COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Situational Update from Southern Seven Health Department’s Executive Director – March 20, 2020

To the Residents of the Southern 7 Counties,

As the state of Illinois continues to see significant increases in positive COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease) individuals, Southern Seven Health Department, along with our community partners, is closely monitoring new developments. For weeks, Southern Seven has been planning for this emergency. We have created many robust contingency programs that pertain to our agency and services.

In the Southern 7 Region (Alexander, Hardin, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, and Union Counties), NO people have tested positive for COVID-19. I anticipate this fact to change in the days and weeks ahead.

Our most immediate message to our communities is: STAY HOME!

In Illinois, the number of cases can be reduced by adhering to public health guidance on social distancing which includes staying at home. Other guidance includes; washing hands frequently, disinfecting commonly touched surfaces, and staying home when you are ill. COVID-19 shares many symptoms with more common respiratory diseases. If you have a fever, cough or difficulty breathing, you need to call your health care provider for further guidance.

There have been two, COVID-19 hotlines established for residents of the Southern 7 region. These are:

1. Massac Memorial Hospital 1-618-638-1344 (7am-7pm line)
2. Southern Illinois Healthcare 1-844-988-7800 (24 hour line)

During this past week, Southern Seven has implemented several plans in order to protect the health and safety of our employees, as well as our program participants.

All public health and WIC clinics are open and seeing patients via a new “pull-up” policy. Patients are asked not to enter the building but rather to call upon arrival. These patients will be screened over the phone for influenza like symptoms. If they are asymptomatic, they will be called into the office to see the nurse when she is available. Clients will not be using the waiting rooms.

Head Start sights are now closed. Meals are being prepared a week at a time and handed out to the Head Start children and any child that wants them.

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