

Stillwater County Unified Command

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: March 16, 2020

To: Stillwater County Media

Stillwater County Unified Command – COVID19

Columbus, MT – Incident Command – Stillwater Billings Clinic

Stillwater County, in response to the COVID19 pandemic, has initiated a Unified Command in order to present clear, consistent information throughout Stillwater County. Unified Command includes Stillwater County, Stillwater County Public Health, Stillwater Billings Clinic, Stillwater County Disaster Emergency Services, Stillwater County Public Schools, Stillwater County Sheriff's Department, and Stillwater County EMS/Fire services.

As of release time, there are currently 0 positive COVID19 cases in Stillwater County. There are 6 positive cases in Montana including cases in Yellowstone, Missoula, Gallatin, Silver Bow, and Lewis and Clark Counties.

To combat COVID19, Unified Command has worked diligently and quickly to enact the following regulations:

- All events scheduled at the "Little Metra" or fairgrounds in Columbus will be cancelled, effective immediately and will be in effect until April 30th, 2020.
- All non-essential meetings/gatherings of 20 or more people should be held via alternative methods (phone conference, skype, so forth) or cancelled until further notice.
- All Senior Centers that provide lunches will move to a "Meals on Wheels" format to discourage group interaction, effective until April 30th, 2020.

Social distancing is the act of distancing one's self from groups or gatherings of multiple people. The idea behind social distancing is to limit the spread of the COVID19 virus to others. While we know that we will not be able to stop every human interaction, or spread of the virus, it is imperative for us to practice social distancing over the coming weeks and possibly months. There is a large responsibility shift back to the public community to help with enforcement of social distancing practices.

Stillwater County Public Health and Stillwater Billings Clinic have developed the following guidance to prevent unnecessary exposure to COVID19:

- If you develop fever, cough, chills, body aches, headaches, or upper respiratory symptoms, do NOT come to the clinic. Self-quarantine for 14 days at home.
- If you have significant difficulty with breathing and shortness of breath, call 322-1000 and we will direct you to further care
- Upon arrival at the hospital or clinic, please call 322-1000 to enter the building
- If you have any upcoming elective visits, please contact your providers office to reschedule
- Avoid the use of the Emergency Department for non-emergent care. This only increases your risk of exposure to COVID19 and reduces access to those individuals that critically need the care.
- There is a strict visitation policy being enforced within the hospital and clinic, effective immediately and will remain until further notice.

In accordance with Governor Bullocks declaration, all Stillwater County Public School are closed March 16th – March 27th, 2020. This closure is to encourage social distancing and slow the spread to individuals in large groups/gatherings. Daycares are still open and the decision to continue to keep daycares open will be re-evaluated as the situation evolves.

Unified Command would like to take this time to encourage our citizens to look out for one another. While this virus does not affect everyone the same, we do know that the highest risk populations are those older populations (aged 60+), immune compromised individuals, and those with co-morbidities. If you have friends or neighbors that are high risk, use phone communication to check on them. If supplies are needed, a healthy individual can pick those up and deliver them to the door of the high-risk individual.

Unified Command will meet regularly via teleconference. Information will be shared as appropriate through press, internet, and social media formats. Unified Command Information can be accessed at www.stillwaterbillingsclinic.com by clicking on the red banner at the top of the page titled "COVID19 Updates for Stillwater County"

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