



**Public Health**  
*Solutions*

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## District Health Department

### IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 3, 2021

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### COVID-19 Omicron Variant Confirmed in PHS District

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the Nebraska Public Health Solutions (PHS) District, and the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory (NPHL) have detected six cases of the omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 among district residents. The first case was likely exposed during international travel to Nigeria, returned on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, and became symptomatic on November 24<sup>th</sup>. The five remaining cases were likely exposed through household contact with the first case. Only one of the six cases were vaccinated. None have required hospitalization. Case investigations and contact tracing are ongoing.

The patient self-identified their travel history, sought testing, and alerted PHS. A team from PHS promptly investigated and coordinated testing for sequencing to identify a variant, and sequencing was rapidly completed through NPHL. Dr. Peter Iwen and Dr. Baha Abdalhamid at NPHL identified the omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 using the Clear Labs next generation whole genome sequencer and the identification was made available for public health response immediately.

DHHS Acting State Epidemiologist Dr. Matthew Donahue said, “The identification of omicron reinforces the urgency for Nebraskans to get vaccinated. The more Nebraskans are vaccinated, the less opportunity new SARS-CoV-2 variants will have to take hold in the state. With delta, which is the current predominant variant, unvaccinated Nebraskans are filling hospitals at a rate 10 times higher than vaccinated Nebraskans. We are doing our part to find new variants when they emerge and arrive in the state, older Nebraskans have done their part in getting vaccinated at high rates; we need younger Nebraskans to keep stepping up to protect themselves and each other by choosing to get vaccinated.”

Covid vaccination is widely available throughout the district. For information on where you can find a vaccine provider near you, please visit the PHS website at [phsneb.org](http://phsneb.org) or call our office.

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