

Board of Health

South Heartland District Health Department

Resolution #2020-4

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH FOR SOUTH HEARTLAND DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT (SHDHD) RELATED TO COVID-19 AND URGING THE USE OF EVIDENCE-BASED, PREVENTION STRATEGIES TO STEM THE SPREAD OF THE CORONAVIRUS IN THE FOUR-COUNTY HEALTH DISTRICT.

WHEREAS, SHDHD is the local governmental public health entity, formed in 2001 under LB 692 as an interlocal agreement between Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster Counties and governed by a 15-member local Board of Health consisting of one supervisor or commissioner appointed by each respective County Board, two community representatives per county appointed by each respective County Board, as well as a physician, a dentist and a veterinarian appointed by the Board of Health; and

WHEREAS, SHDHD is authorized to investigate reportable diseases and to protect the public using evidence-based measures appropriate to the disease or condition, including investigation of new emerging diseases and epidemics of any health problem (71-1628.04 Core Public Health Functions; Title 173, Communicable Diseases); and

WHEREAS, for COVID-19, SHDHD is further authorized by the State-directed health measures to investigate COVID-19 and to protect the public using isolation and quarantine measures and other evidence-based prevention interventions; and

WHEREAS, South Heartland residents have been exposed to a communicable disease known as COVID-19 and there is now widespread "community transmission" of COVID-19 in the four counties of the South Heartland Health District. Community transmission means spread of the illness for which the source is unknown; and

WHEREAS, exposure to COVID-19 presents a risk of death or serious long-term disabilities to any person; the exposure is widespread and poses a significant risk of harm to people in the general population; there is a particular subset of the population that is more vulnerable to the threat and thus at increased risk; and the threat is from a novel (new) infectious disease; and

WHEREAS, the State-Directed Health Measures (DHM) are in effect for South Heartland counties to ensure that members of the public do not gather in large numbers, in close proximity to each other, or in enclosed spaces, thereby endangering the health of themselves and the public and that one of the goals of the State-DHM is to minimize in-person interaction, which is the main means of transmission of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, non-pharmaceutical interventions (evidence-based prevention interventions) have been identified as effective against public health threats by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC) and other similar public health authorities to effectively prevent, limit, or slow the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") recommends the use of evidence-based prevention intervention such as: social distancing, facial coverings, staying home when sick, washing hands frequently, and cleaning and disinfecting frequently-touched surfaces and objects to reduce the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, according to UNMC Global Center for Health Security, studies demonstrate that countries which mandated facial coverings to decrease infection by blocking the spread of respiratory droplets saw a significantly lower per capita mortality rate associated with COVID-19 infection and states and counties in the United States which adopted mask mandates saw significantly lower case rate increases associated with COVID-19 compared to those without mask mandates; and

WHEREAS, South Heartland's 14-day average new daily cases was below 8 per 100,000 through August (low spread, on track to contain COVID), and has since increased to greater than 33 per 100,000 (severe risk, active outbreak) and since mid-October has been greater than 50 per 100,000; and

WHEREAS, hospitalizations related to COVID-19 have increased significantly in the South Heartland health district, with 42% of the total hospitalizations occurring in the first five and one-half months of the pandemic and 58% percent occurring in the most recent one and one-half months; and

WHEREAS, South Heartland's weekly positivity (percent positive tests) in June was reduced to below 1% (low community spread) when residents were required by the State-DHM to limit gatherings and practice social distancing ("Stay Home, Stay Healthy, Stay Connected"), and once these restrictions were loosened or lifted with the phased re-opening, the weekly positivity has since climbed to >15% (severe community spread) for the four-county region; and

WHEREAS, South Heartland is committed to schools being open and students learning with in-person instruction and while schools in South Heartland district are working to adhere to the key mitigation strategies including consistent and correct use of masks, social distancing to the extent possible, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, cleaning and disinfection, and contact tracing in collaboration with local health department, the severe level of coronavirus transmission in the community will continue to impact the ability of schools to stay open due to staff and students exposures in the community; and

WHEREAS, this public health emergency requires the public to be caring citizens and to contribute to the solution for the sake of our communities and those we love; and,

WHEREAS, as individuals and as communities we have the power to choose our actions in the COVID-19 response and recovery process, and given that we have previously reduced positivity to below 1% through non-pharmaceutical interventions and we can again reverse the trends if everyone comes together to take important steps in our daily lives to protect our communities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Health for the South Heartland Health District, SHDHD Board of Health emphatically urges all persons at all worksites, faith-based institutions, health care and educational settings; at retail businesses, salons, restaurants and bars; at sporting, civic and social events; and in meetings or gatherings small and large, formal or informal, family or professional; to practice the following:

- Avoid the Three Cs:
 - Avoid Crowded Places – Avoid gathering in groups where you cannot maintain 6-feet of distance from others
 - Avoid Close Contact – Wear a mask over your nose and mouth or maintain 6-feet distance when you are spending more than 15 total minutes with people you don't live with
 - Avoid Confined Spaces – Avoid enclosed spaces with poor ventilation
- Wash your hands often.
- Stay home if you are sick or have symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Symptoms may include one or more of the following: fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, new loss of taste and smell. Symptoms may be mild and allergy-like.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, get tested. Testing is available through many health care providers and free testing is available through TestNebraska (on the internet at TestNebraska.org)
 - Self-isolate until your test results come back
- If you test positive for COVID-19, continue self-isolating, answer calls from the health department, cooperate with the health department's public health professionals and follow isolation instructions to protect others from spread of coronavirus that causes COVID-19.
- If you are identified as a close contact to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, answer calls, cooperate with the health department's public health professionals and follow quarantine instructions to protect others from spread of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.
- Frequently clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces and objects, like doorknobs, keyboards, light switches, utensils, and your cell phone.
- Get a flu shot. Flu shots will protect people from influenza this season and will keep people safe from the potential compounding complications of having flu and COVID-19.
- Rethink planning events. Work with SHDHD to plan a COVID-19-safe event for your guests or patrons. Event safety plans are required by the State-DHM for venues with capacity of 500 or more people, but SHDHD will provide assistance and guidance for any size event.
- Rethink attending events. Ask yourself how being exposed to COVID-19 might affect you (are you at higher risk of severe illness?), or might affect your job, your family, and those around you who are at higher risk of severe illness.
- Plan ahead and choose safe, creative alternatives for traditional holiday celebrations. Get tips for celebrating the holidays from the CDC or South Heartland websites.

PASSED AND APPROVED THIS 4 DAY of NOVEMBER, 2020

Board of Health, South Heartland Health District, Nebraska

Nanette Shackelford

Nanette Shackelford
Board President

11/4/2020

Date