



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 20, 2020

COVID-19 Joint Press Communication Update

The Crisis Communication Team would like to report that, at the time of this press release, there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Macon County. Thus far, six tests have been completed for Macon County residents, with two negative test results and four pending test results. Because testing is not widely available to the general public, it is **imperative** that community members, whether feeling ill or well, implement social distancing best practices to limit the spread and contraction of COVID-19. This means staying home and away from as many people as possible as often as possible.

If you experience symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath, do not present at a hospital emergency room or doctor's office immediately unless it is a true emergency. Please first call your primary care physician. If you do not have a primary care physician in place at this time, you may call DMH Medical Group at (217) 876-2856, Crossing Healthcare at (217) 877-9117 or SIU at (217) 872-3800. HSHS Medical Group Family Medicine Forsyth is operating a regional respiratory hub. Their hours are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, and Saturday 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Please call your primary care provider before seeking care at the respiratory hub. Memorial Health System is operating a respiratory screening clinic at its DMH Express Care East location to screen people for the COVID-19 virus. The clinic at 4455 U.S. Route 36 East will operate seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. People coming to the respiratory clinic should call (217) 876-1200 before they arrive. Patients and visitors to healthcare facilities should be prepared to be screened before entering.

Daily PSA: Addressing Some Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I called my doctor to tell them my symptoms and they told me I couldn't get tested for COVID-19. Days later, I feel worse. How can I get tested?

A: We encourage you to follow back up with your healthcare provider once more and explain the persistence of symptoms since your last discussion. They are the medical experts and are best suited to determine which steps to take in tandem with the Illinois Department of Public Health and your local health department.

Q: How can I receive the most up-to-date information surrounding COVID-19 in relation to my business or agency?

A: We encourage all public and private partners to please sign up for SIREN if you have not already done so. SIREN is a secure web-based persistent messaging and alerting system that leverages

email, phone, text, pagers and other messaging formats to provide 24/7/365 notification, alerting, and flow of critical information. This system provides rapid communication, alerting and confirmation between state and local agencies, public and private partners, target disciplines and authorized individuals in support of state and local emergency preparedness and response.

Link to register: <https://siren.illinois.gov/>

Q: If someone is diagnosed with COVID-19, will their employer be notified due to the exposure to others in the workplace?

A: Yes. The employer would be contacted with information to send out to staff, most of whom would be at low risk. The employee name would not be provided. In the instance of no confirmed case, this contact to employers would not be made. A special note to employers: *not everyone with symptoms and/or that has COVID-19 may be tested/confirmed*. You may have some employees directed to self-quarantine due to symptoms. It would be up to the employee to notify her/his employer. To prevent the spread of illness in your workplace, you should be taking all precautions outlined by the CDC to prevent the spread of illness. The link to guidance for workplaces follows:

is <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

Update to Community Volunteers Needed and an Additional Resource for Veterans

A message from the United Way and the agencies seeking volunteers: "Agencies need volunteers under 59. We ask all volunteers 60 and over to take a break and stay well because we are going to need you when this all ends!"

To volunteer at the Good Samaritan Inn: Please contact Francie at 217.429.1455 between the hours of 9:00 and 2:00. If you don't get an answer, please try back, or simply drop by to see if help is needed. You can also schedule your volunteer time by email Francie at Volunteercoordinator.goodsam@gmail.com. Due to the shift in meal delivery, The Good Samaritan Inn is operating on reduced staff and hours. Your patience is truly appreciated.

To volunteer at Northeast Community Fund: Northeast asks that you go to their website, northeastcommunityfund.org and register through their volunteer portal. Once signed up, volunteers can schedule themselves online for one or two 2.5 hour shifts (9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays). Please select "food pantry" when self-scheduling.

For United Way of Decatur & Mid-Illinois: Please use the Get Connected: Volunteer in Mid-Illinois portal at https://volunteermidillinois.galaxydigital.com/agency/detail/?agency_id=111106.

Veterans experiencing mental stress/anxiety can call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255; have confidential chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net; or text to 838255.

A Message from Ameren

Effective immediately, Ameren is suspending all disconnections for non-payment and forgiving any late payment fees for residential and business customers. Normal billing for customers' usage will continue as usual, but if you are having difficulty paying your bill, please contact our Customer Care team or go to our [Illinois payment assistance page](#) to learn about your options. Customer Care: Residential: 800.755.5000 (IL) or Business: 800.232.2477 (IL). This comes from Ameren's website at https://www.ameren.com/account/customer-service/covid-19?wt.mc_id=Covid-homepage-link.

Please Keep Sharing

Businesses, agencies, organizations and individuals are coming together and harmoniously working to address our local situation and the needs of our community members. We continue to gather information regarding new resources available to our community. Along with the primary care sites and respiratory screening clinics listed above, here is a list of some other resources that might be of benefit in the weeks and months to come.

The State of Illinois has released a new website dedicated to providing information surrounding the COVID-19 situation across the state. You can visit that site at coronavirus.illinois.gov.

Heritage Behavioral Health is providing crisis support to anyone experiencing increased anxiety and/or depression and anyone needing any additional support. Support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week by calling (217) 362-6262.

Central Illinois residents experiencing stress and anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic or other issues in their lives can call a free, emotional-support hotline operated by Memorial Behavioral Health. The hotline, (217) 588-5509, operated by trained mental-health professionals, will operate from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week, for the foreseeable future.

Memorial Health System announced it has made its MemorialNow virtual-care service free to anyone in central Illinois. The normal \$40 fee-per-virtual visit will be waived for the foreseeable future. New users can download the free MemorialNow app from the Apple Store or Google Play Store or by visiting MemorialNow.com and following written instructions. The service is open to any patient regardless of insurance status or whether the patient already uses a Memorial Health System doctor, nurse practitioner or physician assistant.

Memorial Health System has an online digital assistant to assess individuals for COVID-19 risk based on criteria from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The confidential digital assistant, named "AnneSarah," will assess individuals' risk and, if necessary, inform them on how to seek treatment. This online tool is another way to help the public determine their risk for COVID-19 while allowing them to stay safe in their own homes. To access the digital assistant, visit ChooseMemorial.org/COVID19.

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For more information, please contact:

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