

CARTERET COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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Carteret County COVID-19 Changes to Confirmed Case Updates Press Release #25

Beaufort, NC – Effective March 27, 2020, Carteret County officials will only provide updates to the number of confirmed, positive COVID-19 cases in the County if there are changes. Due to the updated testing recommendations from the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), the number of confirmed cases reported will not accurately represent the number of cases within the County as not everyone with symptoms will be tested. Stephanie Cannon, Carteret County Health Director, explained in our previous press release that, “At this time, testing is most important for people that are seriously ill, such as those in the hospital, in a high-risk setting like a long-term care facility or nursing home, and health care workers and other first responders caring for those with more serious infections.”

Some people are at higher risk of getting very sick with COVID-19. People within the following high-risk groups should contact their doctor if they develop a fever or cough:

- Are 65 years and older
- Live in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- Have a high-risk condition that includes: Chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, heart disease with complications, compromised immune system, severe obesity, or other underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, such as diabetes, renal failure or liver disease.

People who are pregnant should be monitored since they are known to be at risk for severe viral illness. However, to date, data on COVID-19 has not shown increased risk for severe illness.

The expanded testing criteria was recommended for several reasons:

1) The nation faces a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE). Limiting testing ensures critical supplies are available to health care providers and hospitals caring for people needing medical attention.

2) According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), most people who are infected with COVID-19 will recover without needing medical care. Since there is no treatment for COVID-19, a test result will not change the recommendation for those with mild symptoms. If you are sick with COVID-19 or believe you may have the virus, you are being asked to self-isolate and stay at home until you can answer “yes” to all three questions: 1) Has it been at least 7 days since you first had symptoms? 2) Have you been without fever for three days (72 hours) without any medicine for fever? 3) Are your other symptoms improved? Because those with mild illness will be asked to stay at home rather than coming into the doctor’s office to be tested, the confirmed case count does not paint

a reliable picture of COVID-19's spread within our community. Testing is most important for people who are seriously ill, in the hospital, in high-risk settings, such as nursing homes or long-term care facilities, and health care workers and other first responders caring for those with COVID-19.

3) Individuals with mild symptoms leaving their homes to get tested may expose themselves to COVID-19 if they do not already have it. If the individual does have COVID-19, it can be spread to others, including those who are high-risk and health care providers.

We expect to see additional recommendations from the CDC and NCDHHS as they learn more about COVID-19. As always, the County will keep you abreast of any updated or revised recommendations as they become available.

Ms. Cannon advises, "This weekend, we will have beautiful, springtime weather, but now is not the time to let down our guard. County officials continue to stress the importance of remaining at home as much as possible, eliminating any unnecessary travel in and out of the County, practicing social distancing measures, and employing preventive measures (e.g. washing hands, covering coughs/sneezes, and regularly cleaning/disinfecting commonly touched surfaces). We must all do our part to slow the spread of COVID-19 in Carteret County and North Carolina."

For more information on COVID-19, please visit www.ncdhhs.gov or call the Citizen's Inquiry Hotline at 252-726-7060.

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