

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Garrett Organizations Continue to Coordinate COVID-19 Response Efforts

December 8, 2020, Oakland, MD – Garrett County Government, the Garrett County Health Department and other area organizations have a strong history of working together. In regards to the COVID-19 pandemic, for the last 9 months specifically, the County, the health department, hospital, Board of Education, and Emergency Management teams have been working together daily to coordinate structured response efforts.

Through these regular meetings and information sharing sessions, the local agencies have implemented policies and procedures designed to mitigate the community spread of COVID-19. Even though Garrett County now has one of the highest COVID-19 positivity rates in the state, the County is prepared to meet this challenge.

Issues that are regularly discussed, addressed, and locally planned for are:

- Public health impact and mitigation
- Economic impact, funding, and grants
- Business reopening restrictions and mandates
- Virtual learning and/or in-person school planning
- COVID-19 testing availability
- Masking mandate enforcement
- Hospital capacity and surge
- Homeless populations
- EMS response and safety
- Personal protective equipment
- Vaccine logistics and scheduling

Since the health department is a state agency, all local agencies are in-tune with the most recent state data. The health officer receives information directly from the state and offers timely information to all of the supporting agencies.

The Board of Garrett County Commissioners agreed at the outset of this public health emergency to follow all of Governor Hogan's Executive Orders and remain committed to implementing and enforcing those orders. The County has not implemented any additional restrictions but will continue to monitor the situation and continue to seek and rely on the advice and guidance of the Health Officer and other health professionals.

Ultimately, the Board of County Commissioners has been and continues to advocate personal responsibility during this unique public health emergency. The County and the County Health Officer continue to regularly communicate the state Orders and best practices with the public.

“Our dedicated teams are regularly meeting to be educated, prepared and plan for all elements of the response to this situation,” said Paul Edwards, Chair, Board of Garrett County Commissioners. “This is an unprecedented time and I am proud of the coordination and collaboration here locally in managing this public health crisis.”

If and when new information is received, each local coordinating agency shares with the group as soon as possible.

Overall, this is a public health situation thus, the Garrett County Health Department is the lead agency in response efforts. The County and Health Department websites will have the most current COVID 19 information. Also, another key stakeholder in the fight against COVID is Garrett Regional Medical Center (GRMC). Since there are now more local cases, GRMC has begun posting their current occupancy rate on their website.

The Health Department, Liquor Control Board, Maryland State Police and the Sheriff’s Department are all involved in enforcement and have assessed overall county compliance with the Governor’s Executive Orders is very good. The Health Officer does frequent compliance checks and investigates repeat offenders. The Garrett Liquor Control Board has also passed measures allowing for fines and possible licensing suspensions.

Please contact the Maryland State Police at the McHenry Barracks, the Garrett County Sherriff’s Department, or the COVID Prevention Line 833-979-2266 to report any violations of the Executive Orders.

Lastly, please stay alert and diligent. We must each take responsibility for our own actions in our efforts to promote public health. Please wear a mask, wash your hands, use sanitizer, maintain 6 feet of distance from others and, should you be potentially exposed, follow the CDC’s quarantine guidance.

For community members with medical questions regarding Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), please utilize the Garrett County Health Department website <https://garretthealth.org/coronavirus> or telephone hotline at 301-334-7698.

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About Garrett County Government: The County is governed by an elected Board of County Commissioners (the "Board"), whose three members serve four-year terms and must live in the District which they represent. The Board may exercise only such powers as are conferred by the General Assembly of Maryland. The County is administered under a line organizational method, with the County Administrator responsible for overseeing the financial planning, annual budget process, personnel management, and direction and management of operations within the organization.