Division of Public Health Awarded $67 Million Grant

Grant to be Used to Implement Expanded Testing and Data Capacity for COVID-19

DOVER (May. 21, 2020) – The Division of Public Health (DPH) is announcing it was awarded a $67 million Epidemiology Laboratory Capacity (ELC) grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to implement expanded testing capacity for COVID-19, and support the establishment of a modernized public health epidemiologic surveillance system.

DPH typically receives $1.5 million in ELC grant funds annually but due to the need to support COVID-19 activities, all states received a greatly enhanced amount, and a timeframe of 30 months to implement funding.

The funding will be used for hiring staff for enhanced laboratory, surveillance, informatics, and other workforce capacity, strengthening laboratory testing, implementing new and advanced technologies for electronic data exchange at the public health lab and improving our surveillance and reporting of electronic health data.

> *"Widespread community testing for COVID-19 and contact tracing are keys to reopening Delaware's economy safely while protecting our most vulnerable neighbors. These additional federal resources will be a real help in that effort," said Governor Carney. "Delawareans should stay vigilant. Keep your distance from others. Wear a face covering in public settings, including on the boardwalk. Wash or sanitize your hands frequently. We need to get this right and personal behavior matters. Now's not the time to let up."*

"The enhanced funding from the CDC will allow us to expand community testing in Delaware and to rapidly build our contact tracing program, especially among vulnerable populations," said Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker, a practicing family physician. "As we test more widely, we will find more positive cases in our state and those individuals will need to be isolated. To slow the transmission of this highly contagious disease – one person infected with the virus can infect two to three more people – we need to move quickly to alert people who may have been exposed to someone who tested positive, and to advise them of their need to self-quarantine."

"We are so grateful for the support from CDC and excited about how this funding will expand and support in particular, enhancing our data and surveillance systems," said Dr. Karyl Rattay, Director of the Division of Public Health. "We had begun working to enhance our platforms that support our data and surveillance systems when COVID-19 hit, and as we have navigated this event, we were building systems on the fly. This will greatly accelerate our efforts to be where we want to be in our data analysis and use."

In addition to supporting expanded statewide testing and analysis, the grant will assist Delaware in creating a COVID-19 surveillance network to test symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals, with additional testing for vulnerable populations.

DPH plans to use the funding to:

- Hire staff for enhanced laboratory, surveillance, informatics, and other workforce capacity.
- Purchase testing and laboratory supplies such as specimen collection kits, lab reagents, and test kits for molecular and serology testing.
- Implement new and advanced technologies for robust implementation of electronic laboratory and surveillance data

exchange to and from the public health lab. This includes the purchase of hardware, software and systems like GIS mapping tools.

- Implement new and advanced technologies to improve our surveillance and reporting of electronic health data.
- Use laboratory data to enhance investigation, response, and prevention through contact tracing, surveillance/mapping, outbreak response, community testing events, and public dissemination of data. DPH and other states who have received this funding must accelerate efforts to conduct robust contact tracing and then identify and isolate new cases of COVID-19.
- Coordinate and engage with partners through training, outreach, workshops, communication technologies, and community testing events.

"We know that the key to safely reopening our economy is expanded testing capabilities. That has been the focus of our congressional delegation and Governor Carney, and I'm glad that the First State is receiving this significant federal grant," said U.S. Senator Tom Carper. "This funding, made possible by the CARES Act that Congress passed in March, will help Delaware track and trace this virus so we can keep moving in the right direction to get through this pandemic."

"This critical grant from the CDC will help expand our state's capacity to address the COVID-19 pandemic with more staff support, better testing capabilities, and new technologies," said U.S. Senator Chris Coons, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee. "As an appropriator, I will continue to voice the needs of our state's and other states' public health departments to ensure the federal government delivers the resources health officials need during this crisis."

"Since the beginning of this pandemic, one of my top priorities has been expanding testing capacity both at a state and federal level. This grant from the CDC will help Delaware expand our capacity and consequently be better able to track and trace the virus," said U.S. Representative Lisa Blunt-Rochester, a member of the House Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee. "We know that testing and tracing is the best way to stop the spread of the virus so that we can safely and more confidently reopen our economy. I want to thank the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services and the Division of Public Health for their continued efforts in the fight against COVID-19."

Anyone with a question about COVID-19, should call Delaware 2-1-1, or email delaware211@uwde.org. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing can text their ZIP code to 898-211. Hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Medical-related questions related to testing, symptoms, and health-related guidance can also be submitted by email at DPHCall@delaware.gov.

People who have complaints about out-of-state individuals violating the Governor's State of Emergency Order, or violating the public gathering restrictions, should contact state or local law enforcement. Questions or complaints about business operations should be directed to: Business@delaware.gov. Questions regarding unemployment claims should be emailed to: UIClaims@delaware.gov.

In addition, the Division of Public Health asks any Delaware health care, long-term care, residential, or other high-risk facility with questions or concerns to email: DPH_PAC@delaware.gov or call the DPH Call Center at 1-866-408-1899 and press ext. 2.

DPH will continue to update the public as more information becomes available. For the latest on Delaware's response, go to de.gov/coronavirus.