



**Public Health**  
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**Butler County  
General Health District**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Collaboration Efforts Continue as Miami University Students Return to Campus**

BUTLER COUNTY, OHIO –The Butler County General Health District (BCGHD), Miami University, and the City of Oxford have been collaborating for several months on a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in anticipation of students returning to the community. Yesterday, Miami University (MU) announced they will resume in-person and hybrid classes on campus beginning Monday, September 21, as planned.

“It is the role of the local health district to consult, advise, and share data with universities in order to ensure that information needed to make health-informed decisions is available,” says Jennifer Bailer Health Commissioner for BCGHD. “All decisions as to how to use health information are made by the University itself. It is not public health’s role to tell a university what they must do.”

Over the summer, BCGHD staff met virtually with Oxford bars and restaurants, as well as Greek organizations to ensure they know how to implement all the infection prevention methods currently recommended. Inspections were completed and recommendations for improvements were given. We will continue to respond to complaints received and will take action where we are able.

In addition, BCGHD’s contributions include the identification of new COVID-19 cases among MU students and others. The first MU cases were identified around August 17, and the BCGHD and MU acted quickly to do contact tracing, and isolate and quarantine those involved. Daily conference calls are held for situational updates with a focus on monitoring the response and building capacity.

Bailer states, “The dramatic increase in COVID-19 cases is a testament to the contagiousness of this virus. So far, MU students who have contracted COVID have had mild cases. There have been no hospitalizations, and no complications that we are aware of. While the total number of cases continues to rise, the number of new cases has shown a recent downward trend.”

“For public health, keeping our most vulnerable citizens safe is our highest priority. Many efforts are underway with the City of Oxford, and in collaboration with community organizations to keep COVID-19 at bay in our high risk groups,” added Bailer.

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As additional students arrive, BCGHD will continue to provide contact tracing, education and support, and will track all positive test results for every Miami student tested, no matter where they get tested. BCGHD will provide accurate, data-driven situational updates so that all may respond accordingly in order to maintain their own health and safety. See our website: [www.health.bcoho.us](http://www.health.bcoho.us)

COVID-19 is a contagious disease that can quickly spread based on individual behaviors that can affect an entire community. Student behavior will be key to an effective response. Public health officials understand that young adult peer culture, including such things as hanging out with friends in groups, is not easy to change.

“The experiences of universities across the nation have demonstrated that it is difficult to engage young healthy people in wearing masks and social distancing, however, many are following the rules and we feel this has increased since the first cases became evident. The City of Oxford has passed two ordinances that allow fines for not wearing a mask or for gatherings with more than ten people. This has been really helpful,” says Bailer.

Public health is hopeful that lessons learned from the last two weeks will be on the minds of the MU community and that solid health practices (wearing a mask, socially distancing and hand washing) will be carefully followed as the semester moves along.

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