Health Alert

To:　　Butte County Clinicians and Health Care Providers

From:　Andy Miller, M.D. (signed original on file)

Date:　February 27, 2020

Re:　　CDC Interim Guidance for COVID-19 (*Guidance subject to change as outbreak unfolds*)

Background as of Feb. 27, 2020, 8:00 am

On 2/26/2020, the CDC confirmed a possible first case of person-to-person transmission of COVID-19 in California in the general public. **There are currently no persons under investigation (PUI) and no confirmed cases of 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Butte County. At this time, the immediate risk in Butte County community is considered to be low,** which gives local health care facilities (HCFs) a window of opportunity to prepare. With recent spread of COVID-19 to additional countries, CDC is stressing the need to prepare for cases and outbreaks in the US. BCPH is urging healthcare providers and facilities to review the linked documents in this advisory and incorporate the recommendations into preparedness efforts. *Guidance will be updated frequently in this rapidly evolving situation, so please check the links below frequently.*

Healthcare Facility Preparedness

HCFs should be prepared for the possible arrival of patients with COVID-19 and should ensure their staff are trained and equipped to:

- promptly identify and isolate patients,
- strictly adhere to recommended infection control measures,
- care for patients with confirmed or suspect COVID-19, including potentially caring for a larger number of patients in the context of an escalating outbreak,
- monitor and manage any healthcare workers (HCWs) exposed to COVID-19, and
- communicate effectively within the facility and plan for appropriate external communications.

Please refer to the CDC checklist Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Hospital Preparedness Assessment Tool at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/hcp-hospital-checklist.html. Though developed for hospitals, other healthcare facilities should also find this checklist useful.

Infection Control: COVID-19 patients and persons under investigation (PUIs)

HCFs should have infection prevention and control procedures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 during healthcare delivery. Recommended infection control procedures include administrative rules and engineering controls, environmental hygiene, correct work practices, and appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE).　CDC's Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) or Persons Under Investigation for COVID-19 in Healthcare Settings provides 8 categories of recommendations to minimize potential for COVID-19 spread in a healthcare setting:

- prevent exposure of HCWs and patients, beginning with before a patient arrives

- adhere to standard, contact, and airborne precautions, including the use of eye protection
- manage visitor access and movement within the facility
- implement engineering controls, such as physical barriers or partitions to guide patients through triage areas
- monitor and manage ill and exposed HCWs
- train and educate HCWs
- implement environmental infection control
- establish reporting within healthcare facilities and to public health authorities

Infection Control and Risk Assessment: Healthcare Workers

Proper training in and use of PPE is critical to protect HCWs and prevent exposure-related work exclusions. HCWs who are not using PPE as recommended will need to be excluded from work for 14 days after exposure to a COVID-19 patient. Additionally, to prevent healthcare associated transmission, HCFs should have a low threshold for evaluating symptoms and testing symptomatic HCWs who have been exposed to COVID-19. Ensuring proper use of PPE, including fit testing, is crucial to protecting HCWs and preserving the workforce. Detailed guidance can be found in CDC's Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Healthcare Personnel with Potential Exposure in a Healthcare Setting to Patients with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). This guidance should be used along with clinical judgment and in consultation with BCPH to determine risk and the need for work restrictions.

Need for Judicious Use of PPE

Importantly, HCFs may experience shortages of N95 respirators and supplies are likely to be limited for some time. Judicious and appropriate use of PPE, in conjunction with engineering and administrative measures, will optimize N95 use. See Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of N95 Respirators. **If PPE resources are exhausted, resources requests can be sent to the Butte County MHOAC at publichealthdoc@buttecounty.net**. Note: *There is no recommendation from CDC for face masks to be worn by well persons in the home or other community settings at this time, unless they are providing care to a person with confirmed COVID-19.*

For assistance in assessing, managing, and reporting suspect cases

BCPH is available 24/7 to provide guidance and assistance. Healthcare providers should **immediately** report any patients suspected to have COVID-19. For assistance in assessing and managing suspect cases, please call the BCPH Communicable Disease program:

- During business hours, Mon-Fri (8 am - 5 pm): (530) 552-3929
- For after hours, weekends, or holidays: (530) 332-2462.

Additional CDC Resources

- Interim guidance for evaluating PUIs and testing: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/clinical-criteria.html
- Flow chart to assist health care providers to identify and assess for COVID-19: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/identify-assess-flowchart.html
- Interim guidance for clinical management of patients with confirmed COVID-19: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/clinical-guidance-management-patients.html
- Interim guidance for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Systems**:** https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-for-ems.html
- Specimen collection and testing: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/index.html
- Interim guidance for implementing home care of people not requiring hospitalization: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-home-care.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fguidance-home-care.html

Categories of urgency levels:
Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.
Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action
Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.