



Commonwealth of Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Beth Fisher

502-782-0032

Barbara Fox

502-564-6786, ext.3102

State Health Officials Actively Monitoring for 2019 Novel Coronavirus

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 29, 2020) - With recent cases of 2019 novel coronavirus reported in the U.S. and several other countries, health officials at the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH), within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) are watchful for potential cases within the state and are actively investigating any reports. Kentucky is not reporting any cases of the illness at this time, nor are there any suspected cases.

DPH is working closely with clinicians to make sure providers are aware of and informed about the illness. In addition, DPH wants to ensure providers there is a process in place to determine whether testing is warranted, including consulting with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as needed.

“The Kentucky Department for Public Health works to improve the health and safety of people in Kentucky through prevention, promotion and protection, and our staff also educates Kentuckians about public health concerns like the coronavirus,” said Gov. Andy Beshear. “Even as Kentucky is not under direct threat from this virus, our health

experts are taking proper measures to ensure the public has the most accurate information.”

DPH Deputy Commissioner for Clinical Affairs Dr. Connie White said that this is a very serious public health situation and the virus is being carefully monitored at federal, state and local levels to ensure the public’s health and safety.

“We understand that some people are worried about this virus and how it may impact Kentuckians. Outbreaks of new diseases are always of concern, and with today’s connected world, an outbreak anywhere can be a risk. While the available information suggests a low immediate health risk for the general public, we consider any new infectious disease a serious concern and we are carefully monitoring the evolving situation and taking precautions. Currently the biggest risk we have in Kentucky now for respiratory illness is the flu, which has resulted in 30 deaths so far this season. So we highly encourage everyone who has not received a flu shot to get vaccinated.”

“Based on what has been learned from past outbreaks – including outbreaks of related coronaviruses – finding cases quickly and responding effectively is key,” White said. “Rapid response helps ensure that the ill person receives the care they need, and it lessens the chance of spreading the illness. Fortunately, Kentucky has a strong disease surveillance system in place that includes partnerships with hospital and clinic systems as well as local health departments.”

DPH staff sent an advisory to clinicians statewide on Jan. 22 to update them on the coronavirus and provide guidance on symptoms to look for and actions to take if they think they have a possible case. Health care providers were also asked to alert DPH if a person with recent travel to Wuhan, China, becomes sick with respiratory symptoms. When cases are reported, laboratory samples are collected and submitted to the CDC for confirmatory testing, which can take several days.

“When a new disease is circulating, it’s natural for people to ask what they can do to protect themselves and their families,” added White. “The best guidance at this point is to take the same precautions recommended for avoiding colds and flu: People should stay home when they are sick, cover their cough and practice good hand washing. If you

are planning a trip to China, keep an eye on the news and be aware of this evolving situation. If you have recently returned from a trip to China and are feeling sick, call your health care provider and let them know of your travel and symptoms.”

For more information on the 2019 novel coronavirus visit

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/index.html>.

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.