



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 8, 2020

Department of Health Provides Latest on COVID-19, Two New Presumptive Positives, Total in PA is Six

Harrisburg, PA – The Pennsylvania Department of Health provided an update this afternoon on continuing efforts to mitigate the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Pennsylvania.

Since the update last evening, the state has reported two additional presumptive positive tests. This brings the total to six presumptive positives – four adults in Montgomery County, one adult in Delaware County and one in Wayne County. All have mild symptoms and are in isolation at home.

“While we anticipate that there will be more Pennsylvanians with COVID-19 in the coming days and weeks, it is important for residents to know the commonwealth is prepared and that they should be prepared too,” Dr. Levine said. “Right now, each of our presumed positive cases have traveled to a country or state with known community outbreaks or have come in contact with someone who has the virus. We are working with the health care community across Pennsylvania to keep them informed, consult on patient testing and ensure they have the resources they need to care for patients.”

The Wolf Administration Preparedness Actions

The World Health Organization first announced the coronavirus outbreak in late January and the Pennsylvania Department of Health has had its Emergency Operations Center set up since February 1. The center allows for a collaborative, concentrated state response, including:

- Activated of the Department of Health’s Emergency Operations Center to allow for enhanced response coordination;
- Begun testing for COVID-19 at the state laboratory;
- Maintained communication and outreach with federal, state and local partners;
- Provided symptom monitoring for residents returning from areas impacted by coronavirus;
- Provided health care providers, businesses and education providers with information;
- Reviewed and adapted current pandemic flu plans to prepare for spread of COVID-19;

- Increased testing capacity to test 20 to 25 individuals daily;
- Purchased equipment to increase testing capacity to 125 to 150 individuals beginning the weekend of March 6-8.
- Partially activated the Commonwealth Response Coordination Center at PEMA.
- Governor Tom Wolf signed an emergency [disaster declaration](#) March 6 to ensure state agencies involved in the response have the expedited resources they need to continue to focus on the virus and its possible spread.
- The Department of Health is providing a daily update via statewide press release.

About COVID-19

Symptoms of the COVID-19 can include fever, cough and shortness of breath. The symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure. Reported illnesses have ranged from people with little to no symptoms to people being severely ill and dying. Individuals most at risk for severe symptoms include elderly and those with pre-existing conditions.

Pennsylvanians are reminded to:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean surfaces frequently, such as countertops, light switches, cell phones and other frequently touched areas.
- Contain if you are sick, you should stay home until you are feeling better.

To date, there are close to 110,000 cases worldwide, including more than 3,800 deaths. There are 476 cases and 19 deaths to date in the United States. The department expects cases to continue to be confirmed in the upcoming days and weeks but wants everyone to take action to help prevent the spread of the virus. The department also said due to the rapidly changing nature of the spread of COVID-19 around the world, it is important for families to be prepared.

Comments from State Health Secretary

“We are continuing our efforts to ensure we can increase our testing capacity to 150 individuals,” Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “This increased capacity allows us to continue to work with clinicians to ensure Pennsylvanians have access to testing. We want individuals who have potential exposure and symptoms to call us at 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258).

“Further spread of this virus throughout the nation will likely occur. We encourage people to prepare for potential life disruptions. The same family emergency plans and kits that we use to prepare for flu or norovirus, and even snowstorms and floods, are important now.

“Since the start of flu season, we have encouraged Pennsylvanians to stop the spread of illnesses by washing your hands, covering coughs and sneezes, cleaning surfaces and staying home if you are sick. Those are the same healthy habits you should continue to practice to protect your family and yourself against the spread of this virus.

“Individuals who intend on traveling outside of the United States are urged to check the CDC’s and the federal Department of State’s travel guidance. Currently there are outbreaks of COVID-19 occurring within numerous countries across the world. The number of countries seeing new cases has increased significantly over the last week.

“As this situation evolves, we will continually update Pennsylvanians through our website, health.pa.gov, our Facebook page and our Twitter account,” Dr. Levine said. “It’s important to remember that the most accurate and timely information regarding this outbreak is available through the Department of Health.”

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