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HEALTH DEPARTMENT UPDATE

In response to some questions I've received about the process surrounding identification of positive COVID-19 cases, I want to share some additional details.

It is the responsibility of the local Health Department to first review and confirm all test results. Residents do not need to self-report, as the Health Department follows up on each result received, even though timing may be that a patient receives notification before we do. It is important to remember that we need to confirm results on our end before an investigation begins.

Once the Health Department receives a positive COVID-19 result through their electronic system, an interview of the positive case is then conducted to obtain information on demographics, signs, symptoms and possible exposure sources (for example work, travel, exposure to another confirmed COVID 19 case). The resident is then provided guidance on social distancing and other infection control measures. The resident is also given the opportunity to ask any questions they may have and to add anything they feel is important about their particular case.

Once the interview is complete, the Health Department focuses on any close contacts the confirmed case had. A close contact is defined as anyone who has been less than six feet apart from the case for more than ten minutes. It is not defined as brief casual contact. Close contacts are notified and provided information for quarantine, with an emphasis placed on those contacts who are high risk. An example of a high risk contact would be someone who has a co-morbidity, is an elder adult, or someone who is a health care worker.

While concern about exposures from visiting supermarkets and other locations where social distancing remains difficult is understandable, it is important to remember that the most effective transmission takes place during prolonged close contact and not casual interaction. It is also important to remember not to leave your house if you do not feel well, even if you do not have a fever. Our Westfield Regional Health Officer, Megan Avallone, continues to stress how important it truly is to stay in your home unless you absolutely must go out. We are urging residents not to gather with others and to pay attention to how you feel. If you start to develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19, please contact your health care provider by phone.

As a community, we will get through this, but we need to all work together first. We can start that process by each doing our part: staying home, not allowing visitors, washing our hands, and staying away from others if we become sick. Be assured that the Health Department is working around the clock to keep each of the communities we serve safer and healthier.

**Providing Public Health and Environmental Services to
Chatham Borough, Fanwood, Garwood, Mountainside,
New Providence, Roselle Park, Summit and Westfield**