

Contact:: Michelle Clausen Rosendahl  
Siouxland District Health Department  
1014 Nebraska St, Sioux City, IA 51105  
Phone: 712-279-6119 | Fax: 712-279-2601  
mclausen@siouxlanddistricthealth.org

For Immediate Release:  
March 18, 2020

## **Siouxland District Health Department Update on COVID-19 Illness**

### **Comments by Kevin Grieme, Health Director, Siouxland District Health Department**

- There are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Woodbury County at this time.
- Over the past week, there have been a series of Governor's press conferences and proclamations that have been released. These proclamations have all forced us to change from what is our normal routines and we acknowledge this.
- We want to thank all of the schools, businesses and food establishments that have voluntarily made adjustments to accommodate these recommendations.
- These are all strategies that will allow us as a community to "flatten the curve" and is intended to reduce the burden on the medical community. It will also help to reduce the spread, which is a positive for all residents.
- In good public health practice, here are a few things for residents to consider
  - If you currently do your supply shopping multiple times during the week, if you could attempt to make fewer trips by planning in advance, and get supplies for no more than a two-week period. This would include planning your meals, which could include carry out from a local food establishment.
  - With schools being out, it is important to remember that even informal gatherings in groups of larger than 10 is not recommended. We need to educate our student population so they understand.
- Businesses and our colleges are being forced to make decisions related how to handle employees/students that are returning from travel. We would ask that they consult the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. There is guidance there for both businesses/employers and related to travel. This website is: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

*more*

---

#### **About Siouxland District Health Department**

Siouxland District Health Department, the public health agency for Woodbury County, is creating "A healthy community for all" by "leading a collaborative effort to build a healthier community through improved access to health services, education and disease prevention." They provide public health nursing, nutrition, laboratory, health planning and environmental services. For more information on Siouxland District Health Department visit [www.siouxlanddistricthealth.org](http://www.siouxlanddistricthealth.org).

- We have been alerted that some local employers are requiring all employees that are returning from travel that they secure a return to work slip from their medical provider that states they do not have the Coronavirus. This is something that they cannot provide at this time. The travel guidance gives information about information to share in regards to symptoms and any recommended isolation measures.
- Testing for COVID-19 is on many people's minds. This is also an ever-changing item. One week ago, we were not anticipating some of the challenges that have arisen on this topic.

**Introduction of Tyler Brock, Deputy Director/Director of Laboratory Services, Siouxland District Health Department.**

Testing for COVID-19 is one of the major issues for the public both nationally, at the state level, and locally. While testing capacity is increasing at both the State Hygienic Laboratory (SHL) in Iowa and private laboratories, testing is not unlimited. The demand for testing is very great around the world and it's important that testing supplies be used for the people that need it the most.

The need for testing will be determined by clinicians at primary care facilities and hospitals. Many offices are now using their reference laboratories in addition to SHL. Public health approval is no longer necessary for SHL testing, but their testing is primarily reserved for our most ill individuals and our most at-risk people. The private labs may have less required criteria in order to do testing, but their capacity isn't unlimited either. In fact, testing for most people with mild symptoms may not be needed.

We're hearing the frustration about testing availability both from the public as well as medical providers that are struggling with requests from their patients and uncertainties associated with testing. We understand the demand for testing. Nobody likes quality, accessible laboratory testing more than Siouxland District Health Department. But we all have to remember that this is literally a situation where everyone in the world wants a particular service at the same time. Testing supplies as well as laboratory personnel are not unlimited. There are supplies available locally at this time to test the people that truly need to be tested, and those determinations will be made by the medical providers.

We're working with providers on a daily basis to make sure that testing is done when necessary. And we encourage our providers to reach out to the private laboratories that they utilize in order to have a full understanding of their capabilities. We also know that communication is always the first thing to break down when emergencies occur, especially in this situation where the information is changing so quickly. But it is important that staff throughout our medical offices know how to communicate testing procedures to their patients.

Even with all that being said, public recommendations for people in Siouxland isolating themselves when they are sick are same whether you are tested or not. The current recommendation for people in Iowa that are ill with fever and a cough or shortness of breath should:

- Stay home and isolate from others in the home until:
  - You have had no fever for at least 72 hours (three full days without any fever reducing meds)
  - AND – other symptoms have improved (cough and shortness of breath)
  - AND – at least 7 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared

Again, these recommendations are for people who are ill with the symptoms regardless of whether you have been tested or not. It's going to take everyone's cooperation with these efforts to protect our most vulnerable family and friends as well as keeping our medical system from being overwhelmed.

Please find attached two guidance documents developed by the Iowa Department of Public Health that provide more information about COVID-19 testing in Iowa, and isolation guidance for all Iowans.