



Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

Dear State of Missouri Team Members:

Our state has been purposefully preparing for future COVID-19 cases should we have to face that in the future because we always hope for the best but prepare for the worst.

Earlier this year we received a 'High' ranking for our emergency preparedness from Trust for America's Health. Our incident management team has been meeting daily since Jan. 27, and we have also been engaging with federal governmental leadership, national thought leaders and local public health agencies to maximize Missouri's preparedness for the possible spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus should a future case be diagnosed in Missouri. Governor Mike Parson and his staff, along with the leaders of each of our 16 state departments, have been very engaged with us as new information about this disease develops. This afternoon, DHSS, Cabinet and representatives from SEMA and all 16 state departments are gathering together for what will be invaluable discussion which will further our preparedness measures as one unified team.

We have assessed upwards of a hundred people here in Missouri, and conducted testing for fewer than 15 of them. They have all tested negative for SARS-CoV-2, the virus which causes COVID-19. The risk to the general public in Missouri, especially without history of travel to China, is still considered low at this time.

It is important to know what to do if you have concerns about an illness during this outbreak. DHSS encourages people to call their health care provider or local health department if they are at risk for COVID-19 to inform them of travel history and symptoms. They will give you instructions on how to get care without exposing other people to your illness. While sick, avoid contact with people and delay any travel to reduce the possibility of spreading illness to others.

With concerns in the media and among our citizens gaining more attention, it is very important to stress that the most effective method for preventing the spread of virus is using simple good hygiene, especially handwashing.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

Please take 2 minutes to watch this video from the CDC which answers important questions about handwashing and hand sanitizer.



Now, let's talk about facemasks. As the CDC has said, they are NOT effective in preventing the general public from becoming infected with COVID-19. CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

As we prepare for the worst, but hope for the best, please feel free to review Missouri's pandemic influenza plan which has served as a great platform to guide us through our current response efforts. We have also established a website at www.health.mo.gov/coronavirus to provide information and links to resources and education material on COVID-19.

Finally, it is our mission at DHSS to protect health and keep the people of Missouri safe, and that very much includes you. We thank you for your service to the citizens of Missouri. We will continue to implement measures to keep you and your loved ones safe, and we are committed to providing you with updates as this situation evolves.

Dr. Randall Williams, Director

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