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Gov. Beshear Announces Three Additional Individuals Test Positive for Coronavirus Disease 2019 in Kentucky

Latest patients in Jefferson and Fayette counties with a second case in Harrison County

FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 8, 2020) – Today, Governor Andy Beshear announced three additional people in Kentucky have tested positive for the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), bringing the total to four in the state. The latest cases are in Jefferson and Fayette counties with a second person diagnosed in Harrison County. All four patients are in isolation.

Gov. Beshear confirmed the three additional cases after health officials received the positive test results late Sunday. With those cases being confirmed Sunday afternoon, no additional information is available at this time on the latest patients.

Leaders from the affected communities will join Gov. Beshear in Frankfort at 8:45 a.m. Monday to share the latest information with Kentuckians. The governor spoke to Kentuckians on Facebook live Sunday evening to keep people informed on the latest developments in the state.

"We want to make sure Kentuckians have the information they need to take steps to prevent the spread of the virus," said Gov. Beshear. "While we do have additional cases, which we expected with the way this coronavirus has spread across the nation and world, Kentuckians should know the risk remains relatively low and they should not panic. We can all take proactive steps to reduce the risk of exposure for ourselves, our loved ones and our communities."

As of 5 p.m. Sunday, the state has received results for 21 tests with 17 of those being negative.

The Governor said additional positive tests should be expected.

"We are ready for this," Gov. Beshear said. "We have been preparing with every minute that we have to make sure we can respond and respond appropriately."

Gov. Beshear confirmed the first case on Friday and declared a state of emergency to ensure the state had all necessary resources to respond. The initial patient, who is from Harrison County, is being treated in isolation at the University of Kentucky Chandler Medical Center. The patient was first treated at Harrison Memorial Hospital.

Gov. Beshear has been in constant contact with local officials and with Dr. Steven Stack, Commissioner for the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH), within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), and CHFS Acting Secretary Eric Friedlander.

Guidance for those at risk
Gov. Beshear said Kentuckians should take extra steps to prevent the spread of the virus and, on Saturday, recommended extra precautions for Harrison County residents.

Those who might have come into contact with those who have tested positive should take the following additional precautions.

Social Distancing
Social distancing is recommended for those at higher risk. For a complete list of guidance on social distancing, click here. The guidance includes information for those who might be at increased risk for COVID-19 to take actions to reduce risk of exposure, including:
- Staying at home as much as possible.
- Ensuring adequate supplies of medication, food, and other needs if staying home for prolonged periods of time.
- When going out in public, keeping away from others who are sick, limiting close contact (6 feet away) and washing hands often.
- Avoiding crowds.

Public spaces and buildings
Until more is known from the state's current epidemiological investigations, closing schools and public gatherings is not recommended with four positive cases. However, individual school systems such as Harrison County can make their own decisions about school closures. Harrison County schools have announced they would close from at least March 9 to March 13.

Those who are sick are asked to not visit nursing homes and not to go in to work. Harrison County nursing homes are no longer accepting visitors. At this time, local business do not need to close.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has also issued new guidance for people with higher risk for the virus, which includes older adults and people who have severe chronic medical conditions like heart, lung or kidney disease.

What to do if you feel sick
While Kentuckians' risk of getting the virus is still low, a new state hotline **1.800.722.5725** was announced Saturday to help Kentuckians who have questions or need help.

If Kentuckians have a fever or cough, or need guidance, they should call the hotline. If Kentuckians are having a medical emergency, they should seek help immediately and go to the emergency room.

Response efforts
State and local officials are working together to ensure they have every resource available to help the state respond.

On Friday, March 6, Gov. Beshear declared the state of emergency, which outlines actions the Governor can take to activate the Kentucky Division of Emergency Management within the Department of Military Affairs, the Kentucky Department for Public Health and the Kentucky National Guard.

Currently, the State Health Operations Center is activated at level one – fully activated. The State Emergency Operations Center is also activated.

On Saturday, state and local officials joined Gov. Beshear, Dr. Stack and Secretary Friedlander in Frankfort to brief the public on their preparedness and how they are working together to respond. Those leaders included: Harrison County Judge-Executive Alex Barnett; Cynthiana Mayor James Smith; WEDCO District Health Department Director Dr. Crystal Miller, Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton and Dr. Mark Newman, executive vice president for health affairs at the University of Kentucky.

The officials emphasized the need to stay calm as everyone is coordinating preparedness and response efforts at all levels.

Gov. Beshear also issued an executive order to prohibit price gouging. He is asking Attorney General Daniel Cameron to enforce the price-gouging laws. If anyone has information regarding possible price gouging, they should contact the Office of the Attorney General Consumer Protection hotline at 888-432-9257.

Testing
Gov. Beshear and Dr. Stack said the state would have all of the tests needed. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has also made all of the kits Kentucky needs available and commercial labs have started testing.

The state lab in Frankfort has been conducting COVID-19 testing since Monday, March 2. The Department for Public Health has the ability to process results in a timely manner. Specimens received at the lab by noon each day will be resulted on the same day. Specimens received after noon will be resulted the following day. Currently, Kentuckians can seek testing by consulting with their health care provider.

Sick leave
Gov. Beshear has announced state government is adjusting its sick leave policy to ensure state employees who are sick can stay home – even for new employees who have not accrued leave time. He said the state would make sure those who are sick can stay home and will be covered.

The governor has encouraged businesses to implement similar policies so sick employees, because of financial concerns, do not come to work and expose others.

Prevention
Gov. Beshear said as with any virus, especially during the flu season, there are a number of steps Kentuckians should take to protect their health, including:

- Get a flu shot from your Local Health Department or your family provider.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Click here to watch videos on proper handwashing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and then properly dispose of it.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

More information
Kentuckians can visit kycovid19.ky.gov and cdc.gov/coronavirus for up-to-date information.