SAGINAW COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
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NEWS RELEASE

SAGINAW COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT COVID-19 UPDATE

(SAGINAW) – While unsettling and unusual, the past week demonstrates Saginaw County's and Michigan's proactive response to protecting our people by preventing the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus).

In just a few days, the number of cases of COVID-19 (coronavirus) confirmed in Michigan has risen from two to 16 in Ingham, Kent, Montcalm, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw and Wayne counties with one presumptive positive in Bay County as well. The Bay County case involves an exposed healthcare worker at Covenant HealthCare in Saginaw. Covenant has identified staff and patients that are at risk due to close exposure to the healthcare worker and is working with the respective health departments to establish home quarantine and monitoring.

As of today, there are currently no cases involving Saginaw County residents. Local health care providers are actively screening patients and testing when appropriate criteria become evident. Statewide, there have been 133 negative tests, with 26 still pending. Saginaw hospitals have tested five Saginaw County residents and all five results were negative for COVID-19.

"With Governor Gretchen Whitmer declaring a state of emergency, temporary closings at all K-12 schools and many colleges, and postponement of major events, we know many of you are hungry for information about what to do next," says Delicia Pruitt, MD, medical director of the Saginaw County Health Department. "I'm seeing unprecedented collaboration between our Health Department, health partners, and community stakeholders and that should be extremely reassuring to our community."

Noting that COVID-19 is still relatively new and "we continue to learn more about it daily," Dr. Pruitt acknowledges that the "unknown" is causing varying degrees of fear and worry.

She recommends steps each of us can take moving forward.

Understand how COVID-19 is spread
If a person with the virus coughs or sneezes, their respiratory droplets are released into the air. People in

close contact (within 6 feet or less) can get sick from coming into contact with the droplets. The virus also lives for a long time on surfaces like desks, keyboards, tables, and doorknobs when touched by someone who has the virus. If you touch those surfaces and fail to wash your hands and then touch your mouth, nose or eyes…you can get sick.

Practice basic personal prevention daily
Wash your hands well (for at least 20 seconds with soap and water) and often! Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Keep your distance (six feet or more) from people, especially if they are sick. Clean regularly used surfaces in your home and office and stay home if you're sick.

Know the symptoms
COVID-19 is different than the flu or a common cold. Symptoms are fever, dry cough, and shortness of breath. Runny noses and phlegmy coughs are more indicative of an upper respiratory infection.

Prepare well
There is no need to stockpile supplies like toilet paper and hand sanitizer, Dr. Pruitt says. "Think about supplies you need for about 14 days and have enough food, water, medications, pet food, and diapers on hand."

She also encourages residents to get COVID-19 information from reputable sources like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/COVID-19), Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (www.michigan.gov/coronavirus), or the Health Department (www.saginawpublichealth.org).

What to do if you or a loved one gets sick
If you have a fever, dry cough or shortness of breath, especially if you have traveled someplace with COVID-19 or have come into contact with a person known to have the virus, contact your health care provider by phone for clinical guidance. Currently, no specific antiviral treatment is recommended for those who contract COVID-19, but people with it are treated to relieve symptoms. Severe cases may require hospitalization, but most people will be asked to self-quarantine at home. "We strongly recommend that anyone experiencing symptoms stay home and NOT go to public places until they are free of fever and other symptoms.," Dr. Pruitt says.

Give sick family members their own room if possible, and keep the door closed. Limit their contact with pets. Have them wear a mask if possible and use a separate bathroom too. Have only one family member care for them.

Who is most vulnerable?
From what the CDC and Health Department know about the disease so far, older adults and people who have serious, chronic medical conditions should take extra precautions to reduce their risk of being exposed. Those medical conditions might be heart disease, diabetes, lung disease, or a suppressed immune system from cancer treatment.

With schools closed for 3 weeks, what should we do or NOT do with children?

Most of the cancellations and postponements are creating social distancing – keeping large groups of people from infecting one another. "Try to stay home, have fun, and avoid public places as much as possible," Dr. Pruitt says.

Who needs to get tested?
Physicians should use their judgment to determine if a patient has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 and whether the patient should be tested. Most patients with confirmed COVID-19 have developed fever and/or symptoms of acute respiratory illness (e.g., cough, difficulty breathing).

For regular updates, follow the Saginaw County Health Department on Facebook.

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We want to be as accessible as possible to the media. Due to the high call volume at the Saginaw County Health Department we encourage media to reach out to our public relations consultant, Melinda Shriner at melindas@barckholtz.com or (989) 295-7334.