



## Mayor Brindle's COVID-19 Update March 21, 2020



### **CONFIRMED CASES**

As of today, there are 1,327 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Jersey. These include one additional case in Westfield -- a 72 year-old male. This brings the official count from the Board of Health to 11 cases.

### **HEALTH DEPARTMENT UPDATE**

In response to some questions I've received about the process surrounding identification of positive COVID-19 cases, I want to share some additional details.

It is the responsibility of the local Health Department to first review and confirm all test results. Residents do not need to self-report, as the Health Department follows up on each result received, even though timing may be that a patient receives notification before we do. It is important to remember that we need to confirm results on our end before an investigation begins.

Once the Health Department receives a positive COVID-19 result through their electronic system, an interview of the positive case is then conducted to obtain information on demographics, signs, symptoms and possible exposure sources (for example work, travel, exposure to another confirmed COVID 19 case). The resident is then provided guidance on social distancing and other infection control measures. The resident is also given the opportunity to ask any questions they may have and to add anything they feel is important about their particular case.

Once the interview is complete, the Health Department focuses on any close contacts the confirmed case had. A close contact is defined as anyone who has been less than six feet apart from the case for more than ten minutes. It is not defined as brief casual contact. Close contacts are notified and provided information for quarantine, with an emphasis placed on those contacts who are high risk. An example of a high risk contact would be someone who has a co-morbidity, is an elder adult, or someone who is a health care worker.

While concern about exposures from visiting supermarkets and other locations where social distancing remains difficult is understandable, it is important to remember that the most effective transmission takes place during prolonged close contact and not casual interaction. It is also important to remember not to leave your house if you do not feel well, even if you do not have a fever. Our Westfield Regional Health Officer, Megan Avallone, continues to stress how important it truly is to stay in your home unless you absolutely must go out. We are urging residents not to gather with others and to pay attention to how you feel. If you start to develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19, please contact your health care provider by phone.

As a community, we will get through this, but we need to all work together first. We can start that process by each doing our part: staying home, not allowing visitors, washing our hands, and staying

away from others if we become sick. Be assured that the Health Department is working around the clock to keep each of the communities we serve safer and healthier.

## **FEDERAL AND STATE UPDATES**

- Today, Governor Murphy signed an Executive Order directing all residents to stay at home until further notice. The order provides for certain exceptions, such as obtaining essential goods or services, seeking medical attention, reporting to work, or engaging in outdoor activities.
- In effort to strengthen the existing social distancing measures in place, the order also prohibits all gatherings of individuals, such as parties, celebrations, or other social events, unless otherwise authorized by the Order. When in public, individuals must practice social distancing and stay at least six feet apart whenever possible. To comply with this directive, the Westfield Police Department will be utilizing all-terrain vehicles to check off-road areas in our parks for group gatherings. While we encourage getting out of the house and taking a walk, please avoid gathering in groups from different households.
- Governor Murphy's Executive Order further directs the closure of all non-essential retail businesses to the public, with the exceptions of:
  - Grocery stores, farmer's markets and farms that sell directly to customers, and other food stores, including retailers that offer a varied assortment of foods comparable to what exists at a grocery store
  - Pharmacies and medical marijuana dispensaries
  - Medical supply stores
  - Gas stations
  - Convenience stores
  - Ancillary stores within healthcare facilities
  - Hardware and home improvement stores
  - Banks and other financial institutions
  - Laundromats and dry-cleaning services
  - Stores that principally sell supplies for children under five years
  - Pet stores
  - Liquor stores
  - Car dealerships, but only for auto maintenance and repair, and auto mechanics
  - Printing and office supply shops
  - Mail and delivery stores.
- Delivery and curbside pick-up from restaurants and non-essential retail are still permitted with best practice social distancing measures in place. We will, however, be closing ice cream trucks, as they are not meeting the standard for social distancing.
- Work at construction sites may continue, as can manufacturing, trucking, and transportation operations. All other retail businesses must close, and all businesses must move to 100% work-from-home wherever possible.
- Hospitals and health care facilities will remain open. Essential public health, safety, and social services will remain accessible.

- The Governor urged those who have homes at the Jersey Shore to NOT go to them at this time. The local infrastructure, especially the health care infrastructure, is not prepared for the influx of part-time residents.
- A COVID-19 testing site will open on Monday at the PNC Bank Arts Center in Holmdel. Any New Jersey resident, regardless of age, who resides within a 50 mile radius of the location who is symptomatic, can be tested.
- Congressman Malinowski has launched a website that outlines important information as it relates to the recently passed federal legislation known as the Families First Corona Virus Response Act. This legislation ensures free coronavirus testing for everyone who needs a test, including the uninsured; two weeks of paid sick leave and up to three months of family and medical leave for eligible workers; enhanced Unemployment Insurance; expanded access to economic disaster loans for small businesses; and additional support for SNAP, student meals, seniors' meals, and food banks. More information can be found at <https://malinowski.house.gov/coronavirus>.

## **LOCAL UPDATES**

The We Love Local fund is off to a fabulous start! Thanks to the generosity of the community, more than \$25,000 has been raised so far; with the first \$15,000 matched by the Westfield United Fund, we now have over \$40,000 in just 24 hours to assist independently owned Westfield businesses. If you have not yet donated, you can do so on the Westfield United Fund's website. Very special thanks to resident Giao Williams, who volunteered her artistic talent to create the fund's logo. So far, the story of John Rzeznik's porch concert has grabbed the attention of Hollywood Life, NJ News 12, BBC America, ABC News Radio, NJ.com, and CNN.

Don't forget to follow our Virtual Rec Department on Facebook (@WestfieldRecreation). They have kicked off their Chalk the Walk activity for kids this weekend, and have lots more lined up over the coming days.

I know that the evolving nature of information about this situation is not easy, but please know our top priority alongside public health remains keeping you informed in a timely and accurate manner.