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Guidance for High Risk Population

Date: March 16, 2020

From: Celia Sutton-Pado, Sierra County Health Officer

As of March 16, 2020, there are **ZERO** confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Sierra County.

To protect public health, specifically individuals identified as high risk, and slow the rate of transmission of COVID-19, the Governor of California, in coordination with The California Department of Public Health issued a press release strongly recommending those who are 65 or older and vulnerable to COVID-19 to self-isolate.

Therefore, Sierra County Public Health Agency strongly suggests the following:

- High risk populations including those 65 years and older; those with compromised immune systems and those with chronic medical conditions, such as heart disease, lung disease or diabetes should self-isolate.

What does it mean to Self-isolate?

- **Stay home:** You should restrict activities outside your home, except for getting medical care.
- **Avoid public areas:** Do not go to work, school, or public areas; such as grocery stores, other retail stores and restaurants.
- **Avoid public transportation:** Avoid using public transportation.
- **Stay away from others:** As much as possible, you should stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available.

How to self-isolate?

- Have supplies on hand
- Contact your healthcare provider to ask about obtaining extra necessary medications to have on hand
- If you cannot get extra medications, consider using mail-order for medications.
- Be sure you have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies.
- Stay in touch with others by phone or email. You may need to ask for help from friends, family and neighbors to assist with running errands, replenishing supplies and emotional support.
- Plan activities that create a sense of change and purpose, such as rearranging the furniture or cleaning the house, can help create stimulation and mental well-being.

What will this achieve?

The elderly (65 and older), those with compromised immune systems and those with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk for complications if contracted COVID-19. The timely implementation of aggressive strategies that create social distance and those that reduce close contact of people has proven effective in prior pandemics at delaying rates of transmission and reducing illness and death.

By decreasing the prevalence of disease across California and in Sierra County we will:

- Reduce the number of Sierra County residents who contract COVID-19 before an effective treatment or vaccine is available.
- Protect those most likely to experience severe symptoms, such as older residents and those with underlying chronic conditions.
- Preserve and protect our health care delivery system, including our health care workforce, so that they can care for the least healthy individuals in the community for any medical condition, not just COVID-19.

What is Social Distancing and how is it achieved?

Social distancing is a practice recommended by public health officials to stop or slow down the spread of contagious diseases. It requires the creation of physical space between individuals who may spread certain infectious diseases. The key is to minimize the number of gatherings as much as possible and to achieve space between individuals when events or activities cannot be modified, postponed, or canceled.

Achieving space between individuals of approximately six feet is advisable. Additionally, there is a particular focus on creating space between individuals who have come together on a one-time or rare basis and who have very different travel patterns such as those coming from multiple countries, states or counties.

What is the role of the community?

- Practice universal precautions: Washing hands with soap and water; avoiding touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands; practice social distancing; and staying away from work, school or other people if you become sick with respiratory symptoms like fever and cough
- Assist those in the community who are being requested to self-isolate; such as high risk population
- Religious services be temporarily canceled or have protocols in place to create social distancing and practice universal precautions. Provide alternate service option for high risk population.

How long will these limitations apply?

At this time, it is unknown how long these limitations will apply. As with all guidance that relates to COVID-19 response, Sierra County Public Health will revisit this guidance on a regular basis to evaluate the continued need for it, or any changes to elements of it and continue to adhere to direction from Governor of California and California Department of Public Health.

For additional information, please visit Sierra County's website: <http://sierracounty.ca.gov/582/Coronavirus-COVID-19>, or CDPH: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>, or CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>