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## **Siouxland District Health Department Responds to COVID-19 Illness**

We would like to assure the community that the staff of the Siouxland District Health Department are working closely with the Iowa Department of Public Health, the State Hygienic Laboratory, Woodbury County Emergency Management, our local medical community, local school districts, and other public and private partners to mitigate the potential impact of COVID-19 and prevent its spread to the greatest degree possible. Currently, there are still no cases of COVID-19 identified in Woodbury County.

SDHD has a great deal of experience following up on cases of communicable diseases, as there are several diseases that are reportable and require follow up and communication with the contacts of the ill persons. This is something that is a part of the everyday work at the health department, and we will continue this work with COVID-19. When a positive case is reported in the state of Iowa, that information is automatically provided to the local health department for follow up. The picture below is a simple illustration that shows who is of primary concern in the management of COVID-19 cases. The person in the red circle is a confirmed positive case. The people inside the yellow circle are his contacts and they will be under quarantine orders. The people outside the yellow circle have not been exposed to the case. In most cases, they are not quarantined and there are no restrictions on them regarding work or other activity. If someone inside the yellow circle becomes positive, we create a new red circle around that individual, and a new yellow circle around his or her contacts, and so on. Public health's primary concern will always be people that were in direct contact with sick individuals.

The Iowa Department of Public Health has asked that individuals returning from specific countries voluntarily self-isolate for 14 days following their return. If you have recently traveled to a location where COVID-19 is spreading, or have been exposed to someone that was sick with this virus, you may have some restriction on your movement and activity.

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### **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).

In the state of Iowa, there have been 112 people subject to monitoring by public health. Forty-two of these have already completed monitoring. As of March 10<sup>th</sup>, there have been 86 people tested for the virus. Thirteen of these have been positive: 12 in Johnson County and one in Pottawattamie County. Forty-six have been negative, and 27 are still pending. This information changes rapidly, but can be found on the Iowa Department of Public Health's website.

The IDPH website has very good information for the public, travelers, schools, long term care facilities, healthcare providers, and others. We would encourage everyone to use credible sources for information about COVID-19, including IDPH, the CDC, World Health Organization, and Siouxland District Health Department.

We also want to remind people that there are several strains of coronavirus, four of which are very common and usually cause cold-like symptoms. Many people become infected with these viruses annually. It is important to remember that a diagnosis of coronavirus is not the same as being diagnosed with COVID-19, and does not indicate the same severity. The novel coronavirus, which has been named COVID-19, is new and associated with an outbreak that began in China, and is now experiencing community spread in China, Italy, Iran, Japan, and South Korea. The COVID-19 risk to Iowans is still currently low. Influenza is a bigger risk to Iowans at this time. There is still time to get your flu shot if you have not received one, as influenza is still circulating. Protective measures against flu and coronaviruses are the same:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Stay home if you are ill
- Disinfect frequently-used surfaces often

It is also important to keep in mind that it is respiratory illness season in Iowa right now, with many cases of colds, influenza, and other illnesses that may cause respiratory symptoms. The vast majority of these will not be COVID-19. The symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If you are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19, it is important that you call your healthcare provider's office before going in. This will help them to ask you some questions in advance so that the office can take steps to keep other people from potentially getting exposed and infected.

A public hotline has been established for Iowans with questions and concerns about COVID-19. The line is available 24/7 by calling 2-1-1.

