FOUR NEW ADDITIONAL COVID-19 CASES ANNOUNCED IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY

The Williamson County and Cities Health District (WCCHD) announced four new positive COVID-19 cases on Thursday, bringing the County’s total to seven. A confirmed case reported on March 18 was transferred to Travis County’s jurisdiction for monitoring.

The four individuals are:

- A male in his 30s with known international travel history
- A female in her 30s with known international travel history
- A female in her 40s with exposure to an area with community spread
- A male in his 50s with unknown exposure history

At this stage information is very limited, WCCHD and Williamson County will share more as it becomes available and necessary to protect the health of the public.

“We have prepared for the fact that more confirmed cases would come to Williamson County, so we are ready. We will continue our essential operations and serving the residents of Williamson County while adhering to more stringent social distancing policies. Technology is being utilized to a greater extent in order to fulfill our daily tasks under the new criteria,” said County Judge Bill Gravell. “We continue to ask everyone to follow the preventative measures and be prepared, not scared.”

Health Privacy protection laws only permit the release of limited patient information. WCCHD is unable to release any additional patient information. Investigations conducted by the department will identify potential contacts exposed to the virus. The department will provide close contacts guidance about the virus and monitor them for the development of symptoms.

"The most important things that we can do as individuals to avoid exposure and avoid exposing others should be the main focus as a community," said Dr. Lori Palazzo, WCCHD Medical Director and Williamson County Health Authority. “Social distancing is crucial - older adults and those with underlying health conditions need to stay in their homes. All others need to stop going out in public places for non-essentials reasons and spreading the asymptomatic virus."

She recommends:

- Staying home when you are sick, except to get medical care. Using telemedicine if possible.
- Covering your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, then throwing the tissue in the trash.
• Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
• When you can't wash your hands with soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
• Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
• Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
• Practicing social distancing - keeping a space of 6 feet between you and others; and avoiding any type of mass gatherings.
• Getting a flu shot. (Although the flu shot does not protect against COVID-19, it is flu season.)

To ensure the health and safety of all our residents, County Judge Bill Gravell issued a disaster declaration on March 14 to activate the emergency management plan, which allowed the County to allocate resources, utilize personnel and enact procedures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Williamson County. It also allows for state assistance to be requested if local resources and mutual aid are insufficient. Under the local disaster declaration, the County Judge is given the authority to exercise any and all necessary powers set out under the Texas Disaster Act of Texas Government Code Chapter 418.

If you have symptoms of respiratory illness including cough, fever and shortness of breath, please contact your health care provider. It is important to call ahead before arriving at a clinic, urgent care or emergency department to avoid potential spread. For more information, visit www.wcchd.org/COVID-19. For information on the county response to COVID-19, go to www.wilco.org/COVID-19.

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