

Office of County Judge Billy Bledsoe
Office of Mayor Tommy Sloan
Press Release

**Joint Statement from Judge Bledsoe and Mayor Sloan
Clarifying information of COVID-19 Cases in Coleman County**

May 1 2020

There have been posts from various sources circulating on social media regarding information on confirmed positive cases for COVID-19 in Coleman County. We would like to take a moment to educate the community regarding how the community is made aware of positive cases for COVID-19. The below questions are being asked by our residents.

Q: Does Coleman County have a health department?

A: Coleman County does not have a local health department. Instead, the County Judge appoints a Local Health Authority (LHA) who is responsible for administering state and local laws relating to public health within the County. In this capacity, the LHA is an Officer of the State and is responsible for establishing, maintaining, enforcing control measures, and ensuring the reporting of information regarding communicable or infectious disease to the Department of State Health Services (DSHS).

County Judge Billy Bledsoe recommended Dr. Darron Atwood as the Local Health Authority in 2018. The confirmation of this recommendation was approved by the Coleman County Commissioners Court. Dr. Atwood is the Physician in our County that is *solely* responsible for receiving and coordinating with Judge Bledsoe any information regarding to residents in the County who may have tested positive for COVID-19.

Q: How do positive COVID-19 cases get reported for Coleman County?

A: *For testing conducted within Coleman County:* If a patient is tested for COVID-19 in Coleman County, the treating facility for the patient is responsible for reporting that information to Dr. Atwood. Dr. Atwood, after receiving written confirmation of the positive test result shares that information with the County Judge.

Tests conducted outside Coleman County: If a patient is tested for COVID-19 outside of Coleman County, the treating facility for the patient is responsible for reporting that information to the Department of State Health Services. DSHS will then contact Dr. Atwood with the information. After receiving written confirmation of the positive test result, Dr. Atwood will report the information to the County Judge.

Q: What about the first case of COVID-19 reported on April 24, 2020?

A: On Friday April 24, 2020, Coleman County Judge Billy Bledsoe was informed that the first positive case of COVID-19 in the county was confirmed. Upon further examination of the initial report received, the report contained incomplete information, and further testing showed a negative result for COVID-19. This means this is not an active case for Coleman County.

Q: Where do I find the official case count of COVID-19 for Coleman County?

A: The official source of information regarding positive cases for COVID-19 is the Texas Health and Human Service COVID-19 Statewide Dashboard. The information on this dashboard is the official record of cases of COVID-19 for the State of Texas. All other sources of information from other health departments or clinical facilities will not contain accurate information regarding the cases the County recognizes as confirmed. The dashboard can be found at: www.cityofcolemantx.us/covid-19

Q: What about reports of information on Social Media?

A: Several reports of positive COVID-19 Cases are circulating on social media. We wish to inform the public that unless the information is coming from Judge Bledsoe or Dr. Atwood, the information is not official information for Coleman County. Regardless of the source of information, *neither the City or County will make an official confirmation of any results until written documentation has been confirmed by the Local Health Authority. To do otherwise would be irresponsible.* Media will be notified of any press releases regarding COVID-19 to include: Coleman Chronicle, Coleman Today, KSTA, Coleman County Website, City of Coleman Website, City of Coleman Social Media Pages to include Facebook and Twitter.

As our Community begins the process of safely and incrementally opening up our economy, I urge you not to underestimate the potential for exposure in public places. The goal of this community, is to continue to “Slow the spread of COVID-19”. *We must remain vigilant in our efforts to continue taking common sense precautions by continuing to practice social distancing, frequent hand washing, and using face masks.* Please be safe, and healthy.

Respectfully,

Billy Bledsoe
County Judge

Tommy Sloan
Mayor