



Date: March 6, 2020

**Re: Healthcare Providers and County Public Health Officials Urge Public Calm Over COVID-19 Outbreak**

With today’s announcement from the Arizona Department of Health Services of what may represent the first case of community transmission of coronavirus in Arizona, we have entered into a new phase in our response. Our best and most effective tool to use at this time is communicating responsible and accurate information to the public.

There is a lot still to learn about the new Coronavirus outbreak called COVID-19 but what we do know from data gathered from communities across the globe dealing with the outbreak tells us that the worse thing we can do as a community in response to the virus is overreact.

**Here’s what we know so far:**

The impact of COVID-19, when widespread, will look something like a severe flu season. Though the virus is quite contagious, the vast majority of infections are mild – sometimes asymptomatic – and not typically lethal (deadly). COVID-19 is most dangerous for many of the same people who are most at risk for the flu: older adults and those with chronic disease.

There have been calls by some in our community to close schools, shutter businesses, or cancel events because of the mere threat of the virus coming to Pima County, not just when there is a confirmed case here. Doing so will only cause severe economic and social disruption beyond what we will already experience and will have little to no effect on containing the spread of this virus. We don’t close schools due to the flu, and we’re going through a pretty bad flu season currently, and we shouldn’t close schools and the like for COVID-19.

**Instead, we should all do the things that we know work in combatting the spread of illnesses similar to this virus:**

- Wash your hands, frequently
- Keep your hands away from your face
- Avoid sick people, if you can
- Stay home if you’re sick

Be prepared for changes as the situation evolves. Rely on public health officials and your personal health care provider for accurate information about COVID-19. Pima County has established a webpage – [pima.gov/covid19](http://pima.gov/covid19), with an enormous amount of information about the illness and how to protect yourself and your family.

Take care of yourselves as we go through this. Use the same practices we do each cold and flu season and please stay home if you’re sick. **Be Alert, Not Anxious!**

