



Public Health
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Knox County Health Department

1361 West Fremont Street • Galesburg, Illinois 61401

MEDIA RELEASE

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KNOX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT AND COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER LIMIT SERVICES; HOWEVER, ESSENTIAL SERVICES REMAIN AVAILABLE TO PUBLIC

Knox County, IL –Knox County Health Department officials announced today, that, while at the time of this media release Knox County has not had a resident test positive for COVID-19, the Health Department is still taking necessary actions in collaboration with community partners to ensure the health and safety of the Knox County community.

“It is important for the residents of Knox County to follow the guidance and structure being set up by State and National officials, and reiterated by local public health and its partners,” stated Michele Gabriel, Public Health Administrator for the Knox County Health Department. Locally, the Health Department is working diligently to educate and provide care to the community necessary to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Mrs. Gabriel reiterated that, “the best defense against spread of the virus is still for everyone to establish the habits of regular handwashing, avoiding touching their face, cleaning any areas regularly touched by other people such as handrails, light switches, and door handles, and practicing social distancing.”

Michele Gabriel also notes that it is also of primary importance that individuals follow recommendations and remain at home when they can and avoid going out unnecessarily during this time. As part of this recommendation, the Knox County Health Department and Community Health Center has determined it will be canceling all non-essential services beginning Wednesday, March 18, 2020; during this reduction of services, the building will temporarily be open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. “These are difficult decisions that are being made across Knox County, the State, and the Nation,” stated Michele Gabriel, “the Health Department does not trivialize the availability of our services to this community; however, at this time the best public health recommendation is for this community to remain at home when they can, and not go out unnecessarily so that spread of the COVID-19 virus remains slow, our health care systems remain strong, and our community remains healthy.”

Any individual with an appointment already scheduled with the Health Department or Community Health Center will receive notification that their appointment has been canceled and Department staff will contact individuals to reschedule those appointments once the Department is confident that restoring services is in the best interest of the community members.

The services which the Health Department has determined essential and will remain available for community members, include, WIC, LIHEAP, acute medical care visits, emergency dental services, and behavioral health services. However, participants coming in should be aware that to protect the health of those the Department serves, as well as the staff, there will be differences in how the services are delivered. Individuals will be notified of these changes during reminder calls or when they arrive at the Health Department and Community Health Center.



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“Again,” noted Gabriel, “these changes in how services are being delivered are being implemented to protect the health of the public and staff, and we are asking for the support of the community in temporarily adapting to these changes so we are able to keep essential services available to the community members who need them.” The Department itself will follow recommendations from the CDC while it remains open; both visitors and staff entering the building will be screened upon arrival for COVID-19 related symptoms; and staff will practice social distancing throughout the Department.

Additionally, anyone who has an appointment at the Health Department or Community Health Center is asked to call before coming to inform our patient service representatives of any respiratory or COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath), so that our health care providers can prepare for your arrival.

Health Department staff remain available for questions through the Knox County Health Department and Knox Community Health Center Facebook page and by phone at 309-344-2224. Information and links are also available on the Health Department webpage at www.knoxcountyhealth.org.