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NEWS RELEASE
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COVID-19 B.1.1.7 variant case identified in Douglas County

Health officers encourage continued vigilance with mask-wearing, social distancing and encouraging vaccinations

LAWRENCE – One new case of the B.1.1.7 variant that causes COVID-19 has been identified in Douglas County. It is the first of that type identified in the county, and among about 30 total in Kansas in recent weeks.

Disease investigators have determined the case was travel related.

The CDC is closely monitoring these [variants of concern \(VOC\)](#). These variants have mutations in the virus genome that alter the characteristics and cause the virus to act differently in ways that are significant to public health.

Douglas County's Local Health officer Dr. Thomas Marcellino and Deputy Local Health Officer Dr. Jennifer Schrimsher, an infectious disease specialist at LMH Health, encourage Douglas County residents to continue to be vigilant about mask wearing, social distancing in public, limiting gatherings and washing their hands among other habits to continue to limit the spread of the virus in our community.

"With what we are seeing with the virus in other parts of the country right now, we don't want to let our guards down so that we can continue to see the success we have had in Douglas County at keeping our numbers down," Schrimsher said. "It's important to not get complacent even as thankfully more and more people in our community are getting vaccinated, especially those at most risk for experiencing death or hospitalization. We can't let up now."

"We continue to encourage people to take the appropriate precautions. This includes wearing a mask that fits snugly around the nose and face and has multiple layers of fabric or layering thinner masks with an additional cloth face mask to improve the fit," said Local Health Officer Dr. Thomas Marcellino. "We would also encourage all eligible Douglas County residents to get vaccinated when it's their turn as the approved vaccines have shown to provide protection against hospitalizations and death due to the virus."

More information about Douglas County's COVID-19 response is available at douglascountyks.org/coronavirus and LDCHealth.org/Coronavirus.