



Colleagues,

As we have stressed from the start of the COVID-19 challenge: you can protect yourselves and your families when you have the right information.

The COVID-19 challenge is now at a new level across the entire country, including in Missouri. Case counts have doubled in the last few weeks. We have never before experienced such spikes in cases. No county has been spared. COVID-19 has also touched every department team in the past week alone. (You can track the latest data on our [public health dashboards](#), including down to the county level.) New COVID-19 cases are now straining hospital systems across the state. This affects all our families.

Yesterday, therefore, Governor Parson announced a new statewide [Public Health Warning](#) for Missouri. The Warning provides advisories for all of us as individuals, as well as for our businesses and our local communities.

We urge you to check out the guidance, especially as we approach the holiday season. It should be familiar to you: watch your distance, wear a mask, and wash your hands; minimize travel; stay home if you have any symptoms. We are all fatigued from the stress and hassles of managing COVID-19 every day. It is easy to become frustrated or even complacent. But if we can redouble our efforts and consistently follow this guidance, at work and outside of work, we can slow the case growth and move forward until vaccines arrive.

We encourage you to learn the latest on COVID-19. Our understanding of COVID-19 has evolved in the past few months. Recently, **Dr. William Powderly** presented an update on COVID-19 to Governor Parson's Cabinet leadership – your 16 department directors and deputy directors. Dr. Powderly is a leading infectious disease expert. He is the J. William Campbell Professor of Medicine and the Director of the Institute for Public Health at Washington University in St. Louis. Dr. Powderly gave the Cabinet team a clear explanation of what we have learned about COVID-19 and how to fight it. He answered many questions we bet are on some of your minds.

This information matters now more than ever. That's why we want to share Dr. Powderly's perspectives with you before the Thanksgiving holiday.

The video of Dr. Powderly's presentation and the following Q&A are available now as a MO Learning training path. [Log in and view this video](#). If you are experiencing issues, go to <https://molearning.mo.gov/> to find department specific links and instructions on how to sign into MO Learning.

We hear good news every day on the vaccine front. Vaccine trials are going well. Our teams are preparing for their arrival soon. We expect the first vaccines to begin to be deployed in Missouri before the end of the year.

In the meantime, we need to do all we can to fight COVID-19 and reduce case growth to build a bridge to when vaccines enter the fight.

Thank you for all you do every day to help Missouri stay strong. I hope you can reflect upon what helps you stay focused and motivated this Thanksgiving season. Take care of yourselves, your teammates, and your families. Stay safe.

Drew Erdmann
Chief Operating Officer
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