NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE DATE: 03/12/2020
CONTACT: Christina Harrington
TITLE: Health Officer
PHONE: (989) 758-3818
EMAIL: charrington@saginawcounty.com

SAGINAW COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT URGES CALM IN FACE OF COVID-19 DEVELOPMENTS

(SAGINAW) – Saginaw County Health Officer Christina Harrington is urging the public not to panic following news of Michigan’s first reported cases of COVID-19. “As of late yesterday afternoon Governor Whitmer came out with a recommendation discouraging public gatherings over 100 people. Out of an abundance of caution, the Saginaw County Health Department is strongly suggesting people follow the Governor’s recommendation.” According to Harrington, “As of today, we do not have evidence of localized transmission in Saginaw County; however the State is taking aggressive measures to control the spread of disease and we are awaiting additional guidance from the State of Michigan and MDHHS.”

So far, five Persons Under Investigation (PUI) have been tested in Saginaw County hospitals. Of those tested, four results were negative and one is currently pending. The Health Department is recommending testing only for people who have symptoms or recent travel history to or from other areas of concern.

Background:
A novel coronavirus (SARS CoV-2) is responsible for the expanding outbreak of respiratory illness called COVID-19. Symptoms include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. These symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

How it spreads:
A person can get COVID-19 from close contact with another person (within roughly 6 feet or 2 meters away) or when a person with COVID-19 coughs or sneezes. It also may be possible to get COVID-19 by touching a surface that has the virus on it then touching your mouth, nose or eyes.

People with COVID-19 are the most likely to pass the virus on to another person when they are at their sickest.
Prevention:
There is no vaccine currently. To protect yourself and others, follow everyday preventive actions including:

• Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
• Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
• Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, blowing your nose, coughing, and before eating. (If soap and water is not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.)
• Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects such as door knobs, keyboards, remotes, cell phones, and light switches. The novel coronavirus can remain on surfaces for up to nine days. If surfaces are dirty, use the cleaning agents you normally use for these areas and follow the directions on the label, before disinfection. For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.
• STAY HOME IF YOU ARE SICK.
• **CDC does not recommend facemasks for people who are well** unless they are health care workers or caring for someone with COVID-19. People who are sick or who have symptoms should wear a facemask if around others. (Anyone with respiratory symptoms, not just people with COVID-19, should wear a facemask to protect others when in public.)

While many state universities and colleges have implemented tele-learning as a means to prevent virus spread, K-12 schools are encouraged to remain open as long as possible. Harrington offered the following guidance:

• Educate students and the community about COVID-19 and preventative hygiene practices.
• Encourage staff and students to stay home when sick.
• Report influenza-like activity, absenteeism, and potential school dismssals to public health officials.
• Separate sick students and staff from others until they can go home. When feasible, identify a “sick room” through which others do not regularly pass.
• Communicate and reinforce best practices for washing hands and covering coughs and sneezes.
• Regularly clean and frequently disinfect touched surfaces like door knobs, keyboards, desks, cell phones, and light switches.
• Limit large gatherings (e.g., greater than 100 people in a shared space) such as assemblies, interschool interactions, as well as field trips and school-sponsored travel.
• Schools with students at risk of severe illness should consider plans for learning at a distance for those students, to the extent feasible.

The Saginaw County Health Department is monitoring individuals based on risk of exposure following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Michigan Department of
Health and Human Services (MDHHS). Since this matter is rapidly evolving, citizens are encouraged to consult reliable information sources, such as the CDC at www.cdc.gov/COVID-19, MDHHS at www.michigan.gov/coronavirus, or the Health Department at www.saginawpublichealth.org.

# # END # #