



Pettis County

HEALTH CENTER

March 10, 2020

Press Release

First Identified Case of Coronavirus 19 in Missouri

On Saturday evening, Governor Parsons announced that the first case of COVID-19 had been identified in a St. Louis County resident who had been studying in Italy. The first case has not required hospitalization. The procedure followed by all public health agencies to limit spread is to find those individuals who had contact with the ill person and keep them at home, away from other people for 14 days. This is the same procedure we would follow in Pettis County if a case should be identified here.

The identification of the first case, though not unexpected, still increases the concerns of many in our community regarding the risk to them and their family. Here is what we know about the virus and what we are doing to prepare as a community. COVID-19 the name for the disease caused by the new strain of coronavirus is causing the most serious disease in people over age 70, those with chronic health problems such as diabetes, lung disease, heart disease and lower immune systems. People who travelled to areas where a lot of people are ill have a higher risk of getting the disease. Fortunately, children, particularly those under 9 years of age do not seem to be ill from this virus. Some people with mild illness may not know they have the illness.

To prepare as a community, the Pettis County Health Center staff is meeting with community leaders and sending out information to health care providers as that information is received. We are working to educate our community members on how to reduce their risk of getting COVID-19. The Health Center is scheduling meetings with the leaders of various groups within the community to help those groups plan their response should we see multiple cases of the illness in the county. We are sharing updated information on testing with our health care providers and are assisting health care providers obtain testing for their patients through the State Public Health Lab. Missouri has a good supply of testing material to address the needs of state residents.

Although testing everyone might seem to be the best thing to do right now, there are reasons why we are not testing everyone. There are enough tests for those who are ill and at risk, there are not enough tests for everyone. Using tests for people who are not ill and have no risk factor makes fewer tests available for those most in need. This is not a test that can be done in the doctor's office like a flu test. Commercial laboratories such as LabCorp and Quest have announced the ability to test for the coronavirus although not every area has access to testing at this time. We have not seen information about the cost of the test, insurance coverage or how long test results take. If you feel you are at risk, you need to talk to your doctor. Before coronavirus testing is done, other causes of respiratory illness needs to be ruled out.

The best way to decrease your risk of becoming ill with COVID-19 continues to be wash your hands often, use hand sanitizer often, cover your cough and sneeze, stay home if you are ill, avoid crowds when possible and clean frequently touched surfaces often. People are decreasing hand shaking and hugs which may feel strange, but a smile and nod are still good ways to greet those we meet.

For the most current information, visit the Pettis County Health Center website at www.pettiscountyhealthcenter.com, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services at www.health.mo.gov or the CDC website at www.cdc.gov