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James A. Barcia  
Bay County Executive

Joel R. Strasz  
Public Health Officer

Thomas John Bender, MD, PhD  
Medical Director

DATE: April 7, 2020  
RE: Enrollment in COVID-19 Symptom Surveillance Program  
TO: Healthcare Workers Serving Patients in Bay County

Dear Colleague:

Bay County Health Department (BCHD) has developed a **COVID-19 Symptom Surveillance Program** for all healthcare workers serving patients in Bay County, including anyone working at a hospital, urgent care center, clinic, nursing home, or long term care facility.

#### ACTIONS REQUESTED:

Healthcare workers serving patients in Bay County should:

- Register for the symptom surveillance program by visiting (<https://tinyurl.com/bchd-covid19-hcw-register>).
  - Required for all workers performing any job role at a healthcare facility in Bay County.
  - Time to complete = 5 minutes.
- Report COVID-19 symptoms and test results by visiting (<https://tinyurl.com/bchd-covid19-hcw-survey>).
  - Required twice daily, including once before each healthcare shift.
  - Time to complete = 1 to 2 minutes.

Healthcare workers lacking the ability to register online for the surveillance program may:

1. Request that a supervisor, coworker, or friend complete the online registration process for them.
2. Print registration (<https://tinyurl.com/bchd-covid19-hcw-forms>) and fax completed form (989-895-4014).
3. Call (989-308-1232) to complete registration by telephone.

Symptoms can also be reported directly online, by fax, by telephone, or by a designated respondent. Healthcare workers relying on others are encouraged to confirm that responses will not be omitted or duplicated.

#### HOW BCHD WILL USE THIS INFORMATION:

BCHD will safeguard the delivery of medical services in Bay County during the COVID-19 pandemic by assisting healthcare employers with monitoring the fitness for duty and symptom status of the entire healthcare workforce.

BCHD will use this information to:

1. Provide healthcare employers with guidance as to when infected or symptomatic healthcare workers should not work and when workers who recover from COVID-19 symptoms are safe to return to work.
2. Ensure a consistent approach to determining fitness for duty among healthcare workers so that healthcare facilities can avoid becoming amplifiers of disease spread from infected healthcare workers to their coworkers or patients.
3. Identify gaps in the healthcare workforce as they develop.
4. Support surge capacity management of the healthcare workforce at healthcare facilities by identifying workers who might be shifted to facilities with the highest need.
5. Avoid or limit disastrous loss of life among residents of nursing homes and long term care facilities, as has occurred in [Spain](#), [Washington](#), and [Maryland](#).
6. Update county and state leaders on the status of the healthcare workforce.
7. Report aggregate statistics to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and other partners involved in the COVID-19 pandemic response.

BCHD will NOT make individual contact details or reported symptoms available to the public. BCHD MAY provide individual information to other public health or governmental agencies when requested or required by law or public health order.

## SYSTEM GOALS AND FUTURE ITERATIONS:

We plan to expand this system in the near future to include:

1. Other critical infrastructure workers: first responders (i.e., EMS, Fire, Police, and 9-1-1); corrections officers; municipal and community water treatment; wastewater; and energy.
2. Members of the general public under quarantine or self-isolation orders.

## WHY BCHD ISSUED EMERGENCY ORDER 2020-2:

On April 2, 2020, the Bay County Health Officer issued an [emergency order](#) necessary to protect the public health of Bay County in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Referencing Section 8 of the Governor's [Executive Order 2020-21](#), employers of healthcare workers were called upon to develop and implement a daily screening program for all staff upon reporting to worksites.

During the pandemic we can expect the healthcare workforce to be greatly reduced because healthcare workers will face a high risk of infection from contact with infected patients. By developing a COVID-19 symptom surveillance program for all healthcare workers, BCHD will work with healthcare employers to [maintain, augment, and stretch the healthcare workforce](#) and safeguard the delivery of medical treatment to Bay County residents.

Healthcare workers will be critical to mounting Bay County's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring the delivery of life-saving treatment to the members of our community who become seriously ill from this disease. While the number of confirmed COVID-19 [cases in Bay County](#) remains low to date (due to the [limited availability of testing](#)), the burden of disease can be expected to rise sharply in the days and weeks ahead. BCHD is doing everything within our purview to support the public health response to this crisis by closely coordinating with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)), the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services ([MDHHS](#)), neighboring local health departments, area health systems, local clinics, and other partners.

Consistent with guidance from [CDC](#), [MDHHS](#) has called upon healthcare workers to monitor themselves for symptoms consistent with COVID-19 by measuring their temperature twice daily and remaining vigilant for the development of any respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath, sore throat). The COVID-19 symptom surveillance program provides a convenient tool for recording this monitoring.

Healthcare workers experiencing symptoms fall into CDC's [Priority Group 1](#) and should be tested for COVID-19. Those healthcare workers who test positive for COVID-19 OR who experience new onset symptoms consistent with COVID-19 are not fit for duty and should not return to work. This is not a time for stoicism. Infected healthcare workers (whether symptomatic or asymptomatic) represent an infectious hazard both to patients and their coworkers. CDC has described a [non-test-based strategy](#) for determining when healthcare workers may return to work, which would be the later of either (a) 7 days after onset of symptoms or else (b) 3 days (72 hours) after resolution of symptoms.

Thank you for your dedication to serving the healthcare needs of patients in Bay County. The success of this effort depends on the participation of the county's entire healthcare workforce. If you have any questions about our implementation of this symptom surveillance program, please contact [hcw@baycounty.net](mailto:hcw@baycounty.net) or call 989-308-1232.

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