

## Letter to the community

June 2, 2020

In just the last few days, so many things have happened, and you have probably been following reports in the news and on social media. This news just reiterates that we need to continue our efforts to prevent COVID-19. Public Health is working with the long-term care facilities involved with cases of COVID-19 among residents and staff to make sure the outbreak does not continue to spread within the facilities or out to the community.

We entered Phase 2 on Wednesday, May 27, as we became aware of a potential long-term care outbreak. Since then, we have had 22 new cases reported for Thurston County. As of noon on Monday June 1, we have 155 confirmed cases in Thurston County. Of these latest 22 cases, 15 are related to the long-term care outbreak in one facility, two are related to the outbreak in the adult family home, two are household contacts of a previous case, and three are community acquired.

We continue to investigate the two outbreaks. Public Health performed testing of both facilities last week and will have a second round of testing next week to make sure we identify all potential cases. In Facility 1 (assisted living and independent living), Public Health did 202 tests and some staff members received testing from their own provider. One resident is currently hospitalized. A total of 11 staff members and eight residents tested positive. In Facility 2 (adult family home) two staff members and one resident tested positive. The resident was on hospice and sadly, passed away, not related to COVID.

Local public health provides guidance for immediate control of the outbreak, determining the extent of the outbreak, and establishing measures to prevent the further spread of the disease. Medical care is provided by individual health care providers. We asked the State Department of Health, Healthcare-Associated Infections unit to assist with making recommendations for infection control at the facility. The State Department of Social and Health Services has regulatory authority over long-term care facilities and are involved in the investigation.

This is a good wake-up call for all of us to remember that we have community transmission of COVID-19. There are times when we might be exposed to COVID without realizing it. I cannot over-emphasize the importance of maintaining social distance. Staying home and isolating yourself if you are sick will prevent spread of the disease. Covering your cough or using a face cover will help to contain any secretions coming from your nose or mouth. Wash your hands before and after taking off your face cover. Wash your hands before touching your face. Stay at least 6 feet away from other people and if you cannot do that, wear a face covering.

We must help each other prevent further exposure to and spread of COVID. The virus needs to infect people to keep it alive. For those who have been wearing face coverings and practicing social distancing, thank you for your efforts. We want our county opened back up. We want everyone to stay safe from this disease. Let's work together.

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