



COVID-19 Situation Update for Watauga County

September 25, 2020

This document is intended to provide a regular update on the local response to COVID-19 in our communities and timely, trended data related to COVID-19. This report will be published on Fridays.

Situation Update

We are continuing to see increases in COVID-19 for the county. We are not seeing a leveling or a stabling of confirmed cases, instead we are seeing continued increases in recent weeks (see graphs below). We are monitoring this very closely and are concerned with the continued increases. For the week of September 13-19 (graphs below), increases occurred in cumulative, active and quarantine cases. These increases mean we must continue doing the things we know slow the spread of this virus.

Our case trends have continued to increase with the largest percentage of cases in the 18-24 old age group. We are continuing to see the same trend with cases mostly exposed due to close contact with others through living or working closely with others or attending social gatherings.

“Each fall and winter we typically see an increase in viruses that circulate in the community including flu and other respiratory infections. This year we will also have COVID-19 circulating so we all need to be vigilant and take actions to protect each other. The actions we have been taking to slow the spread of COVID-19 will likely also protect us from other respiratory viruses like the flu. Continue practicing the 3Ws, avoid large gatherings, maintain good hygiene and cleaning practices, stay home when sick and get a flu vaccine,” stated Jennifer Greene, Health Director, AppHealthCare.

Key Points

- We continue case investigation and contact tracing efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19. If you receive a call from a member of our case investigation or contact tracing team, we urge you to cooperate and provide information that will help us conduct response efforts.
- Our case trends have continued to increase with the largest percentage of cases in the 18-24 old age group.
- We are continuing to work closely with our University partners and provide public health guidance and recommendations to ensure our response efforts are coordinated. Every Monday through Friday, we meet with App State to review confirmed cases and outline a plan of action to care for those students who need to be in isolation or quarantine. There are protocols in place to continue surveillance of cases to identify response testing needed. Collaboration continues on the weekends between App State and the AppHealthCare case investigation team. [App State has a dedicated website](#) that highlights guidance, regular updates and data for the Appalachian community.

- We are continuing to work with [Watauga County Schools](#) and provide public health information to inform their decisions about school operations.
- We are continuing to work to increase testing opportunities for the community. Planning for proactive testing for staff in locations that have opted-in to that service continues. Also, we are conducting response based testing when data gathered in the case investigation of a positive case informs the need to conduct broader testing. These response based testing events are intended to focus on areas where there is potential for further spread, a cluster of cases, or an outbreak.
- PPE (personal protective equipment) levels remain stable in most areas.
- Turnaround times for testing have improved with most tests resulting around 2-4 days. NC DHHS now provides data on testing turnaround times. This data is updated daily and can be found [here](#).
- We have posted additional positions to assist with COVID-19 response efforts to respond to the increased demand due to increased cases. More information about those positions can be found [here](#).
- Outreach continues to be an important part of our collective community strategy to address COVID-19. Regular meetings take place with community partners to discuss the current situation in the county, strategize areas for growth and improvement and provide a time for questions and answers.

Outbreaks & Clusters

Data is provided for outbreaks and clusters that are active and ongoing. The number of cases are current at the release of this report. As we conduct outbreak investigations, the numbers included in this report are subject to change.

An outbreak is defined as two or more laboratory confirmed cases. A cluster is defined as a minimum of five cases with illness onsets or initial positive results within a 14-day period and plausible epidemiologic linkage between cases. An outbreak or cluster is considered over if 28 days have passed after the latest date of symptom onset in a symptomatic person or first date of specimen collection from the most recent asymptomatic person, whichever is later.

Additional information on the [definitions of outbreaks and clusters](#) is provided by the North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services.

Facility or Setting Type	Facility or Setting Name	Active Cases	Cumulative Cases	Last Positive Result
Nursing Home	Glenbridge Health & Rehab	3 staff, 11 residents	11 staff, 42 residents, 7 deaths	9/21/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Wrestling	2	13	9/23/2020

Institute of Higher Education	App State Thunder Hill Residence Hall	4	12	9/24/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Chi Omega Sorority	0	10	9/12/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Kappa Delta Sorority	1	10	9/23/2020
Institute of Higher Education	App State Alpha Delta Pi Sorority	7	9	9/25/2020
Institute of Higher Education	Raven Rocks Residence Hall	7	7	9/25/2020
Institute of Higher Education	*App State Football	3	43	9/23/2020

*Due to the ongoing case investigation and the timeline of confirmed cases, this cluster remains active. This count reflects cumulative cases since the first reported result on June 16.

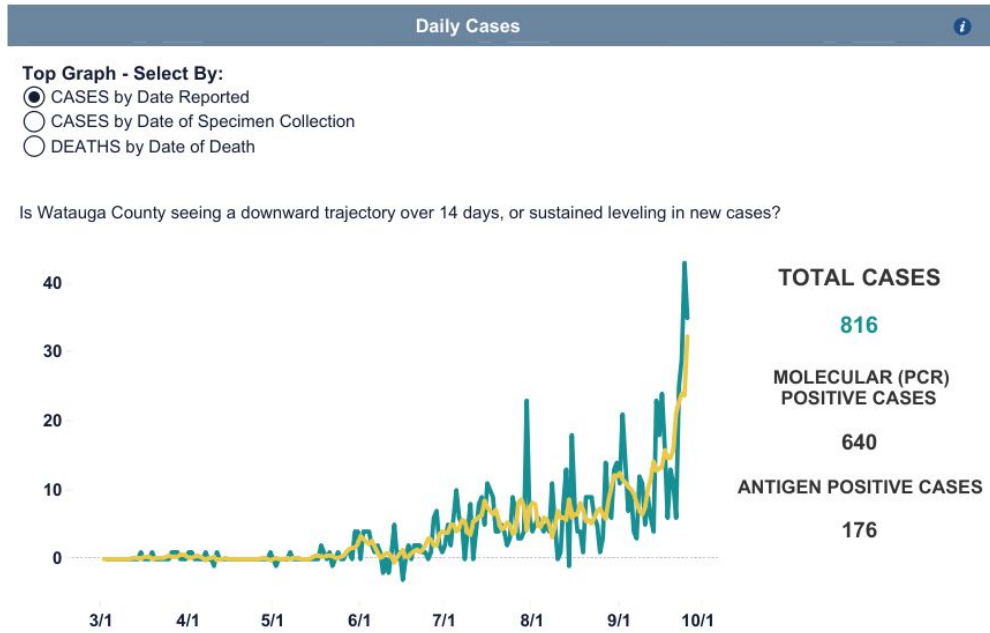
By proactively testing these athletes, App State Athletics has been able to identify opportunities for isolating positive cases and quarantining others who have been exposed. Routine testing continues through App State Athletics to continue identifying early any positive cases. In addition, App State Student Health Service provides testing for students each weekday. The university is offering free COVID-19 tests for App State students, faculty and staff at “pop-up” testing events each Saturday in September and October. All events take place from noon - 5 p.m. at the Rivers Street Parking Deck. No appointments required but you will be asked for your App State ID and other identifying information. October dates for additional pop-up testing events are currently being confirmed by the university. [App State has a dedicated website](#) that has guidance, regular updates and data for the Appalachian community.

Mitigation and Response Efforts

- Ongoing testing continues to monitor the health of residents in skilled nursing facilities
- Educational outreach on COVID-19 prevention with these facilities
- Positive cases are separated from others to allow for safe isolation
- Ongoing daily health monitoring is occurring at the facilities
- Monitoring of positive cases continues with public health staff
- App State and AppHealthCare review cases daily to ensure that staff and students get the support they need to safely isolate or quarantine and to support contact tracing efforts by public health staff
- Ongoing messaging continues from App State to campus about prevention measures and enforcement

Demographic Data from NC DHHS as of September 25th

NC DHHS updates this data daily and can be found on [NC DHHS's website](#).



Molecular (PCR) positive cases represent confirmed cases, and antigen positive cases represent probable cases of COVID-19, in accordance with CDC case classification guidelines. The terms "confirmed" and "probable" are used nationally to standardize case classifications for public health surveillance but should not be used to interpret the utility or validity of any laboratory test type.

Demographic Data - Cases

Select county: **Watauga County** **Watauga County Cases** Select demographic metric: CASES DEATHS

816

For demographic groups where the county has fewer than five cases and the county has a population of fewer than 500 for that demographic, then that data is suppressed for privacy and the graph for that demographic won't appear. For example, if a county has fewer than five cases in people 18-24 years old and the county population has less than 500 people who are 18-24 years old based on census data, then the age graph will not appear for that county. Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

By Race		By Age	
American Indian Alaskan Native	0%	0-17	5%
Asian	0%	18-24	58%
Black or African American	4%	25-49	20%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific ..	0%	50-64	9%
White	91%	65-74	4%
Other	5%	75+	3%

By Ethnicity	By Gender	Missing Demographic Data
Hispanic	Male	Race
19%	51%	179
Non - Hispanic	Female	Ethnicity
81%	49%	322
		Age
		2
		Gender
		23

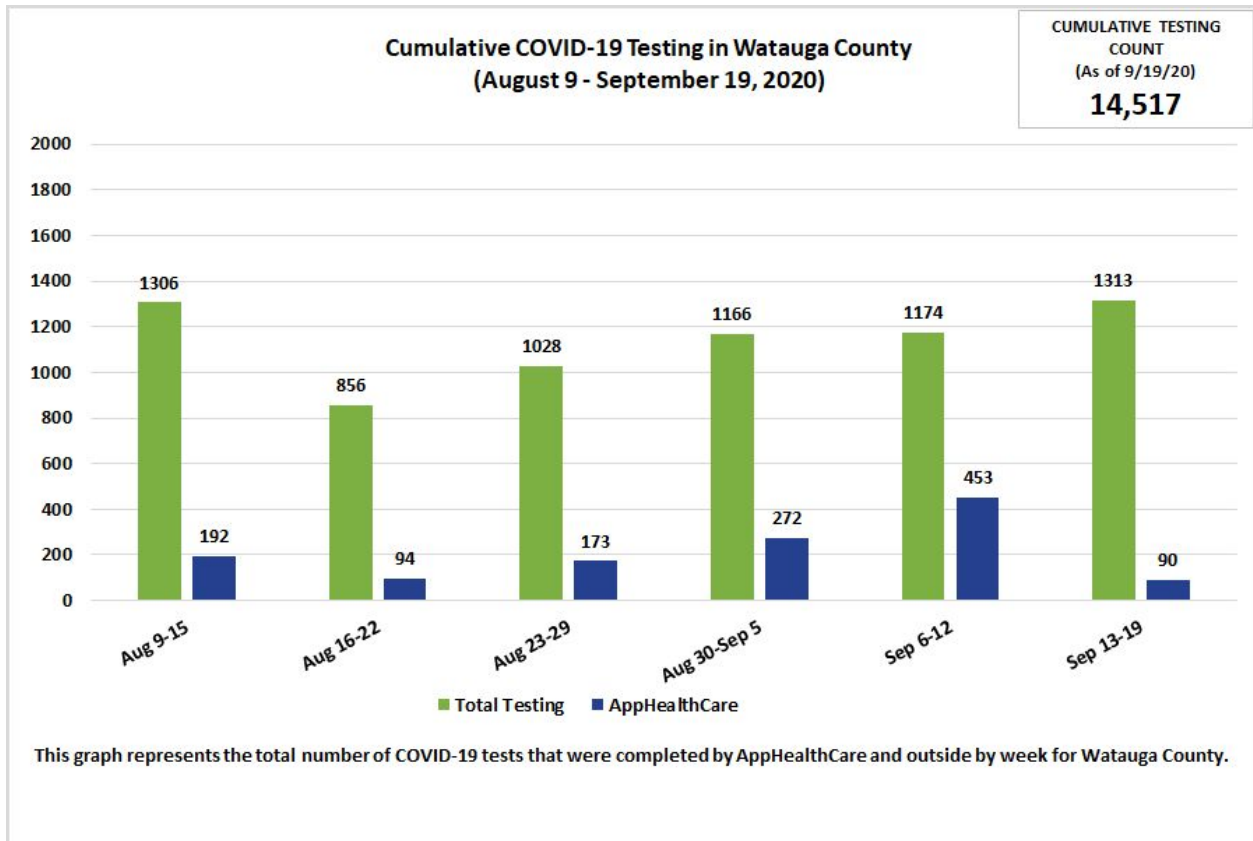
September 25, 2020

Data for Watauga County

An important note about data context: The graphs below show the available data. Please carefully read the descriptions below the graph to understand the data limitations. The most current data is available on the [AppHealthCare dashboard](#), as the data below is past data trended.

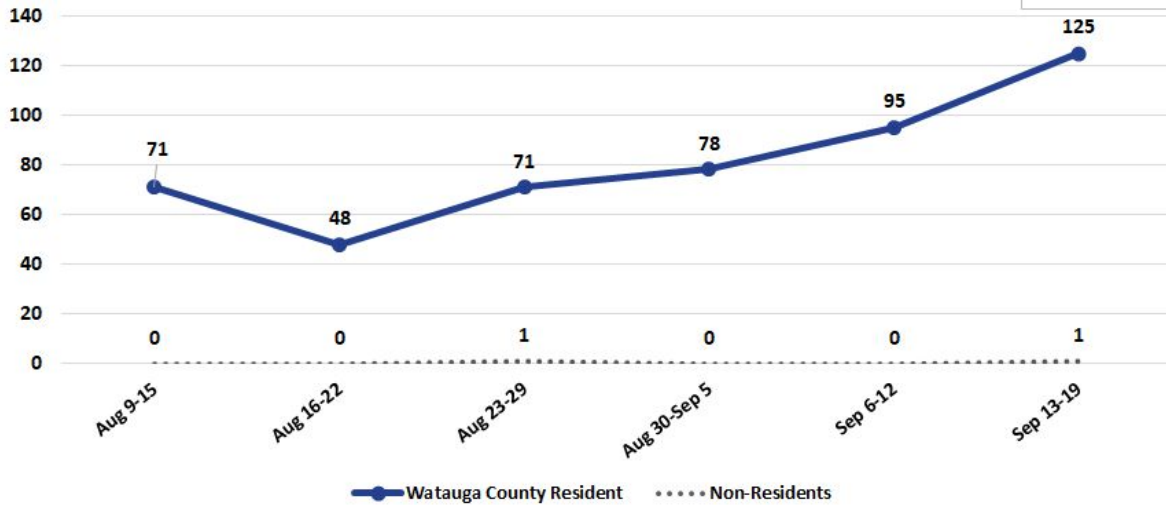
Important Disclaimer About Data

It is imperative that this report and the data contained within is understood in the appropriate context. Please, if you use this report, please be certain that the information included within is shared within the appropriate context. Doing otherwise may be damaging to the public health response efforts. There are multiple factors involved in addressing this virus, including compliance with public health control measures implemented by the local health director and referenced in NC GS 130A. These measures are imperative for limiting the spread of COVID-19. **AppHealthCare strongly advises that when data is shared for the purposes of educating the public or informing policy decisions, it should come directly from NC DHHS or AppHealthCare as it is presented with appropriate context from those directly involved in public health response.**



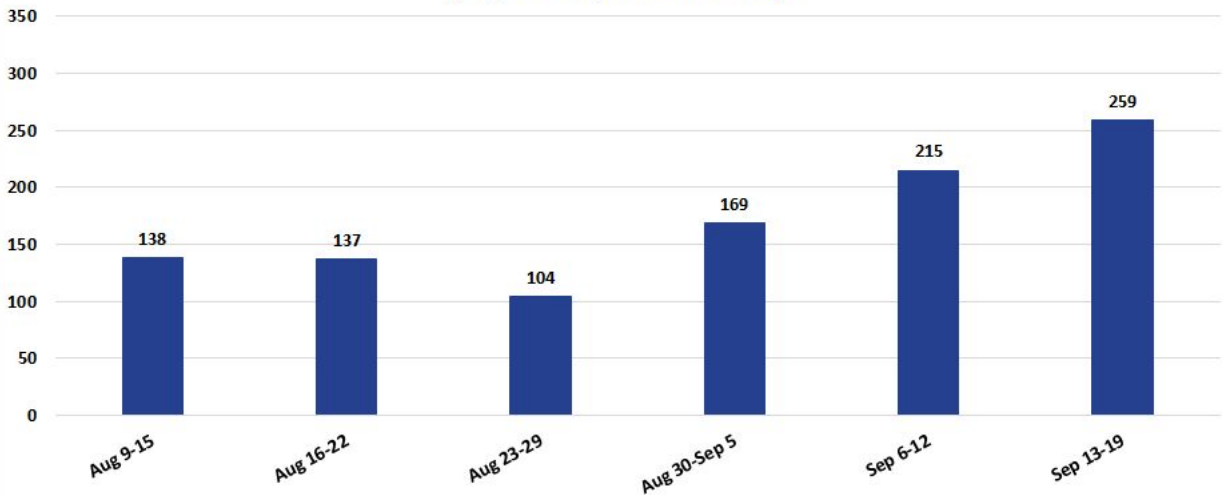
**Cumulative Case Count by Week in Watauga County
(August 9 - September 19, 2020)**

CUMULATIVE CASE
COUNT
(As of 9/19/20)
800



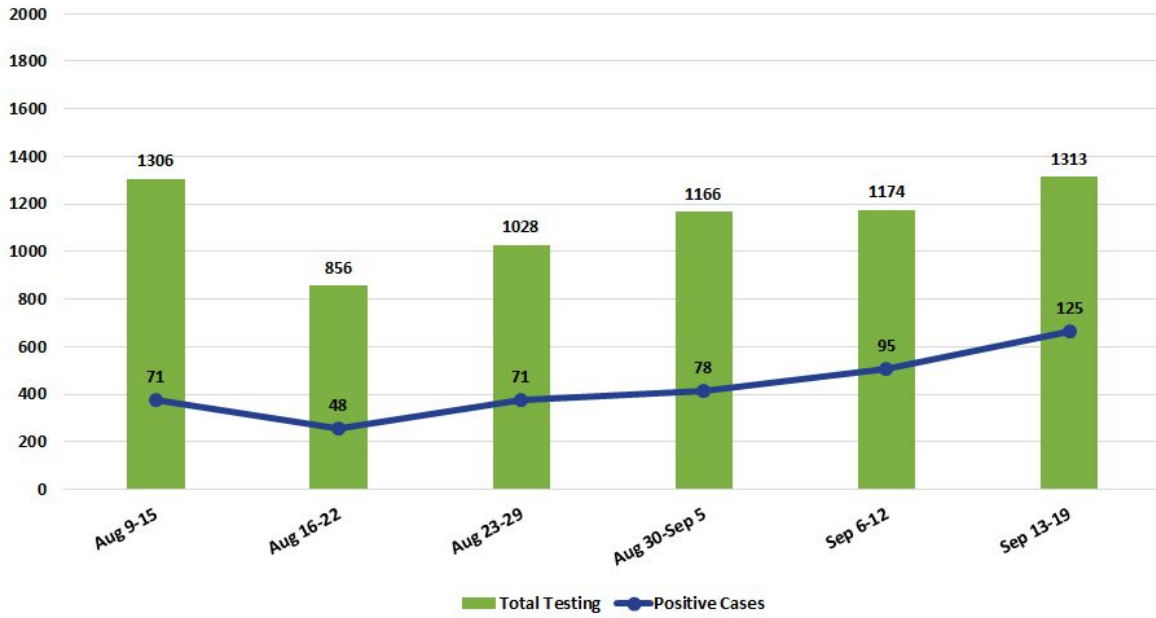
The solid navy blue line in this graph represents the number of positive COVID-19 cases among Watauga County residents by week. This graph also shows the number of non-residents that have tested positive for COVID-19 but reside outside Watauga County.

**Number of Active Positive Cases by Week in Watauga County
(August 9 - September 19, 2020)**



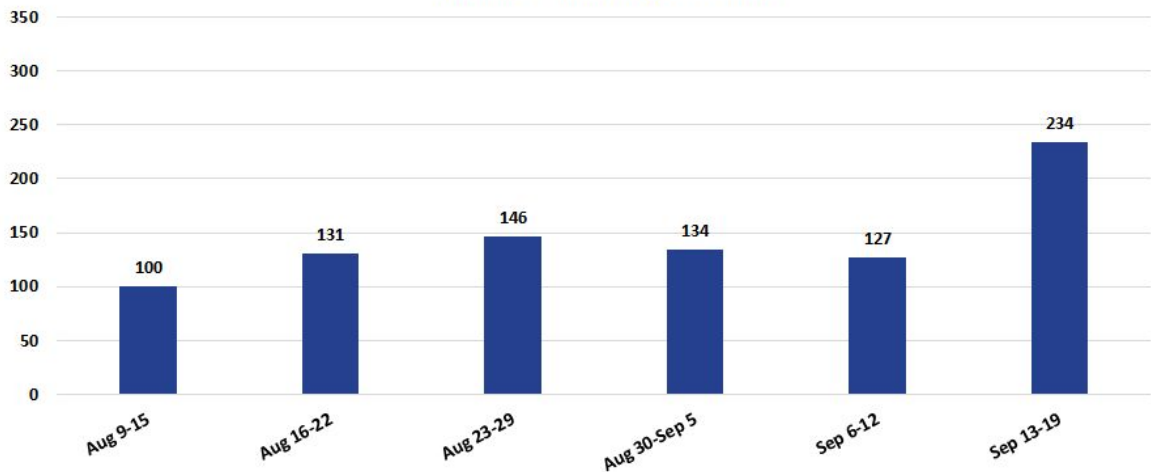
This graph represents the number of active COVID-19 positive cases by week in Watauga County. A positive COVID-19 case is considered active for a total of ten days after the initial positive test result.

**Total Weekly Tests Reported vs. Weekly Positive Case Count in Watauga County
(August 9 - September 19, 2020)**



This graph represents the number of COVID-19 positive cases by week compared to the total number of reported tests that were completed by AppHealthCare and outside agencies each week.

**Number of People Being Actively Monitored by Week in Watauga County
(August 9 - September 19, 2020)**



This graph represents the total number of Watauga County residents that AppHealthCare staff have monitored due to being exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 case. Individuals are notified and asked to quarantine and monitor for symptoms for fourteen days.

Additional data can be found on [AppHealthCare's data dashboard](#). This data is updated each day by 8pm.

Additional Data and Information from NC Department of Health & Human Services

- **Zip Code Data** - NC DHHS publishes data for confirmed cases by zip code for the state. The map and data can be found [here](#).
- **Outbreak Data & Information** - This data is broken down by type of congregate setting like a nursing home, residential care facility, correctional facility, or a congregate working setting. The map by county and report can be found [here](#).
- **Hospitalizations** - More detailed data around hospitalizations, ventilators and bed capacity is now available by regions and can be found [here](#). Our district counties are in the Triad Healthcare Preparedness Coalition.

Key Messages

- **Show Your Love!** This multi-county communication campaign focuses on showing your love to yourself, others around you and the community. Posters and social media graphics for the 3Ws are now available on our website in both English and Spanish. Download them [here](#).
- Practice the 3Ws if you have to leave your house - **Wear** a cloth face covering, **Wash** your hands frequently or use hand sanitizer and **Wait** 6 feet from others.
- Regularly clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces like doorknobs, handles, light switches, countertops, etc.
- If you are sick, please stay home except to receive medical care.
- If you are at higher risk for severe illness due to COVID-19, we encourage you to stay at home to the greatest extent possible to decrease your chance of infection.



Testing

If you meet any of the criteria listed below, we encourage you to be tested for COVID-19. You can call your healthcare provider or AppHealthCare. You should be tested if:

- You believe you have symptoms of COVID-19,
- You have no symptoms and you are at higher risk for severe illness (you are 65 or older, you have an underlying health condition or chronic condition), or have been in close contact with someone who is known to have a positive result,
- You are someone working in a frontline role or essential business where social distancing is hard to maintain,
- You are a first responder, law enforcement officer, fire department staff member, or healthcare staff member,
- You live in or work in a facility where social distancing is hard to maintain, like congregate living, healthcare facilities or home care.
- You are part of a historically marginalized population who may be at higher risk for exposure.

- You have attended protests, rallies, or other mass gatherings where you could have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or could have exposed others because it may have been difficult to practice social distancing.

What should you do while waiting for test results? What if the test is negative or positive?

Answers for those questions, including prevention measures and home care if someone is sick are included in NC DHHS guidance [here](#).

NC DHHS has tools for the public including a website to [Check Symptoms](#) and [Find My Testing Place](#). AppHealthCare does not require someone to have symptoms to be tested.

Alleghany (336) 372-5641 | Ashe (336) 246-9449 | Watauga (828) 264-4995

AppHealthCare COVID-19 Hotline (828) 795-1970

General COVID-19 Questions: preparedness@apphealth.com

Media inquiries: media@apphealth.com

www.AppHealthCare.com and follow us on Facebook & Twitter

