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DPH Opens Coronavirus Call Center

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DOVER, DE (March 4, 2020) – As part of the state's response to the ongoing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak that has impacted many countries, including the U.S., the Division of Public Health (DPH) is announcing the opening of a call center at its State Health Operations Center (SHOC) in Smyrna. The call center is open to take questions from the public, schools, medical providers, state agencies and community organizations. Hours of operation will be 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Hours may be adjusted to accommodate for peak volume. Any changes will be communicated through press release and social media communications.

The call center number is **1-866-408-1899**. There is also an email address where individuals can submit questions: DPHCall@delaware.gov (mailto:DPHCall@delaware.gov%20). A recorded message will provide instructions for persons calling after 4:30 p.m. or on weekends who may have symptoms of concern. Additionally, if you are a returning traveler from a country with a level 2 Travel Alert or higher (China, Japan, Italy, South Korea or Iran), and have a medical emergency, you should contact 9-1-1.

"We are receiving a tremendous number of calls from concerned individuals, and from organizations seeking guidance on what they should be doing to mitigate community spread of coronavirus disease, should it occur in Delaware," said **DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay**. "Opening this call center will enable us to answer people's very valid concerns and enable key epidemiology staff to better focus on the job of monitoring returning travelers, and maintaining our high level of surveillance."

DPH is also ramping up its activities by centralizing staff at the State Health Operations Center to facilitate more frequent and easier communication among DPH's many sections that are involved in this response. The announcement comes just days after DPH and the Department of Health and Social Services held a press conference to provide additional information on its preparedness activities. In addition, after consultation with the Governor's Office and State Partners, Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) Director AJ Schall and Governor John Carney have activated the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) and enacted the Delaware Emergency Operations Plan in order to support the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services.

SEOC Activation Level: Enhanced Watch

- DEMA will be deploying a liaison to the State Health Operations Center
- DEMA will be assisting with public information and Joint Information Center functions

Monday, DPH announced the Division of Public Health Lab in Smyrna now has the capability to test for coronavirus disease known as COVID-19. The tests for the two patients in Kent County, the first run at the lab, came back negative. To date, there have been eight Patients Under Investigation (PUIs) whose results have been negative. There is one additional PUI whose test results are currently pending.

DPH also issued updated guidance for monitoring returning travelers as new countries have been added to the list of countries with coronavirus disease-related travel alerts. Any travelers returning from a country with a Level 2 or higher Travel Alert - China, South Korea, Japan, Italy and Japan – in the last 14 days and who:

- Have fever, cough and/or shortness of breath, should contact DPH at 1-866-408-1899 to discuss next steps. Those who need to call 9-1-1 for a medical emergency should advise dispatchers of your recent travel and symptoms;
- Do not have fever, cough and/or shortness of breath (asymptomatic travelers), should contact DPH at 1-866-408-1899 for instructions on self-monitoring.

Asymptomatic returning travelers are asked to stay home (no work, school, attending public gatherings) during this 14-day period. If a returning traveler develops symptoms during this time, and there is no medical emergency, they should contact DPH instead of calling 9-1-1 or visit a walk-in or urgent-care facility.

DPH is focusing its outreach efforts in the coming week to the business community, who are encouraged to review flexible leave policies and consider options for employees such as telecommunting both for returning travelers from Level 2 or higher countries, and in the event of community spread of coronavirus disease.

DPH continues to recommend simple, everyday measures that people can take to prevent the spread of all infections. CDC's Dr. Nancy Messenier said in a briefing Tuesday, that the other side of stopping the spread of coronavirus disease is not catching it. These preventive measures are:

- Cough or sneeze into your elbow, not your hand. If you use a tissue, dispose of it right away.
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly, including the backs of your hands and under your nails.
- Clean surfaces at home, work or school that you use often.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- If you are healthy, the CDC does not recommend buying or using face masks. If you are infected, however, a mask can help prevent the spread of a virus.

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Symptoms of COVID-19 can include fever, cough and shortness of breath. The symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure. Reported illnesses have ranged from people with little to no symptoms (similar to the common cold) to people being severely ill and dying.

For more information and updates related to COVID-19, visit the DPH website at de.gov/coronavirus (https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/epi/2019novelcoronavirus.html), where materials can be found in English, Simplified Chinese/Mandarin, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole.

The most accurate and timely information regarding this outbreak is available through the Division of Public Health, as well as the CDC's website and social media channels. (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Findex.html&data=02%7C01%7CJessica.Borcky%40delaware.gov%7Cfcbbbd47b7d84072246a08d7c06f7300%7C8c09e56951c54deeabb28b99c32a4396%7C0%7C0%

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A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit http://delawarerelay.com. (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fdelawarerelay.com%2F&data=02%7C01%7CJessica.Borcky%40delaware.gov%7Cfcbbbd47b7d84072246a08d7c06f7300%7C8c09e56951c54deeabb28b9

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.

(https://news.delaware.gov/2020/03/04/dph-opens-coronavirus-call-center/?print=pdf)

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