

State of Vermont

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Dear DA Executive and Medical Directors,

As you are aware, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is providing regular updates on the current status of the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2, which can cause the disease COVID-19). The CDC warns that the coronavirus is extremely likely to spread in communities across the U.S., and is providing guidance on how to prepare for its arrival and to help prevent further spread.

We recognize the concern among the DAs, which care for our most vulnerable Vermonters. DMH would like to take this opportunity to share some information that may be helpful as you consider next steps.

CURRENT SARS-CoV-2 STATUS IN VERMONT

As of March 3, there are no known cases of people with COVID-19 in Vermont and the risk to residents generally is still low, but health officials expect there will be cases in our state. The Vermont Department of Health (VDH) is currently monitoring 84 people who have recently returned from travel in the affected countries of South Korea, Italy, Iran, Japan and China – and will now begin monitoring anyone who has had close contact with an individual in New Hampshire with COVID-19. Seventeen people have completed monitoring so far without any signs of illness.

At the direction of Governor Phil Scott, Vermont Emergency Management has assembled an interagency task force to support the overall public health response and further prepare for the likelihood of COVID-19 cases in Vermont.

COVID-19 INFORMATION SOURCES

Below are two information sources about coronavirus, one from the CDC and the other from VDH:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/preparing-individuals-communities.html>
- <https://vermont.us20.list-manage.com/track/click?u=d01e01e425fa1e66c26167761&id=df15f041b2&e=13b7695c9b>

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES VERMONTERS SHOULD TAKE

Because COVID-19, and all respiratory illnesses, are most commonly spread through respiratory droplets, the Health Department is urging everyone to take the same precautions as those recommended to prevent the spread of influenza.

- *Continue basic hygiene protocols* – wash your hands, cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve, and stay home if you notice symptoms
- *Implement a strong disinfecting protocol* - wipe down surfaces with disinfectant frequently
- *Check the information website sources listed above daily for updates*

We know that many of you may be thinking about N95 masks or similar face coverage. DMH will not be providing masks for DA staff based on the guidance we have received, which is that masks are not a particularly effective strategy for protecting individuals from contracting the coronavirus.

Please forward this information to staff and let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Tom Weigel, MD, MBA
Medical Director, Department of Mental Health

