

Contact:  
Donna Gaukler, Director  
Missoula Parks and Recreation  
(406) 552-6265  
[gauklerd@ci.missoula.mt.us](mailto:gauklerd@ci.missoula.mt.us)  
[www.missoulaparks.org](http://www.missoulaparks.org)

Mary Parrish, MS  
Public Information Officer - COVID-19 Response  
Accreditation and Training Coordinator  
Missoula City-County Health Department  
406-830-5363 (PIO cell)  
[mparrish@missoulacounty.us](mailto:mparrish@missoulacounty.us)



## MISSOULA PARKS AND RECREATION PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release September 17, 2020

### Parks and Recreation volunteer tests positive for COVID-19

A volunteer associated with a Parks and Recreation program has tested positive for COVID-19; the individual's last exposure to program participants was September 9.

The Missoula City-County Health Department's (MCCHD) initial investigation indicates the potential exposure is limited to fewer than 15 participants within a specific recreation program. MCCHD is responsible for contacting the affected families and is in the process of doing so now.

With the steep increase in Missoula County cases and close contacts this week, the Health Department is hard at work conducting case investigation and contact tracing efficiently and accurately, including notifying contacts associated with this case. Families do not need to contact Parks and Recreation or the Health Department to inquire if they qualify as a close contact. Parks and Recreation has notified program participants about MCCHD's ongoing case investigation.

Based on the case investigation results to date, program cancellations or facility closures are not recommended at this time. The program in question takes place outdoors in a City park. The Health Department is working closely with the volunteer and affected program participants regarding quarantine requirements, testing, and returning to the activity.

Parks officials stress this is the first and only COVID-19 case affecting program services after several months of public participation in a wide variety of recreation and aquatics programs. "Since the pandemic began, we have served thousands of residents in our recreation programs and at aquatics facilities," says Parks and Recreation Director Donna Gaukler. "This is the first COVID-positive case linked to Parks and Recreation. Participant and staff exposure is limited, due in part to our rigorous COVID-19 safety protocols. We want to thank Missoula residents for honoring the Governor's and Health Officer's Orders and Parks' guidelines and rules related to COVID-19."

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Gaukler says Parks and Recreation is conducting an internal safety review and remains committed to meeting or exceeding safety standards in COVID-19 prevention protocols. "Our initial assessment indicates COVID-19 safety protocols were observed, and the program volunteer acted responsibly. We're following public health guidance regarding quarantine and enhanced facility cleaning as needed, and we're providing additional safety training for our staff, volunteers, and participants," she added.

Parks and Recreation works closely with MCCHD to design, implement and evaluate safety protocols for Parks staff, volunteers and community members. Programs are designed to keep participants in small, contained groups to limit exposure and facilitate contact tracing if a staff member or a participant should test positive for COVID-19.

Additional City and Parks COVID safety guidelines require staff and volunteers to wear masks when interacting with others and maintain a 6' distance from participants whenever possible. Staff and volunteers perform a daily health assessment and do not report to work if they experience symptoms or suspect they may have been exposed to COVID-19. Participants are required to conduct the same daily health assessment at home before joining Parks programs.

If residents have any questions or concerns regarding COVID-19, they should reach out directly to MCCHD at 406-258-INFO (4636) or visit <https://covid19.missoula.co/>. For questions about recreation programming, please call at 721-PARK (7275) or email [parksrec@ci.missoula.mt.us](mailto:parksrec@ci.missoula.mt.us). As a reminder, program participants will be contacted privately by MCCHD if they are considered a close contact.

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