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Joel R. Strasz
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To: All Media
From: Joel Strasz, Public Health Officer
Date: November 3, 2020
Re: **BAY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT PROVIDES TOOLS FOR PUBLIC TO ASSIST IN COVID-19 CONTACT TRACING DURING CURRENT SURGE OF CASES**

BAY COUNTY, MICHIGAN – Over the past two weeks, an extreme volume of new positive cases of COVID-19 have been reported to the Bay County Health Department. The increased numbers of new positive cases have caused delays to case investigations and subsequent contact tracing.

To ensure that vulnerable populations are protected, the Bay County Health Department (BCHD) has announced several steps to assist Bay County residents who have tested positive for COVID-19. First, BCHD has made the decision to prioritize case investigation of confirmed cases for people 18 years old or younger, and those over the age of 60. Telephone calls will continue to be made to these persons to ensure that a thorough case investigation is made and that needs for these special populations are met.

It is important to note that **all** cases in Bay County will be investigated. To help achieve this goal in a timely and efficient manner, BCHD announces that all Bay County residents that test positive for COVID-19 are encouraged to self-report symptom onset and close contact information via the following link on the Bay County Webpage: <https://www.baycounty-mi.gov/Health/COVID-19-Contact-Tracing.aspx>. This is a safe and secure link to provide the BCHD with your information. All of the information collected is confidential and will not be shared with anyone.

BCHD is working diligently to reach out to individuals as quickly as possible, but we do not want you to wait to be contacted prior to taking action. BCHD is asking the public for patience and to follow these guidelines:

If you were notified that you tested positive for COVID-19:

- Self-isolate for 10 days. After 10 days, if your symptoms have improved and you have not had a fever for 24 hours (without the use of medications), you may return to normal activities.
- Notify all your close contacts immediately.
 - A close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24- hour period* starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to test specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated.

-More-

If you were notified that you were a close contact to a positive case:

- Self-quarantine for 14 days beginning the first full day after the last date of exposure to the positive case.
 - **FOR EXAMPLE:** Last exposure date is 10/20. Begin counting quarantine from 10/21 through 11/3. Resume normal activities on 11/4.
- Consider getting tested, especially if you develop symptoms of COVID-19.
- If you get tested and results are negative, you still must complete your 14-day quarantine before resuming normal activities.

Finally, to assist with reaching out to those who are identified as close contacts, BCHD will be using the TraceForce system staffed by volunteers from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. TraceForce is a system that collects the names, phone numbers and counties for people listed as close contacts to a positive case. Contact tracers reach out to the individual and check in with them daily, by text or phone, to monitor how their well-being progresses. It is important to note that volunteers **do not** have access to test results, addresses, health insurance or financial information. The identity of any patient who tests positive remains private.

A call from Traceforce is not a confirmation that you have the virus. It's only to let you know that you are at a higher risk due to recent exposure and should take necessary precaution. If you have been identified as a close or household contact of a positive case, you will receive a confirmation letter with applicable quarantine dates.

For the latest and most accurate information regarding COVID-19 please go to the Bay County Health Department website at <https://www.baycounty-mi.gov/Health/COVID19/>

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