For Immediate Release

Date: March 31, 2020

Buckhannon-Upshur COVID-19 Community Task Force Partners Monitor Protective Equipment Supplies, Modify Policies as Pandemic Response Continues

BUCKHANNON – The Upshur-Buckhannon Health Department reported that there had been no new positive-confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Upshur County as of Tuesday morning, March 31, during a Buckhannon-Upshur COVID-19 Community Task Force teleconference.

Despite that report, local partners are continuing to strategize the county’s on-going response to the pandemic.

Much of the collective effort focuses on three tasks:
- Keeping the public informed,
- Sustaining food distribution to families, and
- Making sure medical providers and first responders have the protective equipment they need to serve the public.

There has been one positive-confirmed case of COVID-19 in Upshur County, which was reported on Thursday, March 26. The Upshur-Buckhannon Health Department continues to coordinate that investigation with appropriate local and state partners.

Residents should remain confident in the response and other infection control measures throughout the city and county.

Residents have a crucial role to play in the response!

- Abide by the Governor’s stay-at-home order (see https://governor.wv.gov/pages/default.aspx#homeorder for more information).
- Follow social distancing recommendations like the following.
  - Limit trips out to the extent possible.
  - Plan weekly supply or grocery trips, and when making those trips, allow six feet of space between persons.
  - Check with your neighbors to see if one person on your block can make a single trip for supplies for several households.
  - Send one person per family or group into grocery stores, pharmacies, etc.
• Continue to practice good hand hygiene with soap and water for 20 seconds, or with alcohol-based hand sanitizers that contain at least 60% alcohol.

The task force continues to encourage residents to go outdoors, but everyone should remember social distancing guidelines while they are outside. Local officials have observed several large congregations of people in parks, community basketball courts, etc. Use those community resources! Just remember to keep groups small and to keep six feet between everyone to the extent possible.

Consistent with the Governor’s Executive Order that closes state park campgrounds, the Upshur County Commission closed the James W. Curry Park Campground until further notice, and the Buckhannon City Council is looking at park usage in the city.

Stay informed! As a reminder, according to the CDC, COVID-19 symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure, and include:
• Fever,
• Cough, and
• Shortness of breath.

St. Joseph’s Hospital maintains a Triage Nurse’s Line at 304-473-2161 from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, for community questions. Community Care of West Virginia runs a pandemic triage line from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m, Monday through Friday, at 304-471-2240, also for community questions.

The Upshur-Buckhannon Health Department and the Upshur County Department of Homeland Security have received and distributed personal protective equipment to hospitals, clinics, first responders, etc. Both agencies are working with their counterparts at the state level to request more equipment as it becomes available.

Responders are also reaching out to local businesses to gauge interest in donating protective equipment. Interested parties can contact any emergency responder agency (i.e., police, fire, or emergency medical services) if they would like to participate.

Other services throughout Upshur County continue to see patients and clients. West Virginia Home Health continues to accept patients, as does West Virginia Hospice. Both entities are screening patients to protect patients and staff. Appalachian Community Health Center is also providing telephonic support to clients. The mental health crisis hotline is operational 24/7/365 at 888-315-2880.

Mountain CAP also continues to accept applications and referrals. Interested persons can reach the office at (304) 472-1500, email mountaincap@mountaincap.com, or visit www.mountaincapwv.org or find Mountain CAP on Facebook for general inquiries, affordable rental housing questions, or for information on supportive services for veteran families.
The Mountain CAP Child Advocacy Center is offering support and referrals electronically; call 304-473-0020 for more information. The center will conduct forensic interviews for children who are in imminent risk of harm. For confidential reporting of neglect or abuse for youth under 18 years of age, call the hotline at 1-800-352-6513. The Mountain CAP Weatherization Assistance Program has temporarily ceased entering homes to provide services; however, for no-heat emergencies, the program can provide temporary space heaters until the pandemic emergency passes. Call 304-472-1515 for additional information.

Both the Upshur County Commission and the City of Buckhannon would like to remind residents that both the county offices and city hall remain closed. Essential services remain operational. Visit http://www.upshurcounty.org/alert_detail.php and http://buckhannonwv.org/covid-19/ for additional information on accessing county and city services.

The COVID-19 pandemic response is a fluid situation, and the task force will continue to meet regularly.

Local authorities continue to stress the need for residents to seek information from trusted, reliable sources. Those sources include the CDC (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html) and WVDHHR (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx) websites, which contain updated information about the COVID-19 virus. Governor Jim Justice’s website contains information about the state’s response: https://governor.wv.gov/Pages/default.aspx.

Partner agencies such as St. Joseph’s Hospital, Upshur-Buckhannon Health Department, Upshur County Schools, the City of Buckhannon, and the Upshur County Commission will also continue to release details specific to their programs and operations through various local media outlets.

The Buckhannon-Upshur COVID-19 Community Task Force is a coalition of stakeholders representing the health department, medical providers, the county and city governments, as well as emergency response agencies, educational providers, social services agencies, and civic organizations. The task force also includes representatives from daycare centers, public housing authorities, nursing homes, etc.