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For Immediate Release

MCHD, National Guard to provide testing to vulnerable populations

MORGANTOWN, WV (May 19, 2020) — In accordance with Gov. Jim Justice's order to provide free COVID-19 testing to vulnerable populations in certain counties, Monongalia County Health Department will partner with the West Virginia National Guard to test individuals on Friday and Saturday at three locations.

Testing will take place from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday at the Big Lots parking lot in Westover, and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at the WVU Coliseum parking lot and at Mountainview Elementary. All three sites have bus transportation available.

"This testing will be provided to people even if they don't have symptoms," said Dr. Lee B. Smith, MCHD executive director and county health officer. "They also won't need a physician's order or health insurance."

Testing will accommodate pedestrians as well as individuals in their vehicles. Tests will be conducted on a first come, first served basis.

"While any resident of Monongalia County is eligible to get the testing, it is geared toward vulnerable populations, including minorities, those with special needs and individuals without primary health care providers," Dr. Smith said.

In order to help notify individuals of their test results, all participants will need to provide their name, date of birth and a telephone number where test results may be reported. Monongalia County Health Department staff will be in contact with everyone who tests, letting them know if their results are positive or negative.

"In an effort to stop the spread of this viral disease which may cause illness, hospitalization or even death, people who test positive will be asked about anyone in their family and social circle, which is called 'contact tracing,'" Dr. Smith said. "This will allow our staff members to find other individuals who also might have been infected with COVID-19."

It is strongly encouraged that anyone who arrives for testing at either of the sites wear a mask or face covering. This is especially true for those with symptoms, who should alert organizers to that fact. Those conducting the testing will be wearing full personal protective equipment (PPE) and social distancing will be observed.

"The safety of persons being tested and staff doing the specimen collecting is of the utmost importance," Dr. Smith said.

Once individuals are tested, they are asked to go home and remain there until they learn their results. This is the standard protocol asked of anyone who receives a COVID-19 test.

Wearing masks in public and maintaining a social distance of at least 6 feet is also recommended for everyone, including those who receive tests for those times that they are out in public.

Other points for those who are interested in testing include:

- West Virginia National Guard medical staff will be assisting MCHD staff with nasal swabbing for both testing days.
- There will be a registration table where labels will be made for the tube that contains the specimen and the outer bag for submission to the lab.
- To obtain a good specimen for testing, the person performing the test places a small, flexible Q-tip-like swab in the nose, which is advanced to the back of the throat and then removed after several seconds. There is slight and temporary discomfort.
- Specimens may take several days to run in the lab and those participating will be contacted with their results. This is why contact information from those taking the test is so important.
- Any questions may be addressed to Monongalia County Health Department at 304-598-5100.
- Frequently asked questions (FAQ) may be found on the health department's website, monchd.org/covid-19.html.
- For those who do have health insurance, there will be no charge or co-pay for anyone. However, MCHD would like to obtain some administration fees from the insurance company to help cover supplies and employee time, so please bring health insurance information.

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