FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 27, 2020

Hamilton County Public Health Prepares for Coronavirus

In Conjunction with State and Federal Resources

HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO – Hamilton County Public Health (HCPH), as one of 113 local health departments in Ohio, is part of a highly-organized prevention and response effort for the coronavirus, or COVID-19 outbreak. The agency is in lockstep with the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in managing protocols for prevention and if necessary, mitigation of cases of COVID-19.

“As of today, there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Ohio,” says Greg Kesterman, interim health commissioner at HCPH. “We are working diligently with resources at the local, state and federal levels to make sure our response plan is up-to-date, our partners are well-informed, and the healthcare community knows exactly how to handle any eventuality.”

Current responsibilities for local health departments are working together across Ohio to monitor individuals returning from travel in China and other countries. ODH is informed of travelers returning to Ohio. If a traveler returns to Hamilton County, HCPH is responsible for monitoring and quarantining those individuals for 14
days – the incubation period for COVID-19. Monitoring includes daily temperature checks while the local health department is in constant communication with those quarantined. If a person develops symptoms during the quarantine period, HCPH helps them get the care they need.

“To date, we have been responsible for monitoring people who fit the travel criteria established by CDC,” Kesterman says. “Fortunately, we have had no confirmations of COVID-19.”

Another important public health responsibility is contact tracing. If an individual develops symptoms, health department staff track and monitor individuals with whom they may have had contact. These could include family members, friends, work colleagues or other individuals.

HCPH and health departments across the State are in constant contact with ODH. There are regular conference calls with the State and health care facilities to share current information and guidance and to stay on top of ever-changing challenges with the response to coronavirus.

“The actions that we’re all taking are very similar to our work during the Ebola response in 2014,” Kesterman adds. “What we’re doing is very typical public health work. We update plans, track and monitor those potentially exposed and then put protocols into place to prevent the risk of spreading the virus.”

According to the CDC, imported cases of COVID-19 in travelers have been detected in the U.S. Person-to-person spread of COVID-19 also has been seen among close contacts of returned travelers from Wuhan, China but at this time, this virus is NOT currently spreading in the community in the United States. The potential public health threat posed by COVID-19 is high, both globally and to the United States.

But individual risk is dependent on exposure. For the general American public, who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus at this time, the immediate health risk
from COVID-19 is considered low. Under current circumstances, certain people will have an increased risk of infection, for example healthcare workers caring for patients with COVID-19 and other close contacts of persons with COVID-19.

Flu is currently a greater threat to public health. HCPH urges everyone to get a flu shot. It’s not too late and at the very least, the vaccine can help lessen symptoms and reduce their duration.

For more information on flu and COVID-19, visit: www.hcph.org; www.cdc.gov; or odh.ohio.gov.

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*Hamilton County Public Health works to assure the 480,000 citizens living outside the cities of Cincinnati, Norwood and Springdale are safe from disease, injury and contamination.*