



City of Grand Forks  
Staff Report  
Committee of the Whole  
City Council – March 2, 2020

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**Agenda Item: Update to Mayor Brown and City Council on SARS CoV – 2 and Coronavirus Disease or COVID – 19**

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**Submitted by: Debbie Swanson, Director, Grand Forks Public Health Department**

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**Staff Recommended Action: Receive report, monitor situation, and begin planning for continuity of operations when necessary.**

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**Committee Recommended Action:**

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**Council Action:**

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**BACKGROUND:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continues to monitor an outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus that was initially detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province China in December 2019 and has now been detected in 37 countries. The first U.S. case was identified on January 21, 2020 and had recently traveled from Wuhan China. Additional cases have been isolated. The disease ranges from mild to severe. There is no vaccine to prevent the infection and no medication to treat it other than the symptoms.

This is a rapidly evolving and changing situation with frequent and new information provided to public health, the health care community, the media, and the public by the CDC and their partners.

**ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Here is a list of the actions GFPH has taken in the past few weeks to prepare and respond to the presence of the SARS CoV – 2 coronavirus and COVID – 19:

- Personnel have been meeting since January to make sure we are poised and ready to respond. We are implementing the Grand Forks Public Health Pre-event Phase of the Emergency Operations Plan.
- Up to date and accurate information has been placed on our website and social media platforms.
- The Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) staff members have

been receiving health alerts, and providing this information to other staff and local preparedness partners.

- Health Department personnel have been responding to calls and inquiries and are referring callers to the ND Dept. of Health and CDC websites and data dashboards for additional information.
- The PHEP program is communicating with the ND Dept. of Health on mobilizing resources locally should that be necessary.
- Efforts have been coordinated with ND Department of Health and local health care providers to prepare for monitoring individuals with travel history indicating a need for health monitoring.
- Grand Forks Public Health conducted an exercise of our point of dispensing (POD) protocols a few years ago and will refresh this to prepare for large scale vaccination efforts if/when a vaccine is available. Vaccine is not anticipated to be available for 12 – 18 months or longer.
- We continue to promote flu protection measures as they can be useful in containing any disease spread. This includes handwashing, respiratory hygiene, flu vaccination and staying home when ill.
- Participation in Grand Forks County all hazards mitigation planning process and plan review is ongoing.

#### **SUPPORT MATERIALS:**

- ND Department of Health Advisory will be added for current information.

**FEBRUARY 27, 2020**

## **HEALTH ADVISORY**

### **Updated Information for Travelers Seeking Health Care, Consideration for COVID-19**

#### **Community Transmission of COVID-19 in California**

The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is providing this updated information regarding people presenting for health care, who have recently (within the prior 14 days) returned from international travel. Health care providers should continue to ask their patients about travel history. COVID-19 should be considered in patients with an appropriate risk for exposure to COVID-19 and presenting with fever, cough or shortness of breath/difficulty breathing.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to monitor COVID-19 activity throughout the world. This week the CDC issued new travel advisories for an additional five countries. Here is a summary of all the current advisories:

- **Level 3 Warning** (avoid all nonessential travel)
  - China
  - South Korea
- **Level 2 Alert** (people at increased risk for serious illness such as those with medical conditions or of older age should avoid all nonessential travel)
  - Iran
  - Italy
  - Japan
- **Level 1 Watch** (normal travel precautions, avoid sick people, avoid touching your eyes, nose, mouth; wash hands often or frequently use a hand sanitizer that contains 60% to 95% alcohol)
  - Hong Kong

It is important to note that these travel advisories do not necessarily correspond to risk of exposure for travelers, as the epidemiology of this disease is unique to each country. This is a rapidly evolving situation and continued spread of this virus is likely. Providers should routinely monitor CDC's COVID-19 travel page for updated guidance for travel risks at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html).

On February 26, 2020, the CDC confirmed an infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 in California in a person who reportedly did not have relevant travel history or exposure to another

known patient with COVID-19. At this time, the patient's exposure is unknown. It's possible this could be an instance of community spread of COVID-19, which would be the first time this has happened in the United States. Community spread means spread of an illness for which the source of infection is unknown. It's also possible, however, that the patient may have been exposed to a returned traveler who was infected.

Providers should monitor the CDC's evaluating and reporting persons for COVID-19 routinely at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html). Providers should call the NDDoH for a determination on testing for COVID-19. Except for people with high-risk exposures or severe respiratory illness, testing for COVID-19 in ill patients is likely not needed. However, consultation with public health may result in the initiation of a monitoring process that could include voluntary social distancing or other measures to reduce risk for the general public. For consultation, questions or to report symptomatic patients, providers can call 701-328-2378 or 1-800-472-2180.

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**Categories of Health Alert Network messages:**

**Health Alert** Requires immediate action or attention; highest level of importance  
**Health Advisory** May not require immediate action; provides important information for a specific incident or situation  
**Health Update** Unlikely to require immediate action; provides updated information regarding an incident or situation  
**HAN Info Service** Does not require immediate action; provides general public health information