



## COVID-19 INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

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### Bi-Weekly Bulletin

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**Subject:** Island County COVID-19 Response

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#### **Review of Week News and Updates from the Week of 3/30/20**

**Welcome:** This bulletin will be released on Tuesdays and Fridays by your PIO team and will replace the daily brief.

Another welcome - this week Tabitha Sierra joined Island County Public Health and our operations team. She is an RN/MPH coming from WhidbeyHealth, and we are thrilled to have her on the team.

**Numbers and Data:** At the time of this writing, Island County has 122 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 4 deaths. Data on the webpage is now disaggregated by island. As cases grow, public health staff will be able to produce more visualizations and will be able to disaggregate the data further (e.g., by age). As of the end of March, approximately 700 people in Island County have been tested (this information was gathered from community partners by public health staff and is not an official count). Island County's epidemiologist is working on a comprehensive data report for March.

The Washington Disease Reporting System (WDRS) is still experiencing delays. The state is also now updating numbers at 11:59 pm. WA Department of Health (WADOH) recently instructed labs to temporarily cease the reporting of negative test results into the system in an effort to allow for WDRS positive case reporting capacity. WADOH is working on building capacity in the system to start including negative test results again.

**Governor Extends 'Stay Home, Stay Healthy':** The Governor extended the 'Stay Home, Stay Healthy' order until May 4<sup>th</sup>. Social distancing seems to be helping to slow the number of cases, but state health officials are reiterating the need to continue social

distancing efforts. Although needed, this will have significant impacts on our community and local economy.

**Long-Term Care Facilities (LTF) Update:** Public health and other agencies continue to support Careage. Numbers currently show that around 60% of the positive cases are residents and 40% employees. Public Health staff worked with a WADOH strike team this week to assess and provide guidance to Careage. Findings will be used to assist other LTFs and will focus on efficient and effective use of PPE. There are currently no other known outbreaks in LTFs in Island County.

**Community Partner Highlights:** A big thank you to Central Whidbey Fire who produced a great video summarizing current public health guidance to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The Incident Management Team (IMT) also worked closely with Island Transit this week to help prepare their public statement for release and help ensure that their staff and riders received all needed safety guidance. Also this week, a system was created to securely share data about confirmed cases with ICOM-911 for use in assisting our first responders.

**PPE and Logistics:** Ten ventilators were delivered to WhidbeyHealth this week, thanks to the logistics team, with another shipment expected for delivery this afternoon. Logistics continues to place weekly orders with the state, but delivery inventory remains well below requested quantities. The Department of Emergency Management (DEM) Director recently placed an emphasis on urgent needs, resulting in some success with increased numbers for today's expected shipment.

Island County DEM continues to look for creative solutions to source PPE. Logistics staff are looking into a special FDA approved method of cleaning used PPE. Gowns remain the most challenging PPE to source. The DEM director put in a specific request for gowns and some are expected for delivery this afternoon.

DEM logistics staff are also helping to plan for alternative hospital facilities and requesting a federal medical team to supply beds, sheets, etc. It is not known at this time if the request will be filled.

**WhidbeyHealth Update:** WhidbeyHealth is working with DEM to help consolidate the process of onboarding, licensing, and activating clinical volunteers when/if needed. The hospital drive-thru testing has changed labs, which has significantly reduced the time it takes to receive results. Swabbing supplies are still limited. Testing has slowed down in the last week, so drive-thru days have been reduced to Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays only.

There has been national press surrounding not only the supply of ventilators but the need for increased capacity in trained vent staff. WhidbeyHealth is actively working to increase staff capacity to operate ventilators through a variety of proactive approaches. They are also planning to bolster capacity by creating a COVID-19 ward and facilitating the use of care teams, which can result in a more efficient use of clinical staff. Due to

the shortage of gowns, WhidbeyHealth staff are actually working to make gowns from plastic sheeting donated by Home Depot.

On a positive note, it seems that social distancing may also be helping to drive down flu numbers in Island County.

**Other Stakeholder Meetings:** PIOs and the communication team have continued to hold regular calls with key stakeholder groups in our community. We held tele-conferences with behavioral health providers, local healthcare providers, and school administrators. We continue to email and call individual stakeholders groups and community partners to discuss messaging and offer specific guidance.

**Masking:** The CDC officially changed its guidance regarding masking today and now recommends that people wear cloth masks when in settings where social distancing can't be maintained. Please read [here](#) for more information.

### **Up and Coming:**

1. The economic impact of the 'Stay Home, Stay Healthy' extension is very real and the community will feel this stress. We are working to collect and disseminate information that will help support our community. Your efforts in this will be valued and appreciated.
2. Markets are slated to start soon and are on the list of essential businesses. We have received many inquiries and have worked to direct market managers to the correct guidance and the Washington State Farmers Market Association recommendations for how to operate during this pandemic. We imagine that our community will have an array of feedback when/if markets open.
3. Careage has been the center of a lot of media attention and we have received a number of media requests related to this outbreak. Related to this press coverage, a new report from the CDC is looking at the potential limitations of testing only symptomatic patients in skilled nursing facilities. Careage chose to test all of their residents and employees.
4. The IMT will be experiencing a reorganization to help better integrate with emergency management activities and community partners. As complexity grows, so does our need for an expanded structure.
5. The public information team is looking to create more personalized and local messaging. Be on the lookout for opportunities to help us in this effort!