

MEDIA RELEASE

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



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Erie County receives funding for wastewater testing Erie Community Foundation provides \$30,000 grant

Erie, PA – A collaboration between the Erie County Department of Health and the City of Erie has received \$30,000 in funding through the Erie Community Foundation. The grant means the expansion of tracking of COVID-19 in the county.

The health department began working with Biobot, the company testing the material and supplying the reports, in mid-May. By testing wastewater, they can indicate the presence of the virus and may identify areas that have a high concentration of COVID-19.

An initial donation covering the first four weeks of testing allowed the opportunity to get started early, which was supplemented by bridge funding from the City of Erie. The expansion of funding will allow testing to continue for the next three months and includes communities who utilize the Erie Wastewater Treatment Facility.

Longtime Erie County Department of Health consultant and infectious disease specialist, Howard Nadworny, M.D., has taken the lead in organizing the project.

Dr. Nadworny said that this testing could show how widespread COVID-19 infections are in the county and help measure how well the community is doing with the measures shown to decrease spread – universal masking, physical distancing, hand hygiene and contact tracing with quarantining. It can help monitor infection trends beyond our ability to test people.

The County Executive echoes Dr. Nadworny's thoughts on the potential offered by this type of sampling.

"If we can get warning signs about areas that have an increased amount of the virus or even show that the incidence of the virus is going down through this process, it will help us in the future; data can be used and action steps can be taken," Dahlkemper said. "We appreciate the support from the Erie Community Foundation and the partnership with the city as we continue efforts to save lives during this pandemic."

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