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Director

March 28, 2020
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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COVID-19 DAILY STATUS REPORT

PLEASE NOTE: This is an evolving situation. More information will be distributed as it becomes available. For the most up to date information, please visit: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus. Additional information is available at www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus.

CURRENT STATUS:

- As of Saturday, March 28, 2020, there are eight confirmed cases of COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) in Merced County.
- Additionally, the Public Health Department announced this morning the first case of community spread in Merced County. This emphasizes the need for residents to follow the stay-at-home order and only leave home for essential purposes.
- Based on information provided by individuals who test positive, Public Health staff will continue to assess risks of exposure and contact any affected individuals.
- Due to privacy laws, the Public Health Department cannot release identifying information related to positive cases.
- UPDATE ON TESTING FIGURES: Until further notice, updated numbers regarding individuals tested for COVID-19 will no longer be included in these updates. The daily figure that has previously been provided only included the total number of people tested within the public health system, but not the commercial lab system, hospitals and clinics (the Public Health Department is not provided those numbers). Due to a significant increase in commercial lab system tests, that daily total would not be an accurate portrayal of how many people have been tested at this time. Following the example of other counties, the Public Health Department is currently working on a new process to more comprehensively capture negative testing results from all lab sources for inclusion on future reports. The Public Health Department already captures, and releases, all positive testing results.
- In California, there are 4,900 active cases and 101 deaths.

RECENT ACTIVITIES:

- Merced County Public Health continues to coordinate with federal, state and local partners to further prepare us for future impacts. This includes working with the California Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor COVID-19.
- In coordination with the Merced County Office of Emergency Services, daily situational status calls continued this week with local government agencies, schools, and healthcare professionals in our community.
- The Merced County Office of Emergency Services and Merced County Department of Public Health proclaimed a local and public health emergency March 13 in order to help address the outbreak. The Board of Supervisors ratified those actions during a March 16 special meeting. On March 19, Governor Gavin Newsom announced Executive Order N-33-20, asking California residents to stay at home. On March 20, Merced County's Health Officer also issued an Order directing County residents to remain in their places of residence except to perform or receive essential services.

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- <mark>In order to minimize the spread of COVID-19, our Board Chambers will be closed to the public during the Merced County Board of Supervisors' March 31st meeting. Please visit the County's webpage at www.countyofmerced.com/boardagenda to learn more.</mark>
- <mark>The Bus remains operational, but should only be ridden for essential purposes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional steps are also being taken to promote passenger and driver safety. (See video for details: www.facebook.com/MercedCounty.)</mark>
- Information regarding donation locations and requested donations was added to www.facebook.com/MercedCounty as well as www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus.
- The Merced County Public Health Department Operations Center was opened Jan. 27, 2020 (<mark>62 days</mark>) in order to prepare for COVID-19 in and around our community. The Merced County Emergency Operations Center is activated at a Level 1.

COVID-19 TESTING UPDATE:

- Within the public health system, every person who has met CDC criteria for severe disease within Merced County has been tested. Testing has been limited across the state of California, as noted multiple times by state officials as a barrier to response.
- Public Health is actively identifying other methods to enhance testing capability for providers throughout the community and increase testing county-wide. We will continue to be notified should positive tests come through either system (public health or commercial).
- This week, staff held soft openings for "mobile specimen collection sites" for COVID-19. Plans are still in development, but as-needed moving forward, these sites will be established on the eastside and westside of the County in order to expedite testing. PLEASE NOTE: Use of these mobile testing sites is by appointment only, and you must be referred there by Public Health prior to visiting. Anyone without prior approval will not be tested.

COVID-19 SYMPTOMS AND PRECAUTIONS:

- Coronavirus symptoms include: mild to severe respiratory illness, fever, cough and difficulty breathing. If symptoms develop, individuals should stay at home to limit exposure to others.
- Anyone who has had contact with a person with possible COVID-19 infection and has the above symptoms should call his/her local health department/health care provider immediately.
- Do not go to your provider's office without calling ahead. Do not call 911 for suspected COVID-19 unless you are having a medical emergency.
- During the flu season, there are steps you can take to protect your health and the health of those around you:
  - Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
  - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
  - Stay away from work, school or other people if you become sick with respiratory symptoms such as fever and cough.
  - Cover sneezes or coughs with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- **Sign up for COVID-19 alerts:www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus**
- Merced County Public Health COVID-19 **Information Webpage**:
  - www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus
- Merced County Public Health **Information Line**:
  - 209-381-1180 (English, Spanish, and Hmong. Live reps. available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.)
- **Email** COVID-19-specific questions to Merced County Public Health:
  - COVID19@countyofmerced.com.

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- CDC **Resources for Households**:
  - https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/index.html
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- Guidance for **Businesses and Employers**:
  - https://bit.ly/2IH2G2u
  - www.covid19.ca.gov
- Report **Price Gouging**:
  - http://www.countyofmerced.com/3381/Price-Gouging
- Report **Consumer Fraud**:
  - www.countyofmerced.com/2322/Consumer-Fraud

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