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*Susanne R. Young, Secretary*

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**To: All State Employees**  
**From: Susanne Young, Secretary of Administration**  
**Date: March 4, 2020**  
**Subject: Coronavirus Preparedness**

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As state employees, you know that the people of Vermont depend on all of us to deliver vital services night and day, every day of the year—through winter storms, natural disasters, and disease outbreaks. Fortunately, we have experienced professionals across our agencies who have risen to the challenge to prepare for and respond to threats like H1N1 influenza and Ebola. I'm confident in our ability to meet the challenge of this new coronavirus, COVID-19.

Although there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 (coronavirus) in Vermont at this time, we fully expect there will be. We urge Vermonters to stay informed and take all necessary precautions. The Vermont Department of Health has compiled helpful guidance on how to help keep respiratory illnesses like COVID-19 from spreading, travel information and situation updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). **This can all be found at [www.healthvermont.gov/COVID-19](http://www.healthvermont.gov/COVID-19).**

This week, the Health Department Laboratory began testing for COVID-19.

**If you have traveled to countries where there is transmission –Italy, Iran, South Korea or China-- we ask you to contact the Department of Health at 802-863-7240.** The Department of Health will let you know what to look for and guide you on what to do if you develop symptoms that could be from coronavirus.

As of this afternoon, the CDC now recommends that individuals who have traveled to Italy, Iran, South Korea, or China should stay home for 14 days after leaving those countries. They will also touch base with you a few times a week. Supervisors will work with affected employees to make sure they are assisted through this new development. Again, if an employee has recently traveled to Italy, Iran, South Korea, or China they should contact the Department of Health for guidance.

Since the virus first emerged, the Health Department has been in constant contact with CDC and other states to closely monitor developments, and work to minimize the spread of illness – advising health care providers, providing guidance and updates on the website and through the news media. Staff across the department are working in the Health Operations Center to adjust our response as appropriate to the situation in Vermont. Epidemiologists and public health nurses are monitoring people who do not have



symptoms and have recently returned from travel to China, South Korea, Iran, Italy, and Japan. Monitoring means checking their temperature daily, watching for symptoms, and for some people, staying home.

And at the direction of Governor Phil Scott, Vermont Emergency Management assembled an interagency task force to support the overall public health response and further prepare for the likelihood of COVID-19 cases in Vermont.

**I urge state employees and all Vermonters to stay tuned to credible sources of information, and take every day common sense actions to help keep illness from spreading at work, at home, and in our communities:**

- Wash your hands often and well with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with your sleeve or a tissue. Throw tissue in the trash.
- Don't shake hands as a greeting – a simple head nod achieves the same goal.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

This is a rapidly evolving situation. We must rely on facts and science, proven public health measures, and recommended precautions in our personal lives to protect both the people we serve at work, and our friends and families at home. As guidance from the CDC changes, or as we develop new guidelines, we will provide further updates.

Thanks to dedicated state employees like you, we are well-equipped to meet this challenge.