



MEDIA CONTACT:
Laurel Johnson, PIO
O: 231-347-5628
l.johnson@nwhealth.org
www.nwhealth.org

April 21, 2020

**Health Department of Northwest Michigan is Working with Area Partners to
Monitor and Address Rising Cases in Otsego County**

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan continues to work with area healthcare partners, including long-term care facilities, during the current COVID-19 response. We understand that the rise in confirmed COVID-19 cases in Otsego County can be scary for our community. In part, this sharp increase in confirmed cases in Otsego County is related to cluster of COVID-19 within a local congregate living facility. Long-term care facility residents and employees are being monitored for COVID-19 symptoms and have access to rapid testing should they need it.

“We have established a dedicated team to work with congregate living settings, including long term care facilities, in protecting their vulnerable residents as well as their staff,” said Lisa Peacock, Health Officer for the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. “Our team is focused on assisting them with important protective measures such as enhanced and timely reporting of cases, PPE supplies and training, as well as prompt support and assistance for critical infection control measures.”

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is committed to ensuring long-term care facilities and other congregate living settings have access to the support and resources they need to keep their clients, residents, and employees safe. Our goal is to ensure that these high-risk settings have what they need to adequately prevent and mitigate any potential clusters of COVID-19. We want to reassure community members that long-term care facilities, and other congregate living settings, are following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines.

Otsego County government shared, “We are in contact daily with the Health Department of Northwest Michigan, Emergency Management, and our first responders to ensure we are working together to provide up-to-date information, education, resources to best monitor and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. We appreciate the strong partnerships and the tireless work of all those involved in navigating these ever-changing circumstances. During this pandemic, our community has experienced a couple of specific circumstances which have resulted in higher numbers of confirmed cases in Otsego County compared to surrounding counties. Our highly trained professionals are responding to and addressing these circumstances as quickly and comprehensively as possible. We are truly grateful to our residents for your continued vigilance in practicing social distancing and prioritizing public health for the entire Otsego County community.”

To our residents, we extend our gratitude. While there is a lot we don’t know about this novel coronavirus, what we are doing in Northern Michigan seems to be working. The science is clear that keeping our physical distance is the best tool we have to slow the spread of COVID-19 and ensure our health care system has capacity to care for those who need it.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, visit nwhealth.org.

###