

## **Omicron talking points**

### **Situation as of Dec. 22, 2021**

As reported by CDC earlier this week, the Omicron variant is the dominant strain in the U.S., and based on laboratory data, we estimate it is now the dominant strain in Minnesota. We continue to do sequencing and track variant cases, but it's important to remember that confirmed numbers reflect only a portion of all positive cases and is an undercount of what is actually circulating in the state.

### **Key Messages**

- The latest sequenced Omicron cases suggest widespread community transmission. The number of cases we sequence is just a fraction of positive cases. All of the Omicron cases we have identified so far are the tip of the iceberg.
- Omicron spreads more easily than other variants, including Delta.
- Omicron does not seem to cause more severe illness or death than other variants. However, with more infections, we could still have many people with severe disease leading to hospitalizations and even deaths.
- The recent emergence of the Omicron variant further emphasizes the importance of vaccination and boosters. Breakthrough infections in people who are fully vaccinated are expected, but vaccines are effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalizations, and death.
- Viruses mutate all the time, and each new infection in a person is a new opportunity for the virus to change. That is just one of many reasons why it is so important that we do what we can to limit those new infections and limit the opportunities for the virus to evolve. We don't want to give this virus new opportunities to find better ways to infect us.