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MEDIA RELEASE

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COVID – WEEK 23 UPDATE

Since the beginning of the COVID Pandemic response on March 2nd, Kit Carson County has tested and screened 1,033 people. Total positive case count since March 2nd is 62.

Since the recent outbreak that began June 30th, 336 Kit Carson County residents have been tested and 82 non-residents have been tested. Updated current positive case count from June 30, 2020 through August 4, 2020 is 30. Of the positive cases, one is currently hospitalized in an ICU in the Denver area. Sixteen are active cases currently in isolation and 20 have been placed in quarantined. Fourteen people have been release from isolation.

As a reminder, "isolation" refers to no movement from a person's home or contact with anyone for 14 days due to a positive test result. Isolation protects others from a known positive case, so that individual is excluded from work, shopping, having visitors, etc. "Quarantine" means a person has had a known exposure to a close contact and that individual needs to remain at home as much as possible while watching for signs of disease for 14 days after the exposure. Quarantine is less strict and allows some movement from the home for essentials such as important/needed doctor's appointments. Being in quarantine also excludes people from going to work or school. While in quarantine, people should distance themselves from others, and wear a mask when in close contact with someone outside of their household. ***Masks protect others from us!*** Not everyone becomes symptomatic and could be spreading the virus and not even know it.

All known cases who have requested testing and were connected to an event at the Elk's Club in Goodland, Kansas on July 18th have received their test results. There is a 14 day window for showing symptoms from being directly exposed at that particular event, which ended August 1st. All positive cases that are discovered after August 1st

are considered "secondary" infections and community acquired. It is these secondary infections that cause concern because they are more difficult to identify early, thus increasing the chances of spreading the virus even more broadly in the community. This is why face coverings are a good way to protect everyone from coming into contact with COVID. It is impossible to know if you are coming into contact with an asymptomatic carrier of the virus. If you are sick and believe you may be infected with COVID, self-quarantine for 14 days from onset of symptoms and do not go to work or school. Please notify your employer if you believe you may have infected fellow co-workers. Do not go to a store to shop. If you need assistance with basic necessities, call the health department and they will assist you.

Testing for COVID is available at the health department Monday through Friday. Friday is "free Friday" and has been set aside for asymptomatic people who have no insurance. Free Friday is limited to the first 10 people who request being tested and is first come first serve. An appointment is required. To set up an appointment for a COVID test, call 719-346-7158.

Guidelines for Return to Work After Testing Positive for COVID

On July 31, 2020, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment in concert with the Centers for Disease Control released updated guidelines on return to work for those who have been placed in isolation. Except for rare situations, a test-based strategy should not be used to determine when to release a case from isolation or to return to work/school. In order to be released from isolation and return to work/school, the following criteria must be met by those who were *symptomatic*:

- At least 10 days have passed since symptom onset **and**
- At least 24 hours have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medication **and**
- Other symptoms have improved

The following criteria must be met by those who were positive but *asymptomatic:*

- At least 10 days have passed since the date of the first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test unless they have subsequently developed symptoms. If symptoms develop during isolation, the isolation period should be restarted based on the symptom onset date as above.

Having another COVID test to confirm a negative is NOT recommended except in very rare circumstances and for healthcare workers. Employers should use the criteria above and certified as being met by the KCC Health Department or a primary care provider before allowing their employees to return to work. A letter from the health department will be provided should an employer require one. The employee will be provided a letter upon their request by the health department.

Guidance released for Cases and Outbreaks in Schools:

In addition to school restart plans, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment issued guidelines to assist local public health and school officials to react to and contain cases and outbreaks that occur in the school setting. Definitions regarding confirmed and suspected outbreaks are provided in the guidance and drive how the school will then proceed. For a complete accounting of the guidance, each school has appended it to their individual school reopening plans.

- One student with confirmed COVID-19 within a school would result in the following action:
    - Student stays home until released from isolation
    - Class/cohort stays home for a 14 day quarantine
    - If school doesn't cohort classes, anticipate a grade-wide or school-wide dismissal for several days
- One teacher/staff member with confirmed COVID-19
    - Teacher/staff stays home until released from isolation
    - Close contacts must quarantine for 14 days
    - Classroom/cohort must quarantine if the teacher has a confirmed case
- Two or more people from separate households with confirmed COVID-19 in a single classroom or cohort
    - All students and staff with COVID-19 stay home until released from isolation
    - Class/cohort must quarantine for 14 days

If outbreak and exposures are limited to one classroom or cohort, school closure should not be necessary

- Two or more outbreak classrooms/cohorts
    - All students and staff with COVID-19 stay home until released from isolation
    - All classrooms/cohorts, including teachers/staff, must quarantine for 14 days.
    - Consider school closure, especially if evidence of transmission between classrooms/cohorts within the school
- 5% or more students/staff have confirmed COVID-19 within a 14 day period
    - School closure for 14 days

Suspected Outbreak: 10% absenteeism for any reason

- School collaborates with local public health to determine whether there is an outbreak of COVID-19 or another pathogen (like influenza)

School Surveillance

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is establishing an Absenteeism School Surveillance Program that will begin in August to collect data on absenteeism due to illness among teachers, staff and students. The State and Local Health Department will be working together to keep in close contact with all schools to quickly identify any problems that may be developing. Schools are required to report all outbreaks to their local health department and/or CDPHE within four hours per statute. Schools must report both suspected and confirmed outbreaks.

Precautions for Parents and Schools to Consider

- Recommend annual flu vaccine for staff and students
- Stay home with sick!
- Teach and practice cough/sneeze etiquette including covering them with elbow or tissue, washing hands after coughing/sneezing and properly disposing of soiled tissues.
- Teach and practice proper hand-washing. Schedule times for hand-washing during the day.
- Practice surface cleaning with the emphasis on high-touch areas and surfaces.
- Educate students, parents and staff on what to do if someone is sick including:
  - Identifying symptoms
  - Separating students in the event of illness occurring at school
  - Knowing when to see a doctor and where to seek treatment