



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Northern Illinois Rockford Region Public Information Officers

Media Contact: Kyle Auman

March 17, 2020

This is a joint news release issued by the following counties: Boone, Carroll, DeKalb, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, and Whiteside Counties.

**LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS
URGE COMMUNITY TO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION TO PREVENT
FURTHER SPREAD OF COVID-19**

Northern Illinois Rockford Region – Over the past several days, IDPH and the Governor’s Office have taken aggressive measures to reduce and slow the spread of the virus in Illinois. We recognize that schools have closed. In addition, bars are closed and restaurants are only operating drive through, curbside pickup or delivery. Social gatherings have also been limited. These decisions have been challenging but your regional health departments believe that these actions will help limit the spread of the virus in our communities and keep our residents safe. We anticipate that there will be increased positive tests of COVID-19 in our region, the state and the nation. In light of this, we have decided to expand our regional proactive approach of community mitigation strategies.

Community mitigation is a set of actions that persons and communities can take to help slow the spread of respiratory virus infections. Since there is currently no vaccine or treatment available at this time, we feel this is an appropriate and measured response to prevent and contain any further spread of COVID-19 in the community. At least through March 30th, we need the public to take the following actions seriously and employ steps to disrupt disease transmission. At this point, it is time to scale up our efforts.

Therefore, the regional health departments of Boone, Carroll, DeKalb, Jo Daviess, Ogle, Lee, Stephenson and Whiteside, recommend enhanced community mitigation to minimize the number of additional cases to include:

- Daycare Centers are not considered public gatherings; however, additional recommendations are being implemented to limit the transmission of COVID-19 in the community for daycares effective Wednesday, March 18, 2020. These recommendations include:
 - Suspending all before-school and after-school care programs consistent with the Governor’s Directive regarding school closures in the state of Illinois.
 - Posting signage outside the entrance of the facility to restrict entrance into the facility for anyone with illness.
 - Communication with families and staff that exclusion criteria for illness will be strictly enforced.
 - Checking all daycare staff for fever at the beginning of their reported work period and day care centers must maintain records of monitoring.
 - Monitoring children daily for signs/symptoms of COVID-19:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
 - Excluding any staff or child with sign/symptoms of COVID-19 from the daycare setting.

- Promptly isolating any staff or child with symptoms and using a face/procedure mask for that staff/child if available. If the child cannot tolerate a face/procedure mask, the staff that is assigned to them should wear the face/procedure mask. Limit the staff to one (1:1) to care for children who have been isolated.
 - Keeping children in the same group with the same staff every day including meal, snack, rest, and play periods.
 - Staggering drop-offs and pick-ups to avoid crowding of children and parents/guardians in confined spaces.
 - Limiting parents/guardians to one (1) per child during drop-off and pick-up times.
 - Prohibiting all outside visitors to the daycare for activities regardless of their security clearance. Note: This does not apply to maintenance/repair workers. However, a log is to be maintained of all outside visitors by date/time to include contact information with name, phone, cell, and email.
 - Monitoring and enforcing strict hand hygiene among all staff and children.
 - Teaching children to sneeze and/or cough into their sleeves.
 - For additional information, please see:
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools-faq.html>
- Residents are to limit all non-essential movement outside of their homes.
 - For agencies and businesses that remain open:
 - Implement policies that allow for flexibility for employees who are parents including limited hours, paid time off, teleworking and/or closure as feasible.
 - Actively encourage sick employees to stay home. Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
 - Take aggressive steps to clean facilities several times a day. Steps should be taken to clean door knobs, areas on a door where people touch, countertops accessible to customers and any other area open to the public. It is thought that this new strain of Coronavirus can live on surfaces for several days.

Community mitigation activities such as these are part of the CDC's recommended guidance. We urge our communities to take these actions seriously.

For more information:

Go to IDPH and CDC websites.

- <http://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/diseases-a-z-list/coronavirus>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19>
- For businesses: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

For general questions about COVID-19, call the IDPH hotline at 1-800-889-3931

####