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7:40PM CT on April 2, 2020

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Media Release:

Gov. Ricketts Announces Partnership with Univ. of Nebraska on Quarantine Housing, First Lady Shore Launches COVID-19 Relief Fund

Gov. Ricketts (podium), First Lady Susanne Shore (far left), and

Nebraska Labor Commissioner John Albin (far right) at today's press briefing.

Watch the video by clicking here (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2Ft3j2jg7intmamqv%2FPress%2520Conf%25204.02.2020.mp4%3Fdl%3D0&data=02%7C01%7Ctaylor.gage%40nebraska.gov

LINCOLN – Today, Governor Pete Ricketts held a press conference to announce that the State has entered into an agreement with the University of Nebraska System to provide quarantine housing. He also gave an update on coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) testing in Nebraska and reviewed the State's social distancing strategy to combat COVID-19.

First Lady Susanne Shore joined the Governor to share information about Nebraska Impact's COVID-19 relief fund. Additionally, Labor Commissioner John Albin overviewed the State's work to process unemployment claims during the pandemic.

Gov. Ricketts: Quarantine Housing

- The State of Nebraska has signed contracts with the University of Nebraska to create bed space for three purposes:
  - Quarantining individuals who need monitoring.
  - People in isolation while waiting for testing results.
  - Discharging patients who are convalescing.
- The contracts will provide about 2,100 beds with food and janitorial services.
- The State and the federal government will cover the costs of these beds.
- Our teammates are working to pull together the staffing for these facilities if they're needed.

Gov. Ricketts: Nebraska's Newest Directed Health Measure (DHM)

- Last night, the State issued a new DHM covering 15 new counties in North and Central Nebraska.
  - New counties include Antelope, Arthur, Boyd, Brown, Cherry, Holt, Hooker, Keya Paha, Knox, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson, Pierce, Rock, and Thomas.
- Overall, 56 counties are now covered by the State's DHM (as of April 2, 2020). For these counties, the DHM…
  - Imposes an enforceable 10-person limit on social gatherings.
  - Requires restaurants and bars to close their dining areas and move to takeout, delivery, and/or curbside service only.
  - Prohibits medical and dental elective surgeries and procedures.
  - Cancels veterinary procedures. Veterinarians are urged to donate unused Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to local health departments and hospitals.
- The State's latest DHM also orders all schools statewide to…
  - Operate without students in their buildings through May 31st.
  - Cancel extracurricular activities through May 31st.

First Lady Shore: Nebraka Impact's COVID-19 Relief Fund

- Nebraska Impact is a nonprofit whose mission is to connect Nebraskans with one another, bridge communities, and enhance state pride by initiating statewide programming that encourages volunteerism and economic development.
- During this unprecedented time, Nebraska Impact is leveraging its statewide connections to assist Nebraskans in need.
- The Nebraska Impact COVID-19 Relief Fund will be directed through statewide Community Collaboratives that are part of Bring Up Nebraska, a program administered by the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF).
- Funds will help individual communities meet their local needs, which may include financial assistance for rent, mortgage, and utilities payments; provisions for food pantries; or supplies for students from low-income families now studying from home.
- Tapping into Bring Up Nebraska's Community Collaboratives assures that funds are used in a targeted, strategic way to meet specific needs.
- The collaborations bring together critical community players, including civic leaders, service providers, educators, health care professionals, law enforcement, and local businesses.
- With the assistance and support of NCFF and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, each Community Collaborative has an intimate understanding of its community's needs, challenges, and strengths. Collaborations are also situated on the frontlines where they can readily solve the problems of area residents.
- Nebraska Impact and NCFF are also working with the Nebraska Department of Education and the Nebraska's ESUs to identify technology needs for students from low-income families who are now studying from home.
- To learn more about the relief fund, visit www.neimpact.org (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.neimpact.org%2F&data=02%7C01%7Ctaylor.gage%40nebraska.gov%7Cdf7f92de77334db6f66408d7d767931e%7C043207dfe6894bf6902C You can donate online, via mail, or over the phone.

Labor Commissioner Albin: Unemployment Benefits

- Nebraskans should not walk away from their jobs in the hopes of collecting unemployment benefits. If you quit your job, you will be ineligible for unemployment benefits.
- The federal CARES Act created a temporary program that offers benefits to individuals not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits including the self-employed, independent contractors, gig workers, and others.
  - Self-employed Nebraskans who have been affected by the pandemic should go ahead and file for unemployment. NDOL will automatically review every claim that comes in for eligibility.
  - By applying this week, Nebraskans will be eligible to receive benefits for this week.
- The CARES Act also increases the amount an individual will receive by $600 for every week an individual is unemployed.
  - Once NDOL receives guidance from the federal government, all individuals who qualify will receive $600 in additional benefits for each eligible week of unemployment, including prior weeks.
  - Regular unemployment claims will start to be processed today. NDOL will pay at the current rate and then make up additional payments once the federal government issues guidance related to the CARES Act.
- The volume of unemployment claims in the past three weeks in Nebraska has been roughly equal to the total volume for 2019.
  - NDOL has doubled the number of teammates processing claims in order to expedite payments.
  - The Department's goal is to make 80% of initial payments within 3-4 weeks of a new claim being filed.
- Nationally, the number of unemployment claims doubled last week (an increase of 100%). In Nebraska, they only increased 56%, which is a sign of the state's economic strength.
- The State has taken action to provide unemployment relief.
  - Making the first week of eligibility payable rather than an unpaid waiting week.
  - Waiving the requirement to look for work.

    - Waiving benefit charges incurred by employers.
- Also, declining an employer's request to come back to work will also be treated as a "quit," making a person ineligible for benefits.

Gov. Ricketts: Nebraska's Social Distancing Strategy

- The State developed its plan in consultation with world-renowned experts at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) and our public health agencies.
- Since the virus will spread to different places at different times, and with varying rate, Nebraska has adopted a regional approach to social distancing.
- The key to slowing the virus is to limit large social gatherings, which Nebraska has done.
- Social distancing can take place without having to close down businesses.
- A shelter-at-home order is not part of the State's plan.
- Nebraskans are encouraged to heed federal guidance to remain home. Most people in Nebraska are already doing so in compliance with the State's limitations on social gatherings.
- We started our social distancing measures early, and this is helping us stay ahead of the curve.

Gov. Ricketts: COVID-19 Testing

- The number of daily test results jumped over 50% day-over-day between March 31st and April 1st.
    - We saw 696 results on April 1st, an improvement from 404 on March 31st.
- DHHS is prioritizing the following persons for COVID-19 testing:
    - Hospitalized patients with a clinical presentation consistent with COVID-19.
    - Outpatients who are in high-risk or vulnerable populations.
    - Residents and staff at 24-hour facilities.
    - Health care workers.
    - Public safety workers and first responders.
    - Individuals older than 65 years old.
    - Anyone with underlying conditions where a COVID-19 infection could result in severe illness or death.
- The State is continuing to work every day to expand testing capacity and materials.

Read the Governor's executive order regarding unemployment by clicking here (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2F9gdndz0g0nsjbmv%2FEO%252020-14%2520Emergency%2520Unemployment%2520Insurance%2520Benefit%2520Relief%2520-%2520Part%25202.pdf%3Fdl%3D0&data=02%7C01%7Ctaylor.gage%40nebraska.gov%7Cdf7f92de77334db6f66408d7d767931e%7C043207dfe6894bf6902001038f11f0b1

Full video of today's press briefing is available by clicking here (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2Ft3j2jg7intmamqv%2FPress%2520Conf%25204.02.2020.mp4%3Fdl%3D0&data=02%7C01%7Ctaylor.gage%40nebraska.gov

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