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PRESS RELEASE

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LOGAN COUNTY WORKING WITH HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO ADDRESS COVID-19

Logan County officials have been notified that recent local outbreaks of coronavirus are raising concerns for the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE).

According to a letter from CDPHE Executive Director Jill Hunsaker Ryan to the Logan County Commissioners and Northeast Colorado Health Department (NCHD) Director Trish McClain, current metrics for disease spread in Logan County could result in the county having to move to a more restrictive level according to the state's guidelines. Logan County is currently experiencing a significant outbreak at the ATC Community Corrections facility in Sterling.

CDPHE cited the following metrics for disease spread in Logan County in their advisement letter last week:

- Two-week cumulative incidence rate: 460.89 / 100,000 people
- Percent positivity: 6.14%
- 2-week COVID-19 case count (new cases): 101
- 4 new hospitalizations between September 8 and September 13

"These metrics do not include cases in congregate settings such as corrections facilities, but do include cases in community corrections due to the ability for those individuals to interact more broadly within the community," Ryan wrote in her letter. "(On September 15), Logan County began in the Safer at Home Dial in Level 2; however, if the above two-week cumulative incidence rate does not drop to 350 cases per 100,000 people or less, it will require that Logan County consult with CDPHE in two weeks for a determination of whether mitigation within Level 2 remains appropriate, or if movement to a more restrictive level should occur."

Additionally, Ryan said, the Department has received multiple reports that there is a general lack of compliance across Logan County with regard to Executive Order D 2020 138, as amended.

"The Department would like to better understand Logan County's involvement with these complaints and actions taken to prevent such violations from occurring," Ryan stated.

Executive Order D 2020 13 stipulates that "...all individuals over ten (10) years old must wear a face covering over their nose and mouth when entering or moving within any public indoor space...", as well as "...no owner, operator, or manager of a public indoor space...may provide service to individuals or allow an individual to enter or move within that public indoor space, unless the individual is wearing a face covering as required by this Executive Order," except as otherwise permitted. This Order exempts two categories of individuals, those who are 10 years of age and younger, as well as those who cannot

medically tolerate a face covering. The Order further exempts individuals during the performance of specified activities.

“As COVID-19 is continuing to spread in Colorado and is very likely spreading through asymptomatic individuals who are unaware of their infection, mask wearing plays an important and effective role in our disease control strategies to flatten the COVID-19 curve,” Ryan said. “Public establishments that operate contrary to the executive order are in violation of the order, and further jeopardize the health and safety of their employees and customers by increasing the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

“Failure to monitor and enforce these public health requirements in Logan County may result in the loss of any discretionary state funding for preparedness and/or COVID-19 response activities,” she concluded.

On September 23, the Logan County Commissioners, in conjunction with NCHD director McClain, submitted a response to Ryan addressing the mitigation steps the local officials are working toward which include a community testing site, an increase in outreach to the business community as well as the general public and added capacity for case investigation and contact tracing.

How can the community help mitigate the situation so that Logan County can keep our kids in school for in-person learning, so parents can keep going to work and so our healthcare system can stay intact?

Logan County officials are urging everyone to “remember the importance of following the “Big 3” – handwashing, social distancing, and face coverings.

“Over the past few weeks, Logan County has seen a rise in COVID-19 cases,” Logan County Commissioner Byron Pelton stated. “While we expected to see a rise due to students returning to school and many people returning to a more normal routine, this rise in cases has put us under the scrutiny of the State Health Department (CDPHE). The Board of Logan County Commissioners doesn’t necessarily agree with this level of scrutiny, however we will continue to work with the Northeast Colorado Health Department to inform the public about the CDC recommended ‘Big Three:’ 6-foot distancing, masks, and frequent handwashing. Additionally, stay home if you are experiencing Covid-19 symptoms.”

According to McClain, “By keeping disease transmission under control, we are able to preserve our health care system, keep children learning in-person, and keep families working. If we are unable to keep disease transmission within acceptable limits, we risk not only the real danger of loss of life, but many other restrictions would have to come into place. For instance, if the positivity rate continues to increase, our local hospital will have to ban visitors from seeing their loved ones and could possibly have to put elective surgeries and ambulatory services on hold. Doing this could severely reduce or eliminate needed services and procedures from our citizens as well as have unwelcome economic effects in our community.

“Our elders in our long term care facilities may be unable to see loved ones visit for extended periods of time, a very real hardship they already faced once this year,” McClain added. “Schools may be forced to undertake remote learning which can be a more challenging learning environment for students and teachers. This has the domino effect of families not being able to work because young children that are not physically in a school building still need supervision. Families then lose income, experience housing and food insecurity and the economy goes downhill. Together, we can work to prevent these negative outcomes by observing the Big 3.”

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