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Joel R. Strasz
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To: All Media

From: Joel Strasz, Public Health Officer – Bay County Health Department
Clarence Sevillian, President/CEO – McLaren Bay Region

Date: November 8, 2020

Re: **COVID-19 CASES INCREASING AT UNPRECEDENTED RATE**

BAY COUNTY, MICHIGAN – The Bay County Health Officer and the President/CEO of McLaren Bay Region (MBR) are urging Bay County residents to come together and take all the actions necessary to crush the current surge in cases of COVID-19. This appeal comes as the growing number of cases is driving increased hospitalizations and deaths in Bay County, especially among our most vulnerable residents.

According to the Bay County Health Department (BCHD), confirmed cases of COVID-19 among Bay County residents numbered 430 during the first week of November. For comparison, cases totaled 195 during the entire month of September and 590 during October. Moreover, the fraction of COVID-19 tests performed among Bay County residents that have yielded positive results – known as the test positivity rate – has been rapidly climbing and is now approaching 10% whereas it was less than 2% only a month ago. There have been 67 deaths from COVID-19 among Bay County residents, including 3 fatalities during a recent 24 hour period.

Bay County depends on our healthcare workers to fulfill the medical needs of our community. Healthcare systems across the state, including MBR, have been challenged during this past week by a sharp increase in both the number of patients hospitalized for the treatment of COVID-19. MBR committed to providing patient care through this crisis. It is imperative that patients who need medical care keep their appointments and not neglect their health status.

MBR remains committed to ensuring that all patient care needs will be met throughout this crisis. In close coordination with BCHD, MBR is continuously monitoring the situation and working to ensure that staffing is adequate, personal protective equipment (PPE) is in ample supply, medication is stocked, and equipment is available to ensure the highest quality care for all patients.

MBR will continue safety protocols, including symptom screening of all persons upon entry to MBR facilities and universal mask wearing by all patients and staff, as well as visitor restrictions, which were implemented in October.

The current surge has the potential to overwhelm the healthcare system, and so it is vital that everyone throughout our community take all the actions necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19.

1. Wear a mask: anytime you might end up being in close proximity to persons from outside your household.
2. Watch your distance: maintain at least 6 feet of separation from other persons whenever possible.
3. Wash your hands: using soap and water for at least 20 seconds or else using alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
4. Avoid poorly ventilated spaces: meet outdoors whenever possible if you will be gathering with other persons from outside your household.
5. Avoid crowds: limit the duration of time you spend in public venues and limit your number of close contacts among persons from outside your household.
6. Quarantine when exposed: if you were identified as a close contact to a person deemed infectious, remain at home until 14 days have elapsed since your most recent exposure to any infectious person.
7. Get tested: if you develop COVID-like symptoms, seek testing promptly and self-isolate while awaiting results.
8. Self-isolate when infected: if you test positive for COVID-19, remain at home until 10 days have elapsed since the onset of your symptoms (or since testing was performed if you remain symptom free).

Please do your part and help minimize the spread of COVID-19. For the latest and most accurate information regarding the COVID-19 please go to the Bay County Health Department website at <https://www.baycounty-mi.gov/Health/COVID19/>