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February 5, 2020

TO: Community Clinics
Hospitals
Pharmacies
Healthcare Providers

FROM: Wilma J. Wooten, M.D., M.P.H.,
Public Health Officer & Director,
Public Health Services

RE: INFORMATION ABOUT NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (2019-nCoV)

On behalf of the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) Department of Public Health Services (PHS), I am sending you this letter to share important information and preparedness activities regarding the Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

It is important to know that while the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers that this is a serious public health threat, the risk for the general American public is low. Globally, as of February 4, 2020, there have been almost [25,000 cases and 500 deaths](#) associated with 2019-nCoV. Nationwide, there have been 12 confirmed cases in the United States, including [six in California](#): Santa Clara County (2), San Benito (2), Los Angeles County (1), and Orange County (1). The HHS PHS is actively responding to the novel (new) coronavirus originating in Wuhan, China. To date, [San Diego County](#) has no confirmed cases of the coronavirus illness.

Additionally, San Diego County has been selected to receive repatriated citizens from the Hubei province of China (city of Wuhan) arriving at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar. The federal government is the lead agency for this response, and the County of San Diego is working closely with these officials, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), and regional public health jurisdictions on this rapidly evolving situation.

HHS PHS has an organized preparedness and response structure, bringing together surveillance, laboratory, and operational experts for proactive planning. Our first preparedness priorities have been accomplished and continue. We have done the following:

- Enhanced surveillance activities and timely investigations of any 2019-nCoV concerns with the focus to identify, isolate, inform, and investigate.
- Close coordination with CDC and CDPH for any persons who meet the criteria for a patient under investigation (PUI).
- Issued two CAHAN (California Health Alert Network) health advisories ([1/24/2020](#) and [2/1/2020](#)) to San Diego healthcare providers about the symptoms of the virus and the steps to take if they have a PUI who may have the illness.
- Collaborated with key County departments, emergency services, healthcare institutions, elected officials, and other partners on preparation and information sharing.

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- Confirmed transport protocols with the Emergency Medical Services to ensure that ambulances are prepared for managing patients and are using infection control precautions for safe transport.
- Arranged for direct delivery of specimens from the San Diego County Public Health Laboratory to the CDC lab for testing any suspect cases.
- Informed the community about the facts of novel coronavirus and how to stay healthy and safe.
- Created [fact sheets](#) for dissemination to the public in select languages.
- Activated [2-1-1 San Diego](#) services as an important information hub that connects people with community, health, and resources.
- Collaborated with the Asian community networks to provide updated and relevant information.
- Activated the County's Emergency Medical Services/Public Health Preparedness and Response Departmental Operations Center/Medical Operations Center from Level 3 (1/21/2020) to Level 2 (2/1/2020), due to the repatriation of individuals from the Hubei province of China (which is where Wuhan City is located).

At this time, residents of San Diego County are at low risk of becoming infected with this novel coronavirus, unless they have recently traveled to Wuhan, China or have come in close contact with someone who was ill who recently traveled in that area.

San Diego County residents can protect their health by taking preventive measures, such as frequent and proper hand washing, staying away from those who are ill, covering coughs and sneezes, and staying home if sick. It is not too late to get a flu shot to help prevent illness and symptoms similar to the novel coronavirus.

HHS/PHS is continuing to monitor the situation. As conditions change, we are prepared to implement additional measures and work with our partners to quickly respond and protect the health of the community. The CDC is the authoritative source for up-to-date information on the virus: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>. For additional information about the outbreak and associated resources, please go to the [County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency, Epidemiology Unit webpage](#), where you will find detailed information about 2019-nCoV, information for health professionals, clinical guidance, press releases, FAQs, and other resources.

As clinicians and medical providers, please adhere to the best practice to **identify, isolate, and inform**. First, *identify* any individuals with respiratory symptoms. Second, immediately *isolate* and place symptomatic patients with a positive travel history in a surgical mask and private room, ideally an airborne infection isolation room. Third, *inform* facility infection control **and** the County Epidemiology Program by calling 619-692-8499 during normal business hours (Monday-Friday 8 AM-5 PM), or 858-565-5255 after hours, on weekends, and County-observed holidays. A flow diagram that summarizes the above Identify-Isolate-Inform "3I" approach with more information is available [here](#). Lastly, also provided in this communication is today's publication of the [CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#) on the public health response and interim clinical guidance for the 2019-nCoV outbreak.

Thank you for your continued support to keep the residents of San Diego County healthy, safe, and thriving.

Sincerely,


WILMA J. WOOTEN, M.D., M.P.H.
Public Health Officer & Director
Public Health Services

Cc: Helen Robbins-Myer, County of San Diego, Chief Administrative Officer
Nick Macchione, County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Director