



Joint News Release

March 10, 2020

8:45 p.m. (ChST)

DPHSS Guam Public Health Laboratory Works to Validate Results of Newly Arrived COVID-19 Test Kits; No Suspect or Confirmed Cases

The Guam Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS) continues to work with local and federal partners to address the threat of the virus that causes COVID-19. Currently, there are **no** persons under investigation (PUI) and there are **no** confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Guam. Guam continues to assess the situation as it evolves. With any change in status, anticipate timely notification.

Guam Public Health Laboratory to Validate Diagnostic Test Kits

On Tuesday, the DPHSS received test kits from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The test kits will be used to conduct diagnostic testing of the virus that causes COVID-19. Back in February, CDC began its initial shipment of COVID-19 test kits. Guam was set to receive these test kits, however they were immediately recalled due to inconclusive results.

Testing for COVID-19 will be available on Guam once validation of the test kits is completed. Validation ensures the quality, reliability, and consistency of analytical results. The validation process is currently under way at GPHL. Once validation is complete, GPHL will make testing immediately available; GPHL anticipates testing to commence before the end of the month.

On March 4, 2020, the CDC broadened its criteria for evaluating PUIs for COVID-19 as access to COVID-19 testing expands to more locations. COVID-19 testing for PUIs in Guam is available through the Hawaii State Laboratories Division (HSLD) and DPHSS will follow all guidelines and criteria set by HSLD for COVID-19 testing of PUIs until the GPHL can begin testing. DPHSS is currently developing testing guidelines for PUIs in collaboration with local partners for when testing becomes available on Guam. Until then, providers should refer to the most recent Physicians Alert for guidelines on accessing testing at HSLD.

Officials Track Cases of COVID-19 in the Philippines

Earlier this week, the Philippines declared a health emergency after more cases of COVID-19 were confirmed. According to the U.S. State Department, a Level 2 advisory for travel to the Philippines remains in place. Travelers are advised to exercise increased caution.

Take Precautions Now: Prevent the Spread of All Respiratory Illnesses

The potential public health threat posed by COVID-19 is high, globally, nationally, and to our island. Individual risk is dependent on exposure. Everyone in our community can take steps now to prepare for this emerging public health threat by doing everyday preventative measures:

- It's currently flu and respiratory disease season and CDC recommends getting a flu vaccine, taking everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs, and taking flu antivirals if prescribed.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. However, if soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your mouth, eyes, and nose with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Practice proper cough etiquette – cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects or surfaces.
- Stay home when you are sick – do not go to work or school.

Share, Download, Print Educational Materials from DPHSS Website

Educational resources for the general population, children and teens, and health care settings about the prevention of respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19 can be shared from the DPHSS website. Messaging for specific audiences such as schools, businesses, pregnant women and children were also developed to help our Guam community. Contents are from CDC. These educational print-ready materials are available for sharing via social media, or download, print, and distribution on the DPHSS website:

<http://dphss.guam.gov/2019-novel-coronavirus-2019-n-cov/>

Stay Up to with Date Reputable Sources

It is important to note that the situation can change quickly. The community is reminded to only share official notices and visit the following links for the most up-to-date information:

- CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- DPHSS website: <http://dphss.guam.gov/2019-novel-coronavirus-2019-n-cov/>
- GHS/OCD website: <https://ghs.guam.gov/coronavirusasNovel-Coronavirus.aspx>

For more information, contact DPHSS Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., at (671) 735-7154.

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