



For Immediate Release:

March 1, 2020

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MEDIA AVAILABILITY: Alameda County and Solano Public Health Officials are available for phone interviews to answer questions. Contact respective PIOs from each county's health department.

WHEN: Sunday, March 1, 2020; 2:30 PM - 4:30 PM

Highlights

- This is the first presumptive-positive case of COVID-19 in Alameda County.
- Two new health care worker cases had exposure to a confirmed case.
- Aggressive measures are being taken to swiftly identify and isolate all individuals potentially exposed to these new cases.
- More COVID-19 cases are expected in the Bay Area and nationwide; now is the time to prepare for increased community spread (cases not connected to travel or other confirmed cases).

Alameda County Public Health Department and Solano County Public Health Confirm Two Presumptive Positive Cases of COVID-19

ALAMEDA AND SOLANO COUNTIES – Alameda County Public Health Department and Solano Public Health are reporting that two health care workers are presumptive positive for the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19); these cases are pending confirmatory testing from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Both cases are NorthBay VacaValley Hospital health care workers and are currently in isolation at home; one is a Solano County resident, the other is an Alameda County resident. Both had exposure to the community-acquired case currently hospitalized at UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento. The initial case is slowly recovering, and the individual's family members had negative test results for COVID-19 so far and remain in quarantine.

“Due to the aggressive measures that public health and hospital staff undertook, all potential exposures to the case were promptly identified and isolated so that patients are not placed at higher risk. Health

care officials have immediately updated protocols and procedures to ensure patient safety is prioritized” said Dr. Bela Matyas, Solano County Health Officer. “This underscores the challenging environment that health care workers everywhere face to stem the spread of communicable diseases, including COVID-19. Health care and Public Health officials throughout the state are committed to protecting patients.”

Public health and hospital staff rapidly identified all health care workers in contact with the case during the case’s hospitalization. All of those health care workers remain in isolation or in quarantine and will not return to patient care until they are cleared. Additional COVID-19 cases among them may occur. It is important to remember that the patient did not meet the CDC’s criteria for COVID-19 testing nor the high-risk threshold for use of COVID-19 specific protective personal equipment by people providing care.

“As always, our top priority is the health and safety of our patients, our staff, physicians and the community,” said Aimee Brewer, president of NorthBay HealthCare Group. “Our two health care workers who tested positive have been in isolation at home since the day we learned they had contact with the patient who had contracted the virus. We took immediate and comprehensive measures intended to stop any further spread of the virus, including working with public health officials to trace the contacts the two workers may have had. We remain in close contact with national, state and local public health authorities to ensure we are following the most up-to-date protocols and procedures for dealing with this evolving situation.”

A full contact investigation is underway for the two new health care worker cases, and individuals potentially exposed are in the process of being identified and evaluated. Teams of epidemiologists from the CDC and California Department of Public Health (CDPH) are assisting the health departments in tracing those who may be at risk for exposure because of the new cases. Alameda County and Solano County Public Health Departments are monitoring these new cases’ conditions as well as their contacts for symptoms.

Patients with confirmed COVID-19 infection have experienced mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Similar to influenza, it appears to cause less severe illness in younger people; those with more severe impacts tend to be older, medically fragile individuals with underlying medical conditions. Health care organizations, government entities, schools and employers should plan now for how best to decrease the spread of illness and lower the impact of COVID-19.

“We understand that the evolving news about COVID-19 is concerning, and we are taking the situation very seriously,” said Dr. Erica Pan, Health Officer, Alameda County Public Health Department. “This news is not unexpected in the Bay Area, and we are ready for cases here. This is not the time to panic; now is the time for all of us to work together.” Dr. Pan said.

Alameda County is declaring a local public health emergency as part of its ongoing response and preparation for community spread in Alameda County. This allows Alameda County to be better poised to respond with additional resources as needed.

Alameda and Solano County residents should take these precautions to stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses:

- Wash hands with liquid soap and water and rub for at least 20 seconds;
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing;
- Refrain from touching your eyes, nose and mouth;
- Stay home when you are sick; and
- Get a flu shot to protect yourself and others from the flu, which has similar symptoms to COVID-19.

People who are well and healthy do not need to use a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses. A facemask can be worn for those who are coughing or sneezing to protect others from getting sick.

Healthy people should not be excluded from any activities based on their race or country of origin. There is no racial, ethnic, or cultural basis for the disease.

“We remain actively involved with federal, state, and regional colleagues to ensure alignment with evolving guidance on protecting the health of our community and our health care workforce,” said Colleen Chawla, Director, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency. “This is a community effort and we will need broad partnership. Our public health team will work with health care providers, schools, workplaces, community organizations, and others to mitigate the health and human impacts of this virus.”

For more information, visit the following:

- CDC website: www.cdc.gov/COVID19
- Alameda County Public Health Department website: <http://acphd.org/2019-ncov.aspx>; for general inquiries, please email ncov@acgov.org or call (510) 268-2101
- Solano County Public Health website: www.solanocounty.com/publichealth