

HEALTH ADVISORY



COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
GOVERNOR'S COVID-19 TASK FORCE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 2, 2020

Two new COVID-19 confirmed cases in the CNMI

Governor Ralph DLG. Torres, the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) announce the confirmation of two new COVID-19 cases in the CNMI.

These two new cases of COVID-19 include a 55-year-old male and a 31-year-old male. These two individuals have no recent travel history. Both are in stable condition and remain in isolation.

Both individuals are being closely monitored by CHCC medical teams. CHCC has already initiated contact tracing for the most immediate contacts (close family members, friends, and associates) of all confirmed cases. CHCC continues to work with the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force to expand designated isolation areas to closely monitor the well-being of individuals with symptoms.

As of April 2, 2020, the CNMI has submitted 33 specimens for COVID-19 testing to the Guam Public Health Laboratory. Of these 33 specimens, 23 have been processed, resulting in eight (8) positive specimens and 15 negative specimens. CHCC awaits the results of nine (9) specimens.

Community Transmission

Some of these cases have come in contact with those who have a travel history from a location with confirmed COVID-19 cases. Other cases have had no recent travel history or no evident indication of coming in contact with someone who is positive for COVID-19.

This new finding of cases occurring among those without close contact is suggestive that COVID-19 community transmission is occurring on Saipan. Community transmission means people have been infected within our community and not just imported from another COVID-19 outbreak jurisdiction.

Demographics of Confirmed Cases in the CNMI			
Age Category (Yrs.)	Male	Female	Total
0-4	0	0	0
5-19	0	1	1
20-49	2	1	3
50-64	1	1	2
65+	1	1	2
Total	4	4	8

Teleconsultation for COVID-19 Symptoms

Consistent with its message urging residents to practice social distancing, the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation (CHCC) is enabling people to connect with doctors virtually, while staying at home.

Medical teleconsultation is a pivotal tool for helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19, while still connecting patients with advice they need from medical professionals.

Members of the community who are concerned about COVID-19-like symptoms they are experiencing can call the CHCC's COVID-19 Infoline to describe their symptoms, and determine if they should speak with a medical professional. Callers can choose to talk to medical staff via a video chat or the telephone about the symptoms they're having.

"We're excited to make this an option for those who don't want to come to a clinic or our screening tent to inquire about their symptoms. It's important that we protect both our patients and our staff by reducing the need for face to face interaction as much as possible," says CHCC CEO Esther Muña.

"The software we're using to conduct the web-based video teleconsultations does not require the patient to download anything. Patients just click the link they receive on their smart phone, tablet, or computer, and they're in a virtual waiting room," explained Muña.

CHCC is urging community members with mild illnesses to treat their symptoms at home and to practice self-quarantine while sick. This means not leaving the house except to get medical care, remaining separate from others in the home, and not sharing dishes, food, or bedding with others in the household. A complete guide to self-quarantine can be found on the CHCC's COVID-19 webpage.

Text Illness Monitoring (TIM)

To assist health officials to track symptoms of our community members, the CHCC has implemented the use of Text Illness Monitoring, or TIM. TIM is a mobile texting tool developed by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to allow individuals to easily communicate their symptoms to CNMI health officials. CHCC staff have begun enrolling individuals into the TIM system at the airport and at the CHCC health tent located at the Navy Hill campus.

Individuals enrolled in TIM receive one to two messages each day for up to 14 days asking about any symptoms that are consistent with COVID-19. CHCC staff will immediately be alerted when an enrollee responds that they are experiencing symptoms and when an enrollee fails to respond to two messages in a row. Based on responses, CHCC staff may choose to follow up with an enrollee for further information. At the end of the 14-day monitoring period, individuals will receive a final message informing them that they have completed monitoring and will be unenrolled from T.I.M. If you would like to enroll in TIM, call the COVID-19 Info Line.

STAY AT HOME, STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC reminds the public that the best way to protect yourself and others from COVID-19 and other illnesses is to continue to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on.

- **Please stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or exposure in public places.**
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Avoid eating out at restaurants. Use drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklist-household-ready.html>
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene:

- Wash your hands for at least 20 second with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are unavailable.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic:

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine looks like:
 - Choose a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Limit visitors

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC appreciate the patience and understanding of the community at this time.

To obtain information about COVID-19, please reach out to the CHCC COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1542/1672/1352/1854

These numbers are available 7:30 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. Monday to Friday.

For mental health assistance and health tips during a crisis please reach out to the Mental Health Support Line at the following numbers: 285-1856/1857

These numbers are available 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday.

For more information about CHCC programs, please follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

This health advisory may be found online at <http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html>

For more information on the overall COVID-19 response in the CNMI, please follow the CNMI Office of the Governor on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at @GovernorCNMI.

CHCC Point of Contact:

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