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For Immediate Release

Mon County COVID-19 totals up to 19; includes 16 Sundale residents

MORGANTOWN, WV (March 25, 2020) — As of Wednesday afternoon, 16 residents and four staff members Sundale Rehabilitation and Long-Term Care in Morgantown have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Because two staff members do not live in Monongalia County, and with addition of the county's first case, which is unrelated to Sundale, that brings the current total number of diagnosed cases of COVID-19 in Monongalia County to 19.

Monongalia County Health Department has been working with Sundale nursing home management and employees and closely monitoring the situation.

“They have been extremely cooperative with this investigation as have the two hospitals,” said Dr. Lee B. Smith, MCHD executive director and county health officer.

The assistance of the West Virginia National Guard was enormously valuable in obtaining samples of residents and staff, Dr. Smith noted. Now the task of contact tracing for those diagnosed with COVID-19 is ramping up in an attempt to slow further transmission.

“Given that there are positive cases in the community, the real busy work for our health department begins, and even though this is work that takes place behind the scenes, it's critically important to identify people who have been exposed and ensure quarantine and testing when necessary,” Dr. Smith said.

Health department employees will be following up on all positive COVID-19 cases that have been confirmed by laboratory testing, interviewing patients to determine contacts after their symptoms began.

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“The health department makes every attempt to contact individuals, which is why we want to reiterate that it is important to give good contact information when registering for the test, including with a working telephone number.”

Monongalia County Health Department has hired an emergency department nurse to assist in the follow-up of individuals who have tested positive, Dr. Smith added.

Anyone who is waiting for tests should remain self-quarantined, making sure to keep safe distances from anyone, including family members with whom they reside. They should not run any errands or make a grocery store trip, even on the way home from a test site. Those who have tested positive for COVID-19 need to observe a strict isolation for 14 days and wear a mask.

In order to slow the highly contagious COVID-19, all residents should follow Gov. Jim Justice’s order to stay at home except for those who work at businesses deemed essential or on approved errands.

Everyone also should wash their hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds, about as long as it takes to sing the chorus of “Take Me Home, Country Roads.” They should also get plenty of rest, cover coughs and sneezes and stay in if sick with any illness, including a common cold.

Other Monongalia County Health Department efforts in the COVID-19 response include:

- Threat Preparedness: Gathering and distributing supplies, including medical masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE);
- Environmental Health: Continuation of routine inspection of restaurants that are still providing take-out and delivery food; as well as coordinating with local schools to pick up perishable food not used because of school closures and taking it to locations where it can be given to those who need it;
- Public Information: Responding to media requests, posting on social media and the COVID-19 web page monchd.org/covid-19.html; and coordination of the COVID-19 Joint Information Center (JIC), which now includes about 65 members. This includes the release of a daily updating press release.

MCHD posts the state COVID-19 numbers each evening, as well as other pertinent COVID-19 information, on the MCHD COVID-19 website and on social media, which includes Facebook and Twitter @WVMCHD and Instagram at wvmchd.

