



For Immediate Release
March 7, 2020
Jayme Stevenson, First Selectman

Town of Darien COVID-19 Situation Report

I would like to update our community on the novel (new) coronavirus disease, COVID-19, and the potential spread of illness here in Darien.

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness first documented in Wuhan, China in late December 2019. The origin of the virus is 'zoonotic' meaning, from animals, and like other coronaviruses (SARS and MERS), COVID-19 is thought to have been transmitted from bat hosts to other animals and ultimately to people. We know now that COVID-19 is easily transmitted from person to person through respiratory droplets from the nose and mouth containing the virus. Treatments and vaccines are not yet available although the federal government is aggressively pushing for expedited research and development. 80% of positive cases have mild to no symptoms. The elderly and people with compromised immune systems and/or underlying illnesses may be more susceptible to severe illness from COVID-19. Children appear, at present, to be mildly affected. This information may change as CDC professionals continue their research and expand their body of knowledge on the virus.

The COVID-19 situation in the United States and here in Connecticut is still emerging and, therefore, subject to rapid change. There are over 300 confirmed cases in the US and 17 deaths. **At the time of this writing, we have no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Darien.** Statewide, 53 people have been 'tested' for COVID-19 with 42 negative results and 11 in the process of being tested. National statistics are updated daily on the Center for Disease website, www.CDC.gov. To keep the situation in perspective, during the 2019-20 flu season the CDC estimates that there were 19 million cases of the flu in the US with 180,000 hospitalizations and 10,000 deaths.

The Town of Darien's Emergency Preparedness Team convened 3 times this past week and members are in regular communication sharing situation updates and reviewing and testing our response and communication procedures. Our team includes personnel from the following departments: Public Health, Police, Fire, EMS, Darien Public Schools and Municipal Government. We are in regular communication with other community agencies and businesses sharing information and affirming policies and procedures. I am confident we have the professionals and policies in place to respond effectively in spite of the uniqueness of this emerging situation.

Comments are circulating that several Darien residents have been 'tested' for COVID-19. Because of privacy laws, testing information is not shared with local officials. COVID-19 testing has been limited to those people who have acute illness symptoms and are hospitalized and all testing has been done at the state health lab. An individual

who begins to exhibit illness symptoms will be 'tested' for all other flu illnesses prior to being screened for COVID-19.

Testing protocols will begin to change next week as approved commercial testing sites become operational and doctors are allowed to make direct testing referrals to local testing facilities. More testing will undoubtedly mean more identifications of the virus. The CT Department of Health will contact our local Director of Health when/if we have a Darien resident who tests positive. It will be the responsibility of our local health department to monitor any subsequent quarantine or isolation directives.

As of last evening, March 6, there is now 1 confirmed case of COVID-19 that was identified in Danbury, CT. The individual is a New York resident but works as a Danbury and Norwalk Hospital healthcare provider. The individual came in contact with a positive case in New York and is now in quarantine at home. Contact tracing, which is performed by local and state health officials, was performed swiftly and all hospital patients are under observation and fellow healthcare colleagues who came in contact with the individual are furloughed.

If you are sick and are concerned you might have been exposed to COVID-19, please stay home and call ahead to your healthcare provider to seek medical advice. Doctors may have the ability to screen without an in-person visit which could jeopardize the health of other patients and healthcare workers. Heed the advice of your doctor before presenting yourself at a doctor's office or local hospital. All 911 health-related calls will receive special dispatch screening to help identify patients exposed to COVID-19 for the safety of the patient, first responders and hospital workers.

If you or a family member is sick, please do not, out of fear, delay seeking medical advice. Do be mindful of the health of others by avoiding public events and gathering places. You may 'feel good enough' to go on with your regular day but you may risk exposing others and medically vulnerable people to illness.

Darien Public Schools spring break is in early April. Many families enjoy traveling at this time. Please educate yourself about CDC travel advisories, call your travel providers for updated information and make informed decisions about the safety of your travel. Please remember that the COVID-19 situation is still emerging in the United States so local, state and federal policies are changing as the situation changes. The Darien Public School Administration is keeping our parents and students updated as needed and more information can be found on the district's website at www.DarienPS.org.

US citizens who have traveled to Level 3 'high risk' countries, depending on their travel history, will be required to self-quarantine for 14 days upon return to the US. US citizens who have traveled to China or Iran in the last 14 days may enter the US but only through 11 designated airports with CDC quarantine screening stations and may be required to quarantine for 14 days depending on travel and health history.

The 14-day quarantine period is the time during which, if you are sick, you would exhibit symptoms if you're going to become symptomatic. It is noteworthy that many people may have the virus but exhibit no or mild symptoms. Families who have or will be traveling to places where outbreaks have been identified, need to practice common

sense measures to protect their families and others and realize that there may be restrictions against returning home.

COVID-19 prevention measures are the same as for the more common flu:

- Avoid close contact with those who are sick
- Practice 'social distancing' (6 feet)
- Wash your hands often for 20 seconds with warm soap and water. Hand washing is preferred but if not available, use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Stay home when you are sick
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue immediately away
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects (including your cell phone and computer keyboard) and surfaces using regular household cleaning spray or wipe
- Face masks are recommended for use for only people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others

The Center for Disease Control (www.CDC.gov) and the World Health Organization (www.who.int) are trusted sources of regularly updated information. State of Connecticut Department of Health information can be found at www.ct.gov/coronavirus.

Additional preparedness information can be found on the Town of Darien website home page at www.darienct.gov under 'News' and also on the Darien Health Department web page.

I will provide regular updates as needed and am available 24/7 for questions and concerns.

Jayne

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