



PUTNAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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A PHAB-ACCREDITED HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 MITIGATION IN PUTNAM First Lab Confirmed Cases in Putnam, New Executive Orders

BREWSTER, NY— The Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH) is confirming two positive cases of COVID-19 in Putnam County residents. The individuals have been quarantined at home and will continue to be monitored carefully. Contact tracing is underway and those that are found to have had contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case will be notified by the PCDOH and precautionary or mandatory quarantine will be established for each person.

“This is not an unexpected event, nor should it cause alarm,” County Executive, MaryEllen Odell, said. “We knew eventually a positive case would be confirmed. The Putnam County Department of Health’s communicable disease staff is working with state and local partners to identify all possible contacts.”

Prior to lab-confirmation of positive COVID-19 cases in Putnam, the County Executive had taken major preventative action on Friday by declaring a State of Emergency and ordering all public schools closed for a five-day period. The news of positive cases in Putnam comes alongside additional emergency measures from the county.

“I have signed three emergency orders to further protect the most vulnerable of our community,” adds the county executive. Effective midnight tonight, the emergency orders include the mandatory closing of daycare centers and nursery schools, prohibiting public gatherings or events of more than 20 people and prohibiting buffet style food. “The message we are sending is this— we strongly recommend proactive and extensive social distancing. You should only be leaving your homes when absolutely necessary. All social events should be reconsidered and re-scheduled if at all possible. By slowing the spread of COVID-19, it can allow the healthcare system to be better prepared and have the available beds for the most ill.”

“Up until now we have been monitoring dozens of possible exposures, both with and without symptoms,” Health Commissioner Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD, said. “We are working around the clock to ensure all measures are taken to mitigate, or slow the impact of this virus. Data suggest that 80% of people who contract the virus self-resolve and tend to have mild symptoms that

eventually subside— but we practice social distancing for the 20% that will have serious complications, hospitalizations requiring intubation, or possibly death.”

In this evolving situation, vigilant personal hygiene and social distancing remain the best defenses. Individuals should remain at home if they have a fever or respiratory symptoms and contact their health care provider before going to the doctor. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations include remaining at home until fever or respiratory symptoms have been resolved for a minimum of 24 hours.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- fever
- coughing
- shortness of breath

Residents are reminded to call ahead to their doctor’s office, urgent-care facility or hospital, so they may take necessary precautions to prepare. If, however, you are in respiratory distress, call 9-1-1 and inform the dispatcher of your exposure risk. COVID-19 symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

Testing for COVID-19 is occurring in Putnam County; tests are administered at the discretion of the attending physician following NYSDOH and CDC guidelines.

Residents can protect themselves from COVID-19/coronavirus, flu and other droplet-spread viruses, with basic, common sense personal hygiene actions including:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- Avoid touching eyes, mouth and nose with unwashed hands.
- Do not share personal items such as water bottles.
- Avoid close contact with individuals who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick. Remain home for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever (without taking fever-reducing medication) or signs of a fever (i.e., chills, feeling warm, flushed appearance).
- Cover your cough or sneeze into your elbow or with a tissue, then immediately discard the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

For general questions about COVID-19 the New York State Department of Health has established a hotline: 1-888-364-3065. For local information, follow the department of health on social media or visit the county website. If you think you may be a direct contact of a lab-confirmed case of COVID-19, please call the PCDOH at 845-808-1390.

The mission of the Putnam County Department of Health, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit our County website at www.putnamcountyny.com/coronavirus; or visit our social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealthny and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

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