News Release

Gov. Ricketts & DHHS Leaders Highlight Service To Medicaid Recipients, Temporary Housing Option For Teachers

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Media Contacts:
Taylor Gage, (402) 471-1970
Justin Pinkerman, (402) 471-1967

Governor's Media Release:

Watch the video by clicking here.

LINCOLN – Today, Governor Pete Ricketts held a press briefing to provide updates on the State's response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Tim Meyers, President of WellCare of Nebraska, joined the Governor for the event. Meyers is also the President of the Nebraska Association of Medicaid Health Plans (NAMHP). He discussed the steps these plans have taken to remove barriers to health care access during the pandemic.

Angie Ling, Incident Commander for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), highlighted the Nebraska Accommodation Project (NAP). NAP provides short-term housing so that Nebraskans can safely quarantine or isolate while protecting household members with a health condition. Through a partnership with the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), NAP is now providing temporary housing to teachers to mitigate the risk of the virus traveling between households and schools.

Gina Uhing, health director for the Elkhorn Logan Valley Public Health Department, talked about the work of local health teams to support schools. She also discussed changes to the State's directed health measures pertaining to quarantine and isolation requirements for the school-aged population.

NDE Commissioner Matthew Blomstedt also participated in the press briefing to provide an update on the ways schools are partnering with their local health departments and the State to combat the spread of the virus.

Gov. Ricketts: Test Nebraska

- All Nebraskans are eligible for testing through Test Nebraska.
- I encourage Nebraskans to continue to sign up, take the assessment, and schedule a time to get tested.
- We have now delivered over 240,000 test results.
- Check out TestNebraska.com for the latest schedule and locations.

Tim Meyers: Medicaid Health Plans

- Since the beginning of the pandemic, the NAMHP has worked tirelessly to put our Medicaid health plan members first and to simplify healthcare for everyone.
- We ensured guidelines were relaxed and complex processes were waived so barriers would not stand in the way of accessing needed care.
- We also stepped up our educational and outreach efforts to make it easier to navigate a system that can often seem complex.

- We also offered more—more benefits, rewards, and resources—because during trying times, health shouldn't be neglected. It must remain a top priority.
- We also look forward to welcoming more than 90,000 Nebraskans who will become eligible to receive life-changing health care supports through our new Medicaid Expansion program.

Angie Ling: Nebraska Accommodation Project – School Staff

- The School Staff Branch of the Nebraska Accommodation Project (NAP) is a partnership between the Nebraska Department of Education and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.
- NAP is designed to protect a household member with a health condition that puts them at a higher health risk from exposure to coronavirus.
- NAP provides short-term housing at a local hotel for quarantine and/or isolation outside of someone's usual household.
- The length of stay is 14 days (or until condition changes).
- There is no charge for this service, and Nebraskans can apply online at dhhs.ne.gov.
- Right now, the program is providing services to educators as well as meat processing workers, healthcare employers, and first responders. We expect the program to re-open to the general population in the near future.
- On average, approved applicants are placed within 24 hours.
- Qualifying criteria:
  - Nebraska resident with State-issued photo ID
  - Employed by any school in Nebraska
  - Must be physically working on campus daily
  - Must come in contact with children daily on campus
  - Has a full-time co-habitant with a high-risk medical diagnosis
  - Is able to provide the date and location of exposure to coronavirus

- Close contact is defined as being within six feet of someone who tests positive for 15 minutes or more

Gina Uhing: Quarantine

- During the pandemic, circumstances are constantly changing. It's important to be flexible and adaptable in our ongoing efforts to protect one another and preserve our hospital capacity.
- Schools play a vitally important role in every child's life by providing education, socialization, as well as critical support and safety net services.
- Recent updates to the State's Directed Health Measures provide clarity and consistency in how local health departments across Nebraska are applying quarantine and isolation orders among the school-aged population.
- The revisions were a collaborative effort between all 19 local health departments and DHHS.
- The changes allow for students who may have been exposed to coronavirus to continue to attend in-class education and extracurricular activities, in lieu of quarantine, in situations where:
  - The exposed student self-monitors (or is monitored) for development of coronavirus symptoms and wears a mask.
  - The exposure occurred during an extracurricular activity outdoors or in a non-confined space, including gymnasiums.
  - The exposure occurred in a confined space, such as a classroom, and both the person with the positive case AND the person who experienced close contact were wearing masks.
    - Close contact is defined as being within six feet of someone who tests positive for 15 minutes or more.
- Local health departments are committed to providing guidance to school districts on preventing the spread of the virus and taking actions to help keep their students and staff safe.

Commissioner Blomstedt: Schools

- Our goal is to keep kids in school.
- It's important to educate folks on what actions and behaviors mitigate the risk of spread, such as masking and social distancing.
- Wearing a mask is critical to our efforts of keeping kids in the classroom.
- Getting a flu shot is also tremendously important this year in light of the pandemic.
- I'm very pleased to be several weeks into the school year without seeing major outbreaks in our schools.
- We're not letting up on our protocols, and we'll continue to make adjustments to them as needed.

Full video of today's press briefing is available by clicking here.

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301 Centennial Mall South,
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509

(402) 471-3121

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