

COVID-19 Conversations with Community Partners

April 22, 2020

Questions and Answers

- 1. I understand one of the Benzie County confirmed cases went to Shop-N-Save. Do you have any confirmed days or times of when that person was there?**

A recent confirmed case and several of their contacts have stated they have been to Shop-N-Save but cannot confirm the dates. COVID-19 is out in the community. Every time you go out in public, you have to assume that it is present and take the necessary precautions; mask, social distancing and washing of hands with soap and water.

- 2. How is the region set up for testing supplies? Are there enough for everyone that needs testing?**

This is a rapid evolving situation. Currently there is a big push to get more testing done. Do we have enough testing supplies for everyone who wants a test? No. Do we have enough testing supplies for the highest priority groups and those under the expanded testing guidelines? Yes. There is a lot of discussion about testing asymptomatic people since the governor announced an expansion of the testing criteria to include critical infrastructure workers without symptoms if supplies and capacity allow. We are happy to consult with employers who feel they have employees who need testing. This would involve a discussion of potential exposure and risk assessment and we will consider on a case by case basis depending on the situation. It is important that people talk to their provider about testing. The Health Department is continuing to look at ways to increase testing capabilities. There are some providers that are starting to test, and we can support them by connecting them with approved labs.

- 3. With the increasing talk of reopening the State, will there be information/guide available for businesses?**

The Health Department has an essential business toolkit available at our website www.bldhd.org. This toolkit has been helpful for essential service businesses and it could be used for other businesses as well. If a business would like to specifically talk about their circumstances, they can call the Health Department's COVID-19 line at 231-882-2197. We will be continually revising this to include new resources as the situation evolves. We encourage businesses to begin thinking about how they will protect employees and those they serve through screening, masking, hygiene, and social distancing measures.

- 4. Is the Health Department using volunteers for contact tracing locally?**

As of right now, we are not. There is a State-wide volunteer registry that other health departments in the high-volume areas are using. BLDHD has some local volunteers who reached out to us that we would possibly use in the future. Currently we have been able to manage contract tracing activities using our internal staff.

- 5. The Governor's Executive Order is for closure up to the 30th of April? Is there a plan to open the Government Center on May 1st?**

The reengagement process is in the planning stages. We saw the addition of initial business sectors in Executive Order 2020-59 that was issued on Friday. We have no information on any upcoming Executive Orders. We hope there will be planning for safely opening all businesses in the area regardless if you they are an essential service business or not. Tools like employee screening, social distancing, masks all come in to play for safely opening. If a business would like to specifically talk about their circumstances, they can call the Health Department's COVID-19 line at 231-882-2197.

- 6. Does the Health Department have a medical professional's opinion for an appropriate reengagement?**

The Health Department supports the protective measures that have been put into place through the Governor's Executive Orders as well as the Public Health Emergency Order that we issued and encourage all businesses to begin planning for how they will implement similar measures as the phases of re-engagement begin. We support what we have heard from the Governor and Dr. Khalidun about a plan that will be staggered and slow to

prevent a second wave of the pandemic. The Health Department is concerned about the wellbeing of all our residents as well as our community and businesses and welcomes any discussion around this planning.

7. Will there be more of a push for people to get the flu shot this season?

The Health Department strongly advises the seasonal flu vaccine every year. We just had one of the worst seasons for flu with an increase in the number of deaths. Living through this pandemic reminds us all what it is like to face a disease that has no vaccine and that there are vaccines available to reduce influenza. This is an important reminder of the important role vaccines play in our health.

8. Scott Tucker from the National Park Service (NPS) gave an update.

Yesterday there was a press release by the NPS that they are not opening campgrounds, Manitou Islands, Scenic Trail and other Park facilities until July 1st at the earliest. The NPS wants everything in place to protect the staff and Park visitors before opening. This includes the approximately 60 summer staff members that are brought in from outside the community. Once those workers arrive in mid-May, they will be quarantined for two weeks. Currently the housing has been reduced in order to protect the health of incoming workers. This means the NPS will not have enough living quarters to accommodate them all. A typical year would have shared quarters for 62 beds. It has been reduced housing for 18 this year.

9. Does the NPS have ticket issuing capacity at overcrowding areas?

No, NPS does not have that capability. What they do have is the capacity to limit access to the dune climb and scenic drive traffic. The NPS has seen great compliance from locals on closing of the trails.

10. Thank you to Northwest Michigan Human Services, Inc., and director Heidi Britton, on getting a drive through testing facility setup at their Leelanau County office in a relatively short period of time. The Health Department is very grateful to NMHSI as well as Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital for providing the much need testing services.

11. How many of tests coming back are false-negative?

We have not been able to identify any confirmed false-negative tests. Available testing has been approved through Emergency Use Authorization through the FDA. This means that research is ongoing. Up until recently, testing has only been available for symptomatic people and the tests serve as a part of their diagnosis. At this point it is difficult to determine if someone who tests negative but later becomes positive had a true false negative or if they hadn't yet been exposed or were in the earlier stages of the disease. The Health Department encourages if a person is showing signs of COVID, that the person self-isolate and seek guidance from their provider regarding testing or re-testing.

12. Could the National Park Service use short-term rental housing to house their summer workers?

Currently under the Governor's Executive Order, short-term rentals are not allowed unless renting to someone supporting the COVID response in some way.

In closing, we would like to thank everyone for their time and efforts in keeping the community safe. The Health Department provides daily updates. If you would want to be added to our emailing list, please contact Michelle Klein at mklein@bldhd.org