



May 27, 2020

For Immediate Release

**For More Information:**

Andrea Whitmarsh, Public Information Officer

518-873-3546 | [andrea.whitmarsh@essexcountyny.gov](mailto:andrea.whitmarsh@essexcountyny.gov)

The phased reopening of New York State is well underway. As we approach Phase 2, the Essex County Health Department (ECHD) has fielded lots of questions about the reopening process. We would like to help answer these questions and provide an update about where we stand with our coronavirus response activities.

Recently, Governor Cuomo outlined a reopening plan for New York State, focusing on getting people back to work and easing social isolation, without triggering renewed spread of the virus or overwhelming the hospital system. This plan is detailed in the *NY Forward Book*, which can be reviewed at: <https://forward.ny.gov>. This link can also be used by businesses and industries to access guidance about operating during this critical time. A *NY Forward Business Reopen Lookup Tool* is available to help business owners determine whether or not a business is eligible to reopen, and includes the public health and safety standards with which businesses must comply. This tool is available at: <https://www.businessexpress.ny.gov/app/nyforward>. Resources, trainings, and other helpful materials and links can also be accessed through the North Country Chamber of Commerce website: <http://www.northcountrychamber.com/>

“Familiarizing yourself with these links and the information contained within is an important first step toward ensuring that your business is ready to reopen,” emphasized Linda Beers, Director of Public Health for the county. “While the Essex County Health Department remains your local, trusted source for information about coronavirus, we want to ensure that everyone has the most up-to-date business guidance coming from the state”, continued Beers. Some of the questions the health department has been fielding pertain to concerns or questions about businesses or gatherings that appear non-compliant with the governor’s executive orders. “We are always happy to work through these concerns with our residents – hopefully in a manner that is agreeable to all parties. However, we do want to stress that we do not create, issue or enforce the executive orders pertaining to coronavirus, nor do we have the resources to address all complaints or concerns”, stated Beers. Individuals can file complaints regarding the operation by businesses or gatherings through an online form at: <https://mylicense.custhelp.com/app/ask> or by calling 1-833-789-0740.

As we move forward, the health department is transitioning from initial response and mitigation activities into monitoring, surveillance, and containment. This still includes work we’ve been doing all along at the local level in response to COVID-19: interpreting and sharing guidance and information, increasing access to testing and other resources, isolating all positive cases, and conducting all contact tracing activities, which is especially significant. Contacting tracing involves identifying and monitoring of all contacts of infected people, notifying them of their exposure, and supporting the quarantine of these contacts to help ensure they can maintain their quarantine such that additional transmission is prevented. Contacts are provided with education, information, and support to understand their risk, what they should do to separate themselves from others who are not exposed, monitor themselves for illness, and the possibility that they could spread the infection to others even if they themselves do not feel ill. We then maintain contact with all isolated and quarantined individuals throughout their isolation or

quarantine period to ensure successful completion.

Based on this level of activity and the other core public health functions that the health department is always responsible for, there are aspects of our current COVID-19 reporting and engagement functions that will transition as well. You may have already noticed that we are no longer providing our daily updates over the weekend. Although we maintain a 24/7 response capacity, our resources to continue to provide updates and information over every weekend going forward are limited. We are also continually assessing the information we do provide, taking feedback into consideration, and expanding or modifying our reporting to be as transparent and thorough as possible. All of our updates can be accessed at our Facebook page:

[www.facebook.com/EssexCountyPublicHealth](https://www.facebook.com/EssexCountyPublicHealth), which stream on our website: [www.co.essex.ny.us/Health](http://www.co.essex.ny.us/Health). The website also includes many other resources and links to helpful information – both regarding COVID-19 and any other topic or program relevant to Public Health. We can always be reached by calling 1-518-873-3500 during business hours (Monday – Friday, 8AM – 5PM) or by calling 1-888-270-7249 after hours.

Other sources of COVID-19 information and data include the New York State Department of Health website: <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>, New York Forward Regional Monitoring Dashboard: <https://forward.ny.gov/regional-monitoring-dashboard>, the COVID-19 Tracker: <https://covid19tracker.health.ny.gov/views/NYS-COVID19-Tracker/>, and the Governor's daily briefing at: <https://www.facebook.com/NYSDOH/>.

“As the weather warms and coronavirus cases continue to decline in New York State, we know that people are understandably feeling the need to return to some sense of normalcy. We want to remind everyone that our ability to move forward with the reopening plan depends on keeping the spread down. Citizens must act responsibly and with concern for their neighbors and community interactions— wash your hands, respect social distancing guidelines, use hand sanitizer, wear a mask, and keep gatherings reasonable and safe”, noted Beers. “We all want to come out on the other side of this better and stronger than before”.

###