



GRANVILLE VANCE

public health

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 22, 2020

CONTACT

Lisa Macon Harrison, MPH
Health Director
Granville Vance Public Health
919-690-2108 office
919-614-3447 mobile
lharrison@gvdhd.org

UPDATE: As of March 22, 2020, there is one confirmed case of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) that we know of in Vance County. The affected person is currently in isolation at home and has cooperated with the restrictions since being tested. Local public health officials will notify individuals if they may have been at risk of being in contact.

Both Granville and Vance County's first cases are considered community spread – neither one has traveled out of North Carolina recently that we know of at this time.

To protect privacy of these individuals who test positive now or in the future, no additional information will be shared by the health department. We have strict guidance, legal obligation, HIPAA regulations, and moral obligation to tend to individual privacy. We are also very committed to looking out for the public's health to the best of our ability.

"I know people are worried and want additional information – that is natural and I understand. Here is what we need the community to know about our strong commitment to keeping everyone safe and healthy while we protect the privacy of individuals," says Lisa Macon Harrison, local health director:

1. Your public health team is working tirelessly to identify positive COVID-19 patients, ensure they remain isolated at home, and start tracing any known contacts from the previous two weeks. Contact tracing means we are the disease investigators determining any potential at-risk contacts and notifying them individually of that contact and that risk. We care very much about everyone's health, and we need your trust now more than ever.
2. Sharing additional information about the whereabouts of this individual – even the region of the county they reside in – does not contribute to the public's health. It does not change what you or they are to do to stay healthy and puts the individual's privacy at risk.

These test results are coming in from many different labs and provider offices. Our commitment to you is to let you know we have a positive AS SOON AS WE CAN CONFIRM THE RESULTS. That may include getting information out to the public before we have even completed our contact tracing fully, but it's important to us that we get you what we know as soon as we know it. We will let you know more information that is appropriate to share about whether a case is community spread or travel related once we are able to confirm that through an interview with the patient. At this point in the pandemic, it is likely that most counties in NC have some amount of community spread.

Families of individuals who are confirmed positive for COVID-19 will be given information about isolation and quarantine and asked to remain at home for 14 days. While the illness isn't severe for most people, it can be really serious for some. GVPH is taking appropriate steps to stop its spread. Some who are sick when they are tested may even clear the virus by the time the results are back from the lab. We all need to be following the guidance to stay home and practice good hand hygiene regardless of the number of positive cases in our community.

State guidance continues to require fever AND lower respiratory symptoms (cough or difficulty breathing) to be present in order to take a sample collection for testing. Please do not show up in your doctor's office, the hospital, or the health department requesting a test if you do not have symptoms. Again, rest assured that if you were in contact with the person who tested positive and we have that information, we will let you know on an individual basis. For those who test positive for COVID-19, there is no known treatment or vaccine available so for now, the course of action will not change.

Although we have enough sample test kits to work with those who are showing symptoms of illness, we do not have the supplies to test everyone at this point. Dr. Guthrie, Granville Vance Public Health Medical Director, offers a reminder there are things we can all do to stay protected from COVID-19:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a generous amount of hand sanitizer, with at least 60% alcohol, on all surfaces of the hands and wrists.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Disinfect surfaces – especially ones that are frequently touched – using household cleaning spray or wipes.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Listen to the advice about social distancing and reducing the spread of this virus – we all have a part to play and staying home is a simple way to reduce spread.
- Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress. Understand things are changing quickly and everyone is still learning.

What to do and when to seek medical evaluation and advice:

- If you or a family member has fever AND lower respiratory symptoms (cough or difficulty breathing), **call your healthcare provider first.** **The person who tested positive in Vance did all the right things - called first, was able to prepare the provider for testing and everyone addressing the patient was able to remain at low-risk for exposure in the situation.** That is the ideal way to ask for a test – to talk through it first - and that is what we ask of everyone.
- Emergency rooms need to be able to serve the most critically ill so do not use the Emergency Room unless you are very sick. Emergency warning signs include, but are not limited to:
 - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
 - New confusion or inability to arouse
 - Bluish lips or face
- Only call 9-1-1 if you are having an emergency.
- You may call the statewide Coronavirus Helpline if you have questions at 1-866-462-3821, which is answered 24 hours a day / 7 days a week.

Please rely on accurate sources of information from the CDC (www.cdc.gov) and State Division of Public Health (<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-response-north-carolina>) as well as your own local public health officials. Granville Vance Public Health will provide the most up-to-date and accurate information for COVID-19 in our district online at <https://gvph.org/>.