

Fremont County Public Health Update

April 13th, 2020

The strategies for businesses and municipalities to combat the COVID-19 pandemic have been left to the individual States with the notable exception of international travel restrictions. Governor Gordon's hesitance to mandate a Wyoming "stay at home" order has meant that local businesses have fashioned their own plans with input from local government and health officials. The Tribes have voluntarily instituted more stringent legal restrictions that have had a very positive impact. So far these combined efforts in Fremont County have been effective and have not required additional legal mandates from the County Health Officer.

Our higher risk populations in nursing homes have been protected since mid-March by federal industry mandates. I would like to remind everyone that this is the population we all are trying hardest to keep from being exposed to COVID-19 by adhering to the current restrictions.

An analysis of the data shows that Fremont County may have yet to meet its biggest COVID-19 challenge. With the help of our frontline health care providers we have successively supported the first seriously ill patients of this outbreak, but a larger concern for a more extensive outbreak looms.

We continue to watch closely the numbers of self-isolation cases from the previous 2 weeks and monitor potential seeding from surrounding counties and states, as even last week an asymptomatic out of state visitor caused a large exposure in the county.

Calls to return to business as usual are understood. The economic hardship of the shutdown is catastrophic. Balancing the lives saved by flattening the curve with that economic hardship will continue to require difficult decisions as we plan how to restart our county, our state and our nation.

When the time comes, the local governments and businesses of Fremont County can help chart the safest path to what will be the NEW NORMAL. That new normal may last another year before science has found an adequate vaccine or treatment for this virus.

How can you help?

Right Now

We should adopt ALL the CDC guidelines for our offices and businesses!

Require your employees to wear cloth masks and give your customers the means to keep their hands clean. Ask or even require that your customers wear masks and observe 6 foot distancing guidelines at all times. Keep frequently touched objects like gas pumps, door handles and credit card machines meticulously clean. Make it visible to all how you are helping to keep your employees and your customers safe. That likely means signs out front requiring customers to wear masks!

Social gatherings - continue to limit them to less than 10 MASKED people with strict adherence to 6 ft spacing. Strongly consider discouraging gatherings with people not currently living in one household.

Out of town Visitors - Consider stronger recommendations to travelers into our region. The Governor has already asked that visitors self quarantine for 14 days. Please make this known throughout your local municipalities.

Community and Business ideas to Consider now for “WHEN” restrictions are lifted

Gyms - Many good plans have been proposed to maintain social distancing and stringent cleaning. Share plans with like businesses to make sure there is consistency across the county.

Churches - Consider two or three separate services with wide spacing between church members instead of one large service. Alternate aisle seating with vacant rows. Keep entrance and exit doors open so that guests do not touch door handles. Require masks. No potlucks please.

Movie theaters - Customers and patrons should wear masks. No adjacent seating for non-household groups. Seat alternate or every third row only.

Restaurants and Bars - Create wide spaced seating. All employees should wear masks. Customers do not have to wear masks. Implement numerous hand cleaning stations.

Personal care businesses - Both employees and patrons should wear masks. Come up with strict guidelines to maintain social distancing and hygiene practices at all times. Please share with all like businesses in your communities.

Nursing homes and senior housing: Realistically, those living here are our most vulnerable citizens and have the least flexibility. NO lifting of current industry restrictions until this pandemic is over.

Again, these are RECOMMENDATIONS only. Current restrictions remain in place and no lifting of these will be considered by the County Health Officer until the Governor's office gives further direction. Obviously if these conditions are extended or changed in any fashion these orders would be followed as well. If local health conditions worsen and are deemed to require more urgent action, then stronger restrictions may be considered by the County Health Officer as per Wyoming Statute 35-1-227 (in conjunction with the State Health Officer consultation under Wyoming Statute 35-1-240 (a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)).

Thank you for your help in protecting the citizens of Fremont County.

Dr. Brian Gee

Fremont County Public Health Officer