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Public Health Officials Announce New Presumptive Positive Case of COVID-19 and Provide Updates on Ongoing Investigation and Response

Public advised on important preventative actions

CHICAGO - The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) today announced a new case of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Chicago and provided ongoing guidance to the public to help contain the spread of the virus. The new case, the seventh in Illinois, was detected in a Chicago resident in his 60s who sought medical care. Testing was negative for flu and other viruses, at which point he was tested for COVID-19 and found to be a presumptive positive. The patient is currently hospitalized and is in serious condition.

An investigation by CDPH is still underway but at this point this case has not been linked to any travel or to an already confirmed COVID-19 case.

“While we will continue to learn more about the patient’s history today, the City of Chicago is taking this case of potential community transmission very seriously. As we have enhanced our surveillance efforts and begun testing more people, we expected to find more cases, and I expect that we will continue to identify cases in the days and weeks to come,” said CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady, MD, MPH. “I want to be clear that the news today does not mean there is widespread transmission of COVID-19 occurring in Chicago. It signals how important it is for anyone with fever, cough and respiratory symptoms to stay home, and how important it is for us all to focus on protecting our older residents and those with underlying medical conditions.”

Chicago is enhancing its surveillance efforts and was among the first cities in the U.S. to expand testing. As part of CDC’s community surveillance and in an effort to diagnose new cases of COVID-19 quickly and prevent community spread, several emergency departments in Chicago, as well as others across Illinois, are testing a sample of patients who present with influenza-like symptoms for COVID-19. Specimens that are negative for flu are tested for novel coronavirus infection.

In addition, patients who are hospitalized with serious respiratory disease who test negative for flu and other viruses can be tested for COVID-19 through the public health laboratory, and that is how this case was detected.

“Community spread is being detected in a growing number of countries and in parts of the United States,” said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. “Public health officials in Illinois have been preparing for the spread of COVID-19 for weeks. Illinois was the first state to start testing locally and all three IDPH labs have been testing specimens. The State of Illinois will continue to use every tool at its disposal to protect the health and safety of our residents.”

This case is not related to the recently confirmed COVID-19 case involving an employee at Jacqueline B. Vaughn Occupational High School in the Portage Park neighborhood. CDPH and Chicago Public Schools (CPS) are investigating that case thoroughly, reaching out to all students, faculty and staff, and



monitoring the health of everyone who might have been exposed. Based on CPDH guidance, CPS has begun a thorough cleaning of Vaughn Occupational and removed the buses that serve Vaughn students for additional cleaning according to CDC-recommended cleaning protocols. In addition, high traffic areas in all schools will also be cleaned, and schools will begin receiving additional cleaning wipes and hand sanitizers beginning Monday.

As a reminder, people who have been at Vaughn since Tuesday, February 25 are being asked to stay home unless seeking medical care or given other direction. This applies to all students, staff, and service providers who were in the building since February 25.

People who were not at Vaughn between February 25 and March 6 do not have restrictions at this time, even if they have been in contact with someone at Vaughn. They can attend work and school, as long as they are not sick.

There are many respiratory viruses that can cause similar symptoms and Chicago continues to see many cases of influenza and other respiratory viruses diagnosed every day. CDPH reminds people experiencing flu-like symptoms to stay home unless seeking necessary medical care. CDPH is working closely with hospitals, providers and other health partners and has been providing guidance on how to identify, report, and test suspect COVID-19 cases.

Current information suggests that person-to-person spread will continue to occur and more cases will be identified in the United States, including in Chicago. As a reminder, practicing everyday preventive actions such as washing your hands often, staying home when sick, and covering your cough, are the most effective ways to prevent the spread of many illnesses, including COVID-19. At this time, there is no recommendation in Chicago to cancel mass gatherings or public events. However, business and community organizations are strongly encouraged to review their existing emergency operations plans, including sick leave policies and telework practices if possible, and to consider strategies for social distancing and modifying large gatherings. And people who are older and have underlying health conditions should consider limiting their travel and avoiding large gatherings. The City of Chicago will continue to monitor the national, international, and local situation carefully and will adjust this guidance as needed, in consultation with state and federal partners.

“Chicago and our state and federal health partners remain diligent in conducting thorough investigations to understand health impacts related to confirmed cases and to continue close monitoring of COVID-19 in the area and abroad to protect the health of residents and visitors,” Dr. Arwady added.

For information about how you, your school, your workplace, and your community can prepare, please visit [Preventing COVID-19 Spread in Communities](#). For general questions about COVID-19, call the hotline at 1-800-889-3931 or email dph.sick@illinois.gov. More information and updates on COVID-19 can be found on the [IDPH website](#), the [CDPH website](#), and the [CDC website](#).

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