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March 18, 2020
For Immediate Release

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Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Update

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) continues to spread across the United States. In a continuing effort to slow the spread of COVID-19, Governor JB Pritzker recently announced additional efforts, including statewide mandates. These mandates include the following:

- The state of Illinois to close all K-12 schools from March 17, 2020 through March 30, 2020.
- Beginning March 16, 2020 at 9:00 p.m. through March 30, 2020, all Illinois businesses that offer food or beverages for on-site consumption must suspend service for and may not permit on-site consumption. Businesses are permitted and encouraged to offer off-site consumption through delivery, drive-through, or curbside pick-up. Hotel restaurants may continue to provide room service and carry out. Catering services may continue.
- Beginning March 18, 2020, all public and private gatherings in the State of Illinois of 50 or more are prohibited for the duration of the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamation (April 8).

In an effort to reduce the risk of exposure and spread in Ford County, Ford County Public Health Department (FCPHD) continues to work closely with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and other state and local partners to monitor and respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. The virus seems to be spreading easily from person to person and FCPHD encourages everyone to take steps to reduce the risk of exposure. These steps have been encouraged over the last several weeks and still apply to help prevent COVID-19.

- Maintain social distancing. Avoid close contact with people who are sick and keep at least six (6) feet between you and others.
- Stay home if you are sick, unless seeking medical care.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, countertops and phones.
- If you have recently returned from a country, state or region with ongoing spread of COVID-19, monitor your health and follow the instructions of public health officials.

What makes COVID-19 different from other respiratory illnesses?
COVID-19 is a novel (new) virus which is different than the seasonal flu. Most people have little or no immunity due to the lack of exposure to the virus. It is extremely important that everyone help to stop the virus from spreading, especially to at-risk populations such as older adults and people of all ages with chronic health conditions.

Why is social distancing important?
Social distancing is a way to keep people from interacting closely or frequently enough to spread an infectious disease, like COVID-19. Currently, there is no available vaccine or medicinal treatment, so the best protection is to avoid exposure. According to IDPH, "Social distancing measures, such as working from home when possible, limiting the amount of time spent in the community, and trying to avoid public transportation as much as possible, will help reduce the number of people who become sick at any given time and the possibility of exhausting our health care resources."

What is the difference between isolation and quarantine?
Isolation and quarantine are public health practices used to stop or limit the spread of disease.
- **Isolation** is used when a person is sick with an infectious disease. It separates the sick person from those who are not sick to help stop the spread of certain diseases. A person should isolate when having flu-like symptoms or being diagnosed with COVID-19. Depending upon how a sick a person is, isolation can occur at home or in a hospital.
- **Quarantine** is used when a person is not sick but may have been exposed to a contagious disease. This means this person is asked to stay home and away from other people to see if they become sick with the disease. If the person does not develop symptoms after a certain amount of days, that person can return to their daily routine.

How to prepare your family in case COVID-19 spreads in Ford County
- Choose a room in your home that can be used to separate sick household members from those who are healthy.
- Create a household plan of action in case of illness in the household or disruption of daily activities due to COVID-19 in the community.
  - Consider 2-week supply of prescription and over the counter medications, food and other essentials. Get only what you need for this time frame. Know how to get food delivered if possible.
  - Create an emergency contact list. Ensure your household has a current list of emergency contacts for family, friends, neighbors, carpool drivers, health care providers, teachers, employers, the local public health department, and other community resources.
  - Create plans to telework. Know what to do if childcare needs change.
- Update emergency contact information. Stay in touch with others by phone or email and ask others to check on you during an outbreak. Check on family and friends with chronic medical conditions.

Current Travel Recommendations
Currently, FCPHD recommends avoiding unnecessary travel. Depending on your travel history, you may be asked to stay home for 14 days from the time you left an area with widespread or ongoing community spread. CDC and FCPHD recommend all persons postpone any travel on cruise ships, including river cruises, worldwide.

FCPHD will continue to provide updates and guidance on COVID-19. For more information and resources, visit FCPHD's Facebook page or website, www.fordcountyphd.org.