FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Directed Health Measures in Place for Washington Counties

Through enactment of Directed Health Measures (DHM), Three Rivers Public Health Department, in conjunction with local law enforcement agencies, have begun enforcement of public social gathering limitations.

On Monday, March 16, 2020, Nebraska Governor Ricketts provided guidance to help limit potential exposure to COVID-19 by limiting public social gathering to 10 or less people through the end of March. Two days later, the second confirmed case of “community spread” of COVID-19 was identified in Douglas County, reinforcing the urgent need for wide-spread social distancing strategies.

As a result, the Chief Medical Officer for the Nebraska Department of Health and Humans Services executed the Directed Health Measures (DHM) effective today, March 19, 2020. Three Rivers Public Health Department has implemented these measures to minimize close proximity in-person interaction in enclosed spaces, which is the main means of COVID-19 transmission. Three Rivers Public Health Department is authorized to implement these measures as a means of limiting the spread of a pandemic or contagious disease through the State of Nebraska’s regulation 173 NAC 6 – “Directed Health Measures to Prevent or Limit the Spread of Communicable Disease, Illness, or Poisoning.” Directed health measures may be directed to an individual, group of individuals, or a population, or directed to the public at large with regard to identified premises or activities and may also include public and private property.

From now through April 30, 2020, it is critical that scheduled events be modified, cancelled, or postponed. Public gatherings are generally defined as any event that brings together more than 10 patrons, customers or other invitees, excluding staff, in a single room or single space at the same time, including but not limited to, a school, daycare facility (including in-home facilities), gymnasium, salon, fitness center, auditorium, stadium, arena, large event conference room, meeting hall, theater, library, or any other confined indoor or outdoor space. This also includes weddings and funerals, as well as parades, fairs, festivals, concerts and other indoor and outdoor events.

Among other steps, the DHM requires restaurants and bars in these areas to close their dining areas immediately and move to takeout service, delivery, and/or curbside service only until further notice. Additionally, schools in these areas are directed to operate without students in their buildings. This restriction does not apply to school staff working in school buildings.

The health and safety of our community remains the top priority for Three Rivers Public Health Department. More information on COVID-19 can be found at www.threeriverspublichealth.org. Those with questions can call the Three Rivers Public Health Department at 402-727-5396 or 211.
UNDERSTANDING THE STATE’S DIRECTED HEALTH MEASURE

Who does the Directed Health Measure apply to?

It applies to places such as theaters, churches, houses of worship, gyms, social clubs, salons, and social gatherings, including weddings, funerals, concerts, and athletic events. This is not an exhaustive list, but illustrates the types of locations the DHM applies to.

Do I need to shut down my bar or restaurant?

At bars and restaurants, it applies to patrons, not to your workforce. Restaurants and bars are encouraged to ask their patrons if they can prepare their order for takeout upon arrival. Restaurants will play a key part in feeding people throughout the pandemic.

Do I need to shut down my daycare?

No. DHHS has issued new guidance that daycares need to follow. You can find it by clicking here.

Do I need to shut down my office?

No. The Directed Health Measure does not apply to places such as office buildings, grocery stores, pharmacies, hospitals, nursing homes, correctional facilities, court houses, court rooms, banks, car dealerships, auto repair shops, nursing homes, long-term care facilities, small shops, golf courses, big box stores, gas stations, convenience stores, shopping malls, manufacturing facilities, packing facilities, construction jobs, and other traditional office settings. This is not an exhaustive list, but illustrates the types of locations the DHM does not apply to.

Furthermore, we do not expect these facilities to be impacted by additional limits at this time.

Do I need to cancel a wedding or a funeral?

Weddings and funerals are also subject to the 10-person limit. Event planners and facilities are encouraged to be flexible with people who are rearranging their plans.