PRESS RELEASE
February 27, 2020

CDC CONFIRMS POSSIBLE FIRST INSTANCE OF COVID-19 COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION IN CALIFORNIA
No Cases of Covid-19 in Santa Barbara County

(SANTA BARBARA, Calif.) -- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed yesterday a possible first case of person-to-person transmission of COVID-19 in California in the general public. The individual is a resident of Solano County and is receiving medical care in Sacramento County. The individual had no known exposure to the virus through travel or close contact with a known infected individual. There are no cases of COVID-19 in Santa Barbara County at this time.

California has a strong health care system and public health infrastructure. California has prepared for the potential spread of diseases, such as H1N1, in the past and is prepared and actively responding to the potential community spread of COVID-19. Contact tracing in this case has already begun.

The health risk from novel coronavirus to the public remains low at this time. While COVID-19 has a high transmission rate, it has a low mortality rate. From the international data we have, of those who have tested positive for COVID-19, approximately 80 percent do not exhibit symptoms that would require hospitalization. There have been no confirmed deaths related to COVID-19 in the United States to date. California is carefully assessing the situation as it evolves.

Locally in Santa Barbara County, the Public Health Department (PHD) is working closely with its healthcare partners to assure screening, testing, and care for potential COVID-19 patients is available across the county. The PHD is providing ongoing guidance and alerts to healthcare partners in coordination with the California Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Healthcare partners, including EMS providers, are participating in weekly teleconferences with the PHD to assure that procedures are in place at each facility to safely screen patients and protect healthcare workers and the community.

-MORE-
“Public Health has been working diligently to prepare for the possibility of a COVID-19 case in our county. The health of our Santa Barbara County community is our top priority and although we’ve seen a possible case of community transmission in our state, the risk to our County community remains low at this time,” shared Van Do-Reynoso, Director for the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department. “We will continue to keep community members and local health care providers informed as we know more.”

As in any public health emergency, the California Department of Public Health’s Emergency Operations Center has been actively coordinating response efforts across the state and preparing for possible community transmission. California continues to prepare and respond in coordination with federal and local partners. This would be the first known instance of person-to-person transmission in the general public in the United States. Previously known instances of person-to-person transmission in the United States include one instance in Chicago, Illinois, and one in San Benito County, California. Both cases were after close, prolonged interaction with a family member who returned from Wuhan, China and had tested positive for COVID-19.

As of today, including this new case, California has had 7 travel-related cases, one close contact case, and now one community transmission.

As with any virus, especially during the flu season, there are a number of steps you can take to protect your health and those around you:

• Washing hands with soap and water.
• Avoiding touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
• Avoiding close contact with people who are sick are all ways to reduce the risk of infection with a number of different viruses.
• Staying away from work, school or other people if you become sick with respiratory symptoms like fever and cough.

For more information about COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019), please visit the SBCPHD website.