



Lackawanna County

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Statement/Information On The Omicron Virus

It's been two years since the discovery of the virus that caused COVID-19. Since then, the virus has mutated and caused different variants. Some variants that are more contagious cause more severe symptoms or decrease the effectiveness of existing health measures such as treatment or vaccination are called variants of concern. There are currently five variants of concern which include the Delta variant and the Omicron variant.

The latest variant of concern is the Omicron variant which was designated as a variant of concern on November 26, 2021. To date, Omicron accounts for 73% of all new COVID cases in the United States.

While new information about the Omicron variant is gathered daily, we at the Department of Health and Human Services are concerned about the health and safety of our employees, families, and the community. Preliminary data about the Omicron variant suggests the following:

- The Omicron variant is more than four times more contagious than the Delta variant, which in turn is twice as contagious as other variants.
- Unlike the Delta variant, the effectiveness of certain vaccinations and treatment is reduced in Omicron.
- Currently, the treatment marketed under the name Veklury remains effective. However, it is administered in a hospital setting. This mode of treatment presents a challenge in that Lackawanna County hospitals are at or exceeding capacity.
- Masking, social distancing, testing, and vaccinations, especially boosters, are critical to containing the spread of COVID-19.
- The measures and flexibility allowed through the declaration of the State of Emergency allow resources to be allocated quickly in response to the emergent need.

As new information becomes available from the State and Federal governments, the WHO and the CDC concerning that new variant, it is important to use it and to be proactive by taking the necessary steps to slow its spread.

[Declaration of a Disaster Emergency for the County of Lackawanna, Pennsylvania](#)

[Omicron \(SARS-CoV-2, B.1.1.529\) Talking Points](#)