

[THIS IS AN UNEDITED REALTIME TRANSCRIPT. I AM A NATIONALLY-CERTIFIED CLOSED CAPTIONER, BUT THIS IS NOT A CERTIFIED TRANSCRIPT, IT IS TO BE USED FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY -- KATHY ROBSON].

>> AMY: All right, you guys, sorry about that, we were having technical issues. But we're trying to flow with it.

This is our Covid Alert update for July 16.

I'm Amy Hyfield, public information officer for Carbon County, next to me is Allison Evertz, Superintendent of Joliet schools, thanks for coming down.

>> Absolutely.

>> AMY: What we're going to do is start off with Carbon County update.

Then Allison has graciously offered to give a school perspective on what's going on right now.

I'm sure a lot of parents have questions.

And then we will think about the masking directive and any questions.

Just to give you an update, we had six new cases yesterday, brings our total of active cases in Carbon County up to 14.

Over the course of the entire event we have had 40 total cases.

And we now have a hospitalization of a Carbon County resident.

That person is hospitalized in billings and so we are hoping for everyone's full recovery especially this person who is in the hospital now.

I am happy to report that we do have some additional resources that have come in to help out with public health.

We have two public health nurses in the County that are working around the clock, very diligently, to do all of the contact tracing as well as the

quarantine, keep up with quarantine on all of the individuals.

We have a national guard member and registered nurse who we have come in from the state that are helping out with their efforts. And that that's a great relief. All of the new cases require a lot of time.

In terms of other things going on, obviously we have a new statewide directive, for masking, we'll talk about that later.

And we will touch briefly on the event starting today which is the Beartooth rally.

And then of course we're going to turn it right now over to Allison for a little about bit of discussion is it Joliet or "JOELIET"?

>> ALLISON: It's Joliet.

Joliet, Montana, yes.

I'm going off of what we have here before us as far as an agenda is concerned.

One of the things people are curious about are school activities and school planning and that regard.

I think some of that is taken out of our hands, Montana high school association deals with a good chunk of that.

All of the activities that we hold in our public institutions are sanctioned by the Montana high school association.

Having said that, it is an organization that is run by a lot of very athletic people that at one point in time were coaches, more than half of them. Have moved into executive positions because they have a love for activities and Athletics.

They're working diligently.

We haven't gotten a final word on the fall sports Athletics, what it'll look like, we're waiting with BATED breath, we love it, we know that it's the best way to keep students engaged and motivated with their academics above and beyond, it's

a real sure-fire way to safeguard against disease because you keep kids active and when they're active they're healthy.

Physical health.

As well as mental health.

Montana high school association had an executive meeting on June 25 and we got the report on July 1.

It was business as usual.

Then schools just recently had to remit their annual dues to the Montana high school association.

I'm getting the general feel we will be moving in the direction of having sports but having said that I think in order to mitigate risk, it's going to look different.

I'm not a spokesperson for them, but having said that, I do get that question and I think people are chomping at the proverbial bit to get back in the gymnasiums and football fields and the like.

My question would be how badly -- are you willing to wear a mask?

So I think at that point right now, so we've looked at a variety of different things.

One of the biggest things that MHSAA is grappling with, supposition, but the contact tracing.

If you're in for instance a southern B conference and we have our bubble here in Red Lodge or our bubble in Joliet, and we're doing a good job at mitigating but we need to go over to big timber for a game, what is that community doing and how are they mitigating, and how collaborative and diligent are they being.

Are we inherently increasing the risk.

There's so many complications and complexities that I think as we move forward, it's a bit overwhelming for people that are trying to manage but also organize in the face of some

semblance of normalcy so we can do the things we love.

It's a bit tricky.

Another thing I think going off the agenda again, I think everybody is looking right now at preventive measures.

In Joliet for instance, we have a reopening task force, we met yesterday, second time we met. We met on June 8, then again yesterday.

Our agenda took into consideration a lot of what's been going on.

I think what's difficult for administrators, we're all feeling like we're weathering a storm so to speak.

It's because we're watching science unfold.

Because we're privy to the information so soon that it's changing so rapidly, and about the time you have your brain wrapped around it the next day it changes.

So the people that aren't keeping up with it feels like a bombardment of misinformation. So keeping everybody on that same page has been very, very difficult.

Having said that, I've got stakeholders that are getting quite restless and antsy and want to plan for the future. Rightfully so, they need to know what pieces they personally need to have in place so that their children's school years are successful and that they can manage their households in conjunction with what's going on in the school.

But having said that, we want to do something as close to the time that we can start because we want the most accurate information.

It begs the question, do you want a plan right now, so that you can move forward with your own planning, or would you like us to hold off as long as we can so that whatever we have and whatever we give you as a plan for reopening is as close to

something that we can sustain as far as a semblance of consistency. Those two things are sometimes at odds. I try to answer with a semblance of transparency to the best of my capability. But it's very, very complex. It's hard. It's hard. I don't know, do you have any other questions that are coming in that are specific or anything --

>> I forgot to mention earlier, if you have a question please submit it in the messaging chat box, and we'll try to get to those.

Also, Kathy Robson, it's back, she will be providing a transcript of this at the end that we will post on Facebook as well as on our web page as soon as we can get that updated. We will also try to address the questions as well. We'll expect more questions to come in as we're going. So you were speaking to the complexities, how things are changing so much. We did, I did, was able to speak with Bill over in Bridger as well as John Fitzgerald here in Red Lodge. Unfortunately I ran out of time to connect with other superintendents. But I know both John and Bill echoed that kind of information, that this is a constantly changing landscape. We're really trying to build this airplane while we're flying. I know that metaphor has been used a lot but it's really true. This is the first time any of us have done this, especially for schools. Everyone I talked with, that health, the well being, the education, and the safety of students and staff is really priority. And when you're weighing all of

those different things in this landscape it is tough. It's challenging. It is, really, changing rapidly. John Fitzgerald said this will look different. It's going to look different this year. We need to be flexible. That's hard for parents. Parents have jobs, they have to figure out how they're going to help their child both with their safety and their health and their mental health, like you mention, with all of the activities. My kids, they're ready, they want to go be with their friends, they want to get out and do. But at the same time, that educational component, that is so critical. That's your mission at schools.

>> ALLISON: Absolutely.

>> AMY: I know John, he was not able to be here because they're meeting, the principals are meeting right now to talk about plans. You have a task force like you said. Bill over in Bridger had said that they are, they put out a survey to parents. And parents over there are in favor of going back to school. This may look different in different areas of the County, I imagine as well. Each school district has its own plans developed. So this will be ongoing. It does sound like the two that I talk to are wanting to have plans in place and submitted to their school boards or whomever needs to approve those by the first part of August. So that those can be communicated out with the caveat that as things change the plans may change, there may be a plan A, B and C. We should look for those. Is that the same with Joliet?

>> We did a survey, the

overwhelming majority of stakeholders want to come back. 151 responses were positive, said they were affirmatively come back. Two were no, and nine were a maybe. Which then, I know probably a lot of the maybes are the students of the immunocompromised. We have quite a few cancer survivors in our community who are immunocompromised. We also have a variety of other issues. Couple of students that have rare immuno diseases. What we run into in an administrative perspective is the opt-out. IF families opt-out, what's that going to look like. Now we're asking teachers to deliver instruction all day long to a body of students, then to have the expectation that later in the evening they're on zoom all night. We have the Joliet teachers association, and I do believe that Red Lodge is also unionized. Having said that, we have to be fair and equitable for teachers and understand their jobs are inherently difficult as it stands. Moving forward we want to create as much curricular effort. And equity for students. Parents have to understand if they do opt out the bulk and brunt of a lot of the -- tutorial and instruction could fall on their shoulders. Because likely what will happen is teachers will be unavailable in the evening. I think as we move forward the expectations need to be realistic. The levels of accountability for parents, if we have to wear masks in school, this is what I heard from students, it's interesting, it's in direct contrast to parents in some

cases. They're going to get more out of their educational experience and make larger gains academically young adults, they have a team mindset. I think facilitated and cultivated because of the teams that they're on. This is important. When we keep this in perspective, this is temporary. You know, this is not a forever thing. Eventually there will be a vaccine and we will all, yes hopefully sooner than later. But if you're hung up on wearing a mask because you get self-conscious, you get claustrophobic, I heard a variety of different reasons, that's your prerogative, right, your civil liberties which I hear get thrown around a lot. But recognize that you may be excluded from some of these things. We may not have a choice until the vaccine exists. Part of me when I hear these arguments, like get over yourself. It's a temporary situation. There will be an end. We want to be as giving and positive and create successful experience for students but we have to work within CDC guidelines within local health guidelines. Again, moving forward, we may be masked-up. Right now the governor announced indoor mask mandate effective immediately. If the mandate is in effect when schools start that will apply to everyone in the school building. Now you talk about 14 cases, having grown from 6 yesterday -- >> We had 6 additional cases, yes. >> ALLISON: One hospitalization. It's a surge. >> AMY: Yeah. >> How quickly we get a handle on that is dependent on how

cooperative we are.  
We just hope the vaccine comes out.  
>> AMY: A lot of wisdom from kids.  
>> ALLISON: Oh!  
It's amazing.  
They're so good, they're good.  
>> AMY: We did have one question with regard to the past survey, was it proposed, what was the past feedback, on back full time or a blended approach, did you put out different options?  
>> ALLISON: Full time, it was full time.  
>> AMY: So that was the only option you put out there.  
>> ALLISON: Yes.  
I need to mention, too, it was early in June that we did this. With things evolving, maybe the survey going out now would be different.  
I don't know.  
>> AMY: I don't know what Bridger put out.  
I know the vast majority of parents surveys says the community wants the kid back in school, in a normal situation as possible.  
That's what Bill told me. Unfolding plans, look for their information in August.  
I assume the usual communication with your parents will apply. I know we have the Red Lodge campus, other places are using Facebook pages as well.  
>> ALLISON: We use the instant messenger through infinite campus, great way, and I'll say since I'm live and on air, that parents need to recognize that they want those announcements. They need to update their information.  
So frequently we find that we catch maybe three-quarters of our stakeholder population simply because they've changed cell phone numbers and we don't have that on record at the school.  
Please make sure we have all of the most recent.  
I know people are frequently

changing cell phones.  
But if you have an updated cell phone and are capable of getting those announcements you will get a text, frequently you get an e-mail, then you will also get a voicemail.  
It is a triple scenario.  
Having said that we also do our Facebook page.  
I periodically, this is a stylistically thing, I go on and do five-minute informational videos.  
I find that I get anywhere from 500 to 1,000 different views. It's a great information disseminator.  
That's been successful in Joliet.  
I've three of those.  
That's when things were first starting phase 1, those sorts of things.  
Yeah, we also --  
>> AMY: You have a website?  
>> ALLISON: We have a school website.  
With teachers also, internally we use "remind."  
They'll also get all of the instant messaging from instant campus but they'll get remind. We cast it out with a wide net hoping.  
>> AMY: Tom is letting us know we have one question.  
>> Can Carbon County schools create a joint instructional team?  
>> ALLISON: We have all of the Carbon County principals, public health nurses, yes, as far as creating distance and remote learning possibilities.  
On the office of public instruction website there are also Montana approved remote and distance learning providers. In there we have Montana digital academy and things of that nature.  
Those have been vetted.  
If they're being offered out, the office of public instruction website, I'll say they've been vetted with some body of criteria.

So some one up at the office of public instruction sees that those are viable educational resources that could move a student through the curriculum. What that looks like I don't know.

It's a great question. One that we could throw out again.

Currently we have a tentative plan for all Carbon County superintendents and some principals to get together. We're looking right now at July 22nd.

It hasn't been confirmed because we're going to try and talk with Dr. George, we'd really like to get him in the room, be part of that dialogue.

And I guess to respond to that question I can't speak for all of us, but I can present and pose that question, July 22nd meeting if it does, indeed, happen.

>> AMY: Excellent.

>> ALLISON: It's a great idea, good idea.

>> AMY: I think we're definitely learning that working together is the way that we can move forward on a lot of these issues that we're coming up with.

>> ALLISON: Yes.

And it's an opportunity to be creative and innovative and do things that we've never done before, because we've never had to.

It's just a lot of hard work, takes a lot of organization. I feel like sometimes our motivations and intentions are good but we are lacking in manpower quite frankly. Here's a for instance. We have in Joliet two administrators. Teachers will step up into leadership roles. From a professional standpoint take a lot of these things on. Kudos for doing so. It's an opportunity for sure.

>> AMY: Any more questions about schooling?

>> TOM: Would you like me to entertain that question?

What happens when a student tests positive for Covid in school.

Will they quarantine class and teachers, subs?

What happens when a teacher tests positive for Covid.

>> ALLISON: That depends in large part what your plan for going back is.

There are two models.

The no mask which would then be pods or bubbles or family units. Those are isolated groups that sit in one place all day.

A lot of the special classes are taught by the classroom teacher. So we can maintain contact tracing if a situation like that arises.

The problem with that model they get to be together and they get to have situation where they all get to see one another's faces, have expression.

If one student contracts Covid, they all are in quarantine.

On the other hand you get mask, we're all masked up one person then goes in to a quarantine situation, teacher or student. They get 14 days in sick leave per legislation that does expire on December 31.

They have that extension in place in addition to teachers having their original bank of sick days they have 14 additional.

We probably have to put a long-term sub in there. They would be out.

The rest of the class would not need to be.

The masks really safeguard that transmission and I think what we're hearing, what we're reading is if you do, indeed, have masks you will be the closest to a normal routine. Versus the pods.

It's a debate for sure. You have a pod or bubble or family unit, one of those individuals, they're in quarantine.

That is a burden on households because parents need to make alternate plans for 14 days.  
>> AMY: Since you mention masks and the directive, that's the next thing that we were going to talk about.  
Obviously you mentioned, the governor put in force a masking directive.  
It's online, find it at Covid19.MT.gov.  
We have a link to it at CarbonAlert.org.  
In short terms, it's for counties in Montana that have four or more active cases. Carbon County right now is one of those.  
I just got an e-mail we did recover two people so we have 12 active cases in Montana. That's still above four.  
For at least the immediate future we will have this masking directive in effect in our County.  
Indoors people are required to wear masks.  
That's indoors in businesses that are open to the public, in government offices.  
All places open to the public. It doesn't mean inside of your private home you need a mask. That may be a good idea, depending what you have there. There are some exceptions, and you read those exceptions. One of the exceptions is like us, where we're giving a presentation and the audience is six feet away.  
We have our assistant over there, Tom Kohley. Very far away from us.  
There are other exceptions in the directive.  
When you go to a restaurant you will go in masked up.  
When you're eating and drinking can you remove it.  
But then when you get up to go to the restroom, or go to leave or whatever, you will be masked up.  
When you go into other buildings, other businesses,

nonprofits, for-profits, doesn't matter, government entities, you need to wear a mask.  
That is that dreck Ty.  
There's outdoor activities.  
If you are unable to socially distance, to have that six feet, you need to wear a mask outdoors.  
If those -- so it says, socially distancing is not possible, or if it's not being observed, then you need to wear a mask.  
The onus is on business owners and event planners.  
They will be the ones that are going to have to ensure that people wear masks.  
It means businesses can refuse you entrance, an event can refuse you entrance if a mask is required.  
That is within the prerogative of businesses.  
Some businesses may have additional things they put into place around mask wearing in their establishments.  
You can check with those businesses when you enter.  
That is what we have discovered as being effective tool at preventing the spread.  
With regard to enforcement, one of the first things we're trying to do is education.  
That has been the view of the governor all along I think to have Montana visitors step up, take on that responsibility of doing what's best for our neighbors, for Montana, for our businesses so that we can keep them open.  
And we are limiting the spread. First education, let's try to give people the information.  
If need be, if the violations are egregious or repetitive, then law enforcement can be involved.  
That's what we are looking at. I know we had questions about the Beartooth rally.  
Which happens this time in July, this weekend in July, for I don't how many years.  
Dr. George is wanting you to

know heather Quinn, the organizer, has been in constant contact with him. They did submit a plan to the Carbon County team, at the time that was reviewed with the directives in place that plan, met the directives. Heather Quinn has been very involved trying to make sure this event can happen within the directives that exist and trying to include the best interests of the public. So it's going to look very different. First off, this event has been happening for a long time and people are going to come to town regardless. We will have motorcycle its, other enthusiasts coming into town. Not sure if it will be as big as in the past but you can expect that starting today. The traditional events that had people closer together, like live music, dancing, those are not happening. The poker ride I believe is still happening. The Harley rodeo up at the rodeo grounds is still happening. But it is going to look different this year. They are limiting the number of people that will be at the rodeo grounds and they are requiring masks during that event. So you can expect that. Red Lodge downtown Broadway, main street, the road is going to be closed Friday and Saturday, similar to the 4th of July, only open to motorcycles from I believe it starts at 1:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M. I need to doublecheck that. And that's so we can have that more space like the fourth of july, the businesses, bars, the restaurants can have that additional space to accommodate more people. Of course all of those businesses when you are inside this masking directive applies.

So you will need to wear a mask inside, absolutely, and be prepared for that. Outdoors there's less risk and as long as people are able to socially distance and are socially distancing, they're doing that, then we should be okay without the masks. Although if that is what you feel like you need to do absolutely, wear a mask to be doubly sure. For this weekend, when we do have more people here, if you have higher risk of contracting a virus, if you are worried about things, then you probably should avoid downtown Red Lodge. I know that may be a burden for some, it's only for a few days, hopefully if you are in need of something downtown or the grocery store, call upon friends and neighbors to help you access that. So that's the word that I have on the rally. I also wanted to mention that we put together posters if businesses would like to put something up. This is a requirement of the directive that you have something at your entrances, egresses, that talks about wearing masks. These are available on the carbon alert website. I don't know if the state has produced something. If businesses want to do their own. These are under the print resources, you can download them. I want to talk about the three Ws. Masking is part of that. Three Ws are wear a mask, watch your distance six feet apart, and wash your hands. I grew up in the south which you would never know from my accent, I know. The south is the holy trinity of cajun and creole cooking. You have celery, onions, and

peppers.

That goes into almost every dish.

I've been thinking of this of the holy trinity of virus prevention, the coronavirus prevention.

Masking, we have the hand washing, and we have the physical distancing.

All of those work together.

It's not going to be enough if you just wear a mask and don't wash your hands.

It's not going to be enough if you stay six feet apart but don't wash your hands.

The hand washing is a good practice regardless.

That physical distancing has been shown to really help prevent the spread of the virus, aerosols and what not that we have, respiratory transmission F we practice those and make those habits, it's really going to help to stop the spread of the virus.

That's what I had.

Do we have any questions, Tom?

>> AMY: We have.

>> We have a couple of questions.

Please repeat them, people can't hear me.

Regarding masking, does the mask mandate only apply to members of the public, what about employees, are they required to wear masks.

>> AMY: That's a really good question.

>> Repeat the question.

>> AMY: The question was that if you have a business are you only required to wear masks when the public is present.

If you just have employees in the building, or you have a section of the building, let's say, that is closed to the public and only open to employees, is that an exception. I'm going to admit this directive came out yesterday. I have read it.

I am not a scholar on the subject.

I recall seeing in the exceptions --

>> Allison: Only those employees, volunteers, and contractors in public-facing work spaces are required to wear face coverings as specified in this directive.

>> AMY: Yes.

That is, if you're looking at the directive under section 4, exceptions, it is the last bullet point.

I hope that answers the question.

Now is it best practice for your employees to wear a mask when they're together, quite possibly if they're unable to keep that socially distancing, if they're working around each other for a long time.

According to the directive as we're reading it that is not a requirement.

That's all the questions we have.

We'll give it a second.

With regard to masks and this enforcement of things.

How we're working around education.

We can't force people to wear masks.

I learned so much from Star wars.

Tells you when I grew up.

I was thinking about princess LEIA in "a new hope" she said the more you tighten your grip the more star systems slip through your fingers.

I recognize that this enforcement is a little bit of a tightening of grip.

I hope that we don't have people that are slipping through our fingers.

This is about trying to keep our community safe, our vulnerable citizens safe, absolutely one of our -- we do not want to have what has happened in billings happen in one of our assisted living or nursing homes here. We want to keep our economy safe.

We definitely have priorities

around doing this.  
The information keeps coming.  
We keep giving more data.  
We are seeing science happening.  
We get more information.  
We figure out if it's valid and we try to apply it.  
That's how Carbon County is trying to apply things.  
The state.  
This is a reaction to science, it is also a reaction to seeing what has happened in Montana.  
We have a huge increase in cases since before, since the first part of June.  
Trying to utilize our tools.  
Honestly, if everybody could mask up voluntarily then as you mentioned, this will be temporary hopefully.  
We can go around and see everyone's smiling face.  
>> Does the County or city have any extra masks to have on hand for people who do not have one.  
>> AMY: Does the County or city have any extra masks if a customer or employee doesn't have one.  
That's a great question.  
I think I have a couple of answers for that.  
One is that through the state department of commerce as well as Montana hospital associations, the city of Red Lodge and Carbon County is supposed to be getting a distribution, I believe, of 5,000 cloth masks.  
Sherry Weamer at the Red Lodge chamber of commerce is going to work on a plan for getting those out to people.  
Those are for the public, for businesses.  
In all communities in Carbon County.  
As soon as they have a plan worked out and have those received we will be able to distribute those.  
That resource is coming.  
And then in addition, we're expecting most places to procure their own masks.  
If people need addition am is

there a source in the County?  
We don't have that --  
>> But a lot of people have abandon a.  
Probably not the most optimal but something that most people have readily available.  
Use one of those buffs that you have for skiing.  
Maybe a little warmer than you want them to be.  
Though you may not have a mask that you have purchased and you may not have one available in a business setting, I'm sure there is a lot of things that can be improvised with just a touch of cooperative ingenuity.  
>> AMY: If you are encountering people, we have people coming in for the Rally and other events. Weddings, whatnot.  
Right now.  
Now that we have a directive maybe they didn't bring a mask. I would encourage you to reach out to other businesses, reach out to the chamber, and find out if maybe there are places that do have extra that can help you to cover that until your shipment comes in.  
>> We just ordered masks for Joliet, but they're coming.  
>> Into the garbage chute flyboy.  
Remember that?  
You have to lead by example.  
One of the best messages that we can portray to visitors to other people is to wear a mask ourselves.  
When you are wearing your own mask, you're saying this is okay.  
This is a good thing.  
I don't know, my can I see maybe not so much.  
>> ALLISON: Here you go.  
>> The other thing about star wars if you will indulge me, the best laid plans, they rarely work out.  
When you are working together, you are all working for that common goal, you're going to get it figured out.  
One day you blow up the death

star.

I apologize for all of you that are not star wars nerds in the audience.

But that is my life lessons from star wars.

>> AMY: I hope that got us through, do we have any additional questions that have come in.

I'm checking on instagram and I don't see any comments there.

Thank you guys for indulging us, thank you so much for coming, I really appreciate the school perspective.

I hope you guys all have a safe weekend.

Wear your mask.

And we will see you in another two weeks, unless something happens and we need to come in earlier than that.

Hopefully maybe after the first part of August we will have more information about school plans and what we can expect from the upcoming school year.

Thanks so much.

Stay safe.