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PERSONAL HEALTH DIVISION

PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT – March 12, 2020

Over the last 24 hours, the situation surrounding the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, has been rapidly evolving. It has been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization, we have seen our first positive cases in Michigan, multiple colleges and universities have transitioned to online classes, and many large gathering and events are being cancelled.

We are also seeing an increased volume of inquiries, calls, and questions from community partners, the media, as well as the public. I want to reassure you that we are actively monitoring the situation as it changes and assisting our communities to be prepared for an increased demand on healthcare resources as well as mitigation measures such as hand hygiene and widespread social distancing. The goal of containment efforts is to “flatten” the peak of the outbreak – in other words, to spread out the time period that people are getting infected, so that we do not overwhelm our healthcare system, to protect those most fragile, and to minimize the community impact from having many people sick at the same time.

It is normal to feel concerned and it is important to be prepared, but it is also important not to panic. Please know that our internal, regional and state leadership are working hard together to ensure we anticipate and plan for the next steps. The Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department supports the recommendations made by Governor Whitmer in the attached document and we are taking steps to implement these actions within our agency.

Below are some key points from these recommendations:

- Learn about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, which include fever, cough and difficulty breathing.
- **STAY HOME WHEN YOU ARE SICK** – also, individuals at risk of severe illness, including seniors and people with heart, lung, and immune disorders, should consider staying home to avoid others who are sick.
- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, keyboards, cell phones and light switches.
- Communicate and reinforce best practices for washing hands and covering coughs and sneezes.
- Be sure to maintain a supply of medications, food, and other essentials in your house.
- Cancel or postpone large gatherings, conferences and sporting events (e.g. events with over 100 people).
- Reduce in-person gatherings and activities, especially for organizations with individuals at risk of severe illness. Consider offering video or audio of events.
- Consider tele-learning or tele-work opportunities, where feasible.
- Limit non-essential work travel.
- If you care for a loved one living in a care facility, monitor the situation, ask about the health of the other residents frequently, and know the protocol if there is an outbreak.
- Limit visitors at hospitals and other facilities to only those who are absolutely necessary and implement screening of visitors for temperature and respiratory symptoms.

You can find the full list of recommendations [at this link](#). This situation changes daily. If you want the latest information, you can visit the Health Department Website (bldhd.org/coronavirus-covid-19) where we maintain links to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC: cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov) and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS: Michigan.gov/coronavirus).

We have established a Public Health Information Line so that we can efficiently respond to inquiries at 1-231-882-2197.