February 27, 2020

Dear Community Partners,

The Lenowisco Health District (LHD) continues to work with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to respond to the expanding global outbreak of COVID-19, caused by a new coronavirus. The vast majority of cases have occurred in China. However, community spread is being detected in a growing number of countries. Community spread means spread of an illness for which the source of infection is unknown. Destinations with widespread or sustained community spread of COVID-19 include China, Iran, Italy, Japan, and South Korea. Other destinations with instances of apparent community spread include Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

As of February 26, 2020, 15 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in the U.S. One of the 15 cases is in a person who reportedly did not have relevant travel history or exposure to another COVID-19 patient. It's possible this could be an instance of community spread of COVID-19, which would be the first time that has happened in the United States. It's also possible, however, that the patient may have been exposed to a returned traveler who was infected. Additionally, 45 cases of COVID-19 have been detected among the 1,100+ people repatriated from Hubei Province, China and the Diamond Princess back to the United States.

The current risk of COVID-19 infection to the American public is still considered low. As of today, there are no COVID-19 cases in Virginia.

LHD's public health response focuses on multiple areas—including daily coordination with VDH and CDC, internal LHD preparation, working with community partners (local governments, hospitals, etc.), and traveler monitoring. Local health departments coordinate disease surveillance with CDC for travelers returning from China and people who may have had contact with a known COVID-19 patient. All flights from China are being funneled to 11 U.S. airports where on-site public health screening is conducted. Health district staff contact U.S. citizens and permanent residents from China who return to their health district and complete a risk assessment. Based on the risk level, the traveler may be asked to self-quarantine, practice social distancing and/or self-monitor for symptoms or signs of COVID-19.

On a case-by-case basis, LHD works with local emergency departments, urgent care centers, private physician offices and other healthcare providers to evaluate people where there is concern about COVID-19. LHD has shared CDC criteria for a person to be tested for COVID-19 with local healthcare systems. Calls we receive regarding possible COVID-19 cases provide a good opportunity to discuss the situation and reinforce current testing criteria and infection control recommendations. If local healthcare providers have COVID-19 questions, we encourage them to contact us.

Because this is an emerging disease, some aspects of COVID-19 are not well understood at this time. Currently, there is not a COVID-19 vaccine or specific treatment other than supportive care. Scientists are working on developing a vaccine and treatment. Public health experts around the globe are working vigilantly to find out more information about the virus, its transmission, and the illness it causes. A lab test for the novel coronavirus has been developed, and CDC currently performs all testing. It's anticipated that Virginia's state public health lab will have this capability in the near future.

This is a good time to prepare for the possibility of ongoing community transmission of COVID-19 in the United States. The LHD encourages community partners to review their emergency

preparedness and response plans. We encourage all community partners to remain vigilant and keep informed of this rapidly evolving situation. Please visit VDH's coronavirus website, www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus, for general information, as well as guidance for travelers, healthcare professionals, educational institutions and businesses.

Here are steps everyone can take to respond to this emerging public health threat:

- It's currently flu and respiratory disease season. CDC, VDH and LHD recommend that everyone 6 months of age or older get a flu vaccine. It's not too late to do this. Flu and COVID-19 symptoms can appear similar.
- Practice good infection control measures at home, school and work. This includes washing your hands frequently, covering your cough (into a tissue or your sleeve), and staying home from work/school if you are ill.
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill. Also, avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes.
- If you are considering travel, please see the CDC's travel website regarding coronavirus at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html for more information.
- For local governments, schools and businesses: review your continuity of operations plans. While it would depend on the circumstances, these **might** be needed if an outbreak of COVID-19 happened in the Lenowisco Health District. Nonpharmaceutical interventions may need to be implemented. They include personal, community and environmental actions to help prevent the spread of the virus.
    - Personal actions include hand washing, covering your cough and sneeze, and staying home if ill.
    - Community actions include social distancing measures to reduce the risk of people who are sick coming into contact with others.
    - Environmental actions include cleaning measures.
- If you have been in China, or have been exposed to someone sick with COVID-19 in the last 14 days, you may face some limitations on your movement and activity. Please follow health department instructions during this time. Your cooperation is integral to the ongoing public health response to COVID-19.

Thank you for your partnership as we continue to prepare and respond to this evolving public health threat. For patient-specific questions, we recommend you contact your healthcare provider. For general coronavirus questions, please visit the VDH coronavirus website listed above, or call our Epidemiologist, Sydney Manis at 276-708-6251.