Urgent News Release #15

Richland County Emergency Management
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RICHLAND COUNTY COMMUNITY PARTNERS RESPOND TO PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

Richland Center, WI: We have begun our third week of virtual Emergency Operations Center meetings intended to share information between Richland County officials and community partners in a joint response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Public Health Manager/Local Health Officer Rose Kohout announced that as of 2:00pm Sunday, March 29th the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) confirmed that in the state of Wisconsin there were 1,112 confirmed cases for COVID-19, 16,550 have tested negative, and there were 13 deaths related to COVID-19. There are 2 confirmed case of COVID-19 within Richland County at this time. Kohout reported that Richland County Public Health staff continue to monitor those individuals and investigate potential exposure.

Richland County Emergency Management Director, Darin Gudgeon announced that "not everyone with COVID-19 is symptomatic and not everyone who is sick is being tested. We have to assume that the virus is everywhere." The Department of Health Services, Office of Civil Rights February 2020 bulletin clarified that the protections of the HIPAA

Privacy Rule "are not set aside during an emergency". Therefore, we are not able to share any information regarding the confirmed COVID-19 cases in Richland County.

The Richland Hospital Coronavirus Hotline is available 24 hours/day and patients should call (608) 604-9953 BEFORE coming to the hospital. The Richland Hospital is only testing patients in Tier 1 or Tier 2 priorities as outlined in COVID-19 Health Alert #3. The hospital continues to see and treat non-COVID patients who need "essential" medical care, but many of these are being converted to telemedicine appointments to maximize "Safer At Home" and social distancing opportunities. Some patients are being directed to the Muscoda Health Center or Spring Green Medical Center if they need hands-on care. Patients needing "essential" medical care should always call the hospital main number 647-6321 before coming to the hospital.

Richland County Administrator Clinton Langreck reported that at this time most Richland County offices continue to be closed to the public, and if possible, staff are working from home while continuing to conduct business via phone, mail, and email when possible. Additional instructions on accessing county services and informational updates can be found on the Richland County COVID-19 website https://covid.co.richland.wi.us. Partners are also researching how to continue to conduct essential open meetings, such as County Board and School Board meetings, and the ability to allow for the public to access these meetings electronically.

All University of Wisconsin-Platteville/Richland, Southwest Wisconsin Technical College, Richland School District, and Ithaca School District buildings and playgrounds remain closed to the public until further notice. Some schools began online learning and a meal delivery program for students today.

All other community partners continue to work in groups of 10 or less people and practice social distancing of six feet between people. Many local restaurants and taverns are closed, but some continue to offer Take-Out or curbside delivery food ordering options. Small business owners are being cautioned to watch for predatory lending scams and the Greater Richland Area Chamber of Commerce office is offering more information on their website www.gorcchamber.com. This website is also a valuable resource for individuals looking for local work at this time.

For the most up-to-date COVID-19 information, follow Richland County Health & Human Services on Facebook or consult the following websites:

- ❖ Richland County:
  https://covid.co.richland.wi.us
- ❖ Wisconsin Department of Health Services:
  www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19
- ❖ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
  www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/

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