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Press Release

NH DHHS Continues Working With Healthcare Providers, Emergency Responders To Prepare For Potential Coronavirus Activity

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Contact:
Public Information Office
(603) 271-9389

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Concord, NH – No New Hampshire residents have tested positive for COVID 19. The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services is taking steps to prepare for potential community spread of the new coronavirus disease known as COVID-19 in New Hampshire. There are also steps New Hampshire residents can take now to protect themselves.

“The COVID-19 outbreak was first identified in China, and it has since spread to multiple other countries, which has appropriately caused concern about the potential impact on our New Hampshire communities. We have not yet identified any cases of COVID-19 in our State, and we have been working closely with our healthcare partners to be able to rapidly identify any individuals suspected of having COVID-19 in order to prevent further spread of this new virus,” said State Epidemiologist Dr. Benjamin Chan. “Given what we have seen in other countries, it is certainly possible that we could see community spread at some point in the U.S. and New Hampshire. Therefore, we continue to work with hospitals, emergency responders, community organizations, local health departments and public health partners to ensure they are prepared and have the resources they need to respond if and when the virus is present in New Hampshire.”

To date, NH DHHS key activities have included:

- Activating our Incident Management Team to coordinate our public health response with emergency services, homeland security officials, and other public health partners
- Identifying and investigating people with suspect COVID-19 and their close contacts
- Implementing illness monitoring and quarantine for travelers returning from mainland China
- Preparing and shipping specimens to CDC for testing while simultaneously working with CDC to implement the testing locally here in the NH Public Health Laboratories
- Providing technical guidance and information to healthcare and public health partners through health alerts, written guidance and webinars
- Informing the public on prevention measures through media interviews and social media posts
- Planning for future potential for community transmission in the United States including addressing needs for medical surge, community mitigation, and providing housing, transportation, and wrap-around services (e.g. food) for people under isolation or quarantine due to illness or exposure
- Maintaining situational awareness for 2019 Novel Coronavirus across the globe and providing updates to stakeholders
- Maintaining daily communications with federal partners including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, and other national organizations
- Maintaining regular communications with other state agencies, local health departments, and other partners
- Informing the public on respiratory disease prevention measures through media interviews and social media posts

“This is a rapidly changing situation and we are working closely with our federal, State and local partners to collectively address the challenges of COVID-19,” Dr. Chan continued. “We are closely monitoring the outbreak and remain committed to working with concerned residents, communities and health care providers so we can be prepared to respond and protect the health and well-being of our communities.”

To protect themselves against this new coronavirus and the many different respiratory viruses that we know circulate this time of year in New Hampshire, NH DHHS continues to recommend that all residents take the following precautions:

- Stay home and avoid public places when sick (i.e. social distancing)
- Cover mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing
- Wash hands frequently
- Avoid being within 6 feet (close contact) of a person who is sick
- Avoid sharing drinks, smoking/vaping devices, or other utensils or objects that may transmit saliva
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces

For more information on COVID-19, including webinars, health alerts and fact sheets, please visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/.