



# EAST-CENTRAL DISTRICT Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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[Columbus, NE] – Effective at 12:01 a.m. on April 4, 2020, the counties of Boone, Colfax, Nance and Platte, will be under Directed Health Measures (DHMs) implemented by East Central District Health Department’s (ECDHD) Chief Public Health Officer Chuck Sepers.

The new order formalizes the recommended measures put in place on public gatherings, which are limited to 10 guests, customers or other invitees, but excludes staff. Details of the order can be found online at <https://ecdhd.ne.gov/> on the ECDHD home page.

This order states that liquor, beer, and wine sales are restricted to carryout and delivery only, and that food and beverage sales at restaurants, bars, taverns, private clubs, and dining establishments are restricted to carry-out, drive-through, and delivery only. Further, lines for carry-out and drive-throughs at these establishments must provide an environment in which patrons and staff can maintain six feet of social distancing whenever possible.

This order also makes specific directives to salons and similar one-on-one retail services. Since these services cannot be offered while maintaining a social distance of six feet, it is not possible for these services to be performed safely, and because of that, these operations should cease.

The order also mandates self-quarantine for those that test positive for COVID-19 or have been clinically diagnosed by a primary care provider based on symptoms (i.e., fever AND shortness of breath OR cough OR sore throat). Prior to order, self-quarantine was a strong recommendation by the health department,

but not enforceable by health officials.

The order will remain in place through May 15, 2020, but can be extended based on developments with the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Directed Health Measure Order is a direct response to the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the ECDHD jurisdiction. The implementation of the order is meant to “flatten the curve,” or slow the spread of the virus in the four-county area, decreasing the number of patients who need to be cared for at one time, and increasing the ability of health care systems to respond to the pandemic.

The DHM’s were announced Friday, April 3 at during a 9:30 a.m. joint press conference with Sepers and Columbus Mayor Jim Bulkley. They will remain in effect for six weeks, until May 15, 2020, and can be extended by amendment as necessary.

In announcing the DHM’s, Sepers noted that while “Many citizens have made efforts to follow social distancing recommendations now in place, we receive numerous calls about businesses that are not complying with the ECDHD’s social distancing recommendations.”

As of Friday, April 3, none of the four positive cases of COVID-19 in the health district appear to have been transmitted locally. Community transmission is the necessary condition for the Governor’s DHMs, implemented in other health districts, to be applied. “We don’t want to wait until we finally detect community transmission to begin issuing DHMs in our district. Based on the data, now is the time to act to have the greatest effect on flattening the curve,” Sepers noted.

Unlike recommendations, the DHMs announced today by ECDHD can be enforced by both the sheriff and police departments in Boone, Colfax, Nance and Platte counties. Pursuant to Nebraska Revised Statute sections 71-501 and 506, and Nebraska Administrative Code 173 sections 6-009 and 6-006, any person violating this order may be subject to a Class III Misdemeanor for each offense. “Non-pharmaceutical measures are the most effective tool that public health has to stave off the worst effects of this biological disaster, and enforcement of these practices are essential to protect our residents,” Sepers said.

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