MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Health
FROM: Bob Leischow, MPH
DATE: March 12, 2020
SUBJECT: COVID-19 (“coronavirus”) situational awareness

We wanted to let you know that West Allis Health Department and the City are continuing to closely monitor the outbreak and are in close and regular contact with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and other partners. We have met with representatives from our school district as well as the Police and Fire/EMS departments to discuss plans, share information and establish lines of communication as we move forward with this evolving situation. Lines of communication have also been established with Aurora and other community-based agencies.

SITUATION SUMMARY

At the time of this writing, WI Governor Evers declared a public health emergency due to COVID-19. There are seven confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Wisconsin (an additional earlier confirmed case has fully recovered). None of these are in Milwaukee County. On Wednesday, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic. Eight countries — including the U.S. — are now each reporting more than 1,000 cases of COVID-19, caused by the coronavirus that has infected nearly 120,000 people worldwide. WHO advised people should not fear the designation and that it should not be taken to mean that the fight against the virus is over.

For most people, COVID-19 infection will cause mild illness; however, it can make some people very ill and, in some people, it can be fatal,” the WHO says. Older people and those with pre-existing medical conditions (such as cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease or diabetes) are at risk for severe disease.

Public health officials recommend individuals and communities take precautions to prevent the virus from spreading further.

Local, state, and national public safety and health organizations are monitoring this situation as it rapidly develops and responding as quickly as possible by working to minimize the spread of the virus at public events, schools, churches, and places of business.
WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Start practicing not touching your face now. This can greatly reduce the frequency of potential spread. (You can even try a buddy system, where you and a friend remind each other when someone scratches their eyelid or rubs their nose.)

- Replace handshakes with elbow-bumps.

- Start building healthy habits like pushing elevator buttons with a knuckle instead of a fingertip.

- Health officials do not recommend that people who are well wear a face mask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. Face masks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility). It is not necessary to wear these masks as you go about your day.

- Avoid sharing e-cigarettes, drinks, etc.

- Increase regular cleaning of commonly touched surfaces (e.g. doorknobs, faucet handles, toilet handles etc.). Clean your phone screen regularly.

- Wash your hands frequently, for a minimum of 20 seconds, with soap and water.

- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing.

- Avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms.

- Get an annual flu vaccine if you have not had one.

- Stay home if you are sick.

RESOURCES:

- [West Allis Health Department Coronavirus Webpage](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Resources for COVID-19](#)
- [Wisconsin Department of Health Services COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [World Health Organization (WHO) COVID-19 Resources](#)