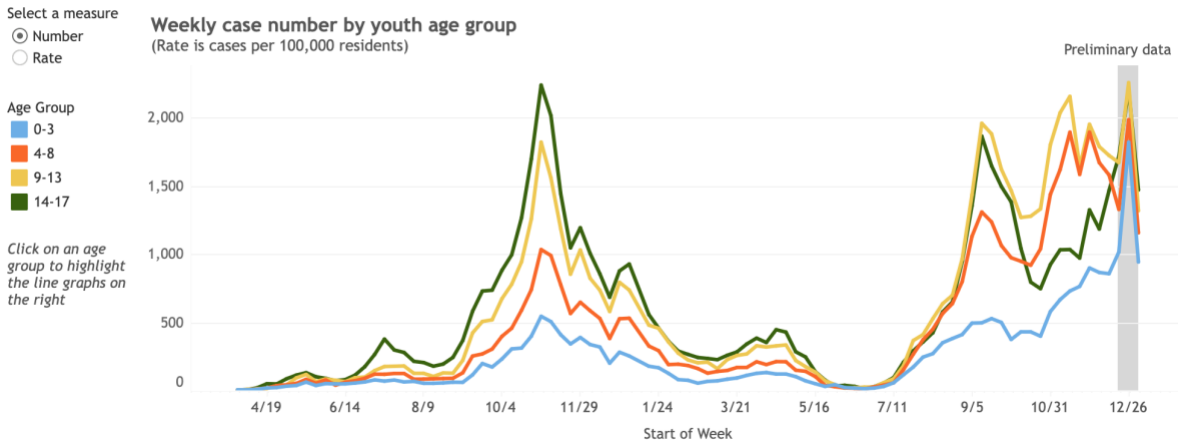


Spring 2022 Caregiving Statement

[The Systemwide Caregiving Task Force](#) is an independent advocacy group composed of faculty, students, and staff from each UW System campus. Since August of 2020, the task force has worked closely with leaders across UW System to support the retention, wellness, and professional development of all UW System employees, particularly caregivers navigating the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the urgency of the current spread of Omicron (as illustrated below), the task force has issued a spring 2022 statement to support campuses in the reopening process.

Confirmed cases by youth age group by date of symptom onset or diagnosis

Updated: 1/7/2022



Source: WI Department of Health Services <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/cases.htm>

As campuses prepare for a return to full campus operations in the coming weeks, the Omicron variant poses unique challenges to childcare, K-12 operations, eldercare facilities, and support services for people with disabilities. In many instances, support networks composed of grandparents, family members, and neighborhood networks are unavailable due to health concerns, leaving families without solutions as institutional support collapses. In alignment with systemwide initiatives focused on equity, diversity, and inclusivity, we support campuses in taking the following steps:

1. Refresh and clearly communicate all campus guidelines surrounding flexibility, remote work, and sick leave for quarantine, caregiving disruptions, and other COVID-related concerns. This should include an update of [centralized caregiving resources](#) and [supervisor training](#) and [resource modules](#) (such as the model linked here).
2. Expand on-site testing operations to include children and other household members of employees and student caregivers. Many children cannot return to school or childcare facilities until they receive PCR-testing results. Tests are currently in extremely short-supply nationally, and it is an enormous logistical challenge to receive results in a timely fashion.
3. Encourage UW System to reinstitute the [COVID-19 Leave Policy](#) which expired in December 2020.
4. Bolster efforts to support the mental health of caregivers as they enter a fourth consecutive semester of significant caregiving disruptions. The results of the

[systemwide caregiving survey results](#) underscore the uneven and long-term career impacts of the pandemic.

5. Offer flexible accommodations and support for student caregivers and those who live with immunocompromised family members, including protections through excused absence or out-of-class policies.
6. Vocalize support for the suspension or reduction of non-essential service work of faculty and staff to alleviate the additional labor required to realize the flexibility needed, in and out of the classroom, to maintain university operations.
7. Develop mechanisms for tracking the impacts of the pandemic on faculty research, tenure and promotion, contract renewals, the professional development of staff, and the retention of students and all employees, particularly those in structurally marginalized groups. Offer grants, course releases, and other necessary accommodations to support those disproportionately impacted by the ongoing pandemic.

Further information on [resources](#), [recommendations](#), and [systemwide best practices](#) can be found on the systemwide caregiving website.