COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Situational Update from Southern Seven Health Department’s Executive Director – March 13, 2020

To the Residents of the Southern 7 Counties,

As our nation continues to face COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease), Southern Seven Health Department, along with our community partners, is closely monitoring new developments.

Our most immediate message to our communities is: **STAY CALM and STAY EDUCATED**

To date, no citizens of the Southern 7 Region (Alexander, Hardin, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, and Union Counties) have tested positive for COVID-19.

The CDC says the immediate health risk to the general public in the U.S. is low. For most people, the novel coronavirus produces a mild illness, and many of those infected don’t even know they have it. As with influenza, in some cases it can lead to serious illness such as pneumonia and death. It appears that the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions are most susceptible.

- COVID-19 spreads mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (approximately six feet). The virus can be transmitted in droplets that become airborne through a cough or sneeze. You can also be exposed after touching a surface that has the virus on it, and then touching your face, eyes or mouth.
- While the CDC has determined that the current risk of infection in the United States remains low, there are steps you can take to stay healthy, such as: washing hands frequently for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, coughing into your elbow or tissue instead of hands, disposing all used tissues, cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, avoiding touch of eyes, nose, and mouth, avoiding contact with people who are sick, and staying home if you are sick.
  - For most healthy individuals, per the CDC wearing a face mask is **NOT** recommended.
  - According to current information from the CDC, symptoms may appear 2 to 14 days after exposure to the virus. Symptoms include fever, cough and shortness of breath. This information is based on what has been seen in similar previous viruses, and it may change as more is known about COVID-19.

For more information please visit cdc.gov/coronavirus or idph.illinois.gov. You can also call the IDPH Hotline with questions at 1-800-889-3931. We have established a page on our website (southern7.org/coronavirus) where you can find information. You can also follow us on Facebook or Instagram for updates.

Rhonda Andrews-Ray
Executive Director