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SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES RECOGNIZES NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK 2020

Stockton, CA – (April 10, 2020) This year, April 6-12 is designated as National Public Health Week. In the midst of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that is sweeping across the world, celebrating all things public health takes on a new meaning. San Joaquin County Public Health Services (PHS) is taking this opportunity to highlight some of its current efforts in leading the county's COVID-19 response while recognizing its various programs and services that are actively involved.

Many in the community are following social distancing guidelines, practicing good handwashing hygiene, and keeping employees and their families safe at home, while PHS staff continue to conduct essential services in creative, new ways and address the urgent COVID-19 response.

Emergency Preparedness (EP)

Constantly planning, conducting practice drills, and regularly updating readiness guidelines for all kinds of emergencies, EP staff are now fully engaged in the process they have been working to prepare for, including:

- Activating the Department Operations Center (DOC), establishing an incident command system for staff to streamline processes, and providing just-in-time training for staff in DOC roles.
- Reviewing and updating emergency preparedness plans and policies based on current COVID-19 response activities.
- Maintaining communication with federal, state, and local partners while providing information to health care professionals.

Disease Control and Prevention (DCP)

Key to outbreak management and investigation, DCP staff are working in full force to track cases and provide needed surveillance and guidance to healthcare providers on a regular basis, such as:

- Promoting disease prevention, assuring access to treatment of communicable diseases including sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), Tuberculosis (TB), as well as many other communicable diseases.
- Monitoring the incidence of reportable communicable diseases in the county and conducting surveillance and case investigation of all reportable communicable diseases.
- Providing clinical guidance to infection control nurses and medical providers on COVID-19, isolation or safe discharges and disease outbreak control.
- Conducting epidemiologic surveillance and maintaining state databases by epidemiologists.

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Public Health Laboratory (PHL)

Even before test kits were available locally, PHL staff were receiving COVID-19 specimens, preparing documentation, and shipping the tests to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) laboratories. Now PHL is processing specimens for not only San Joaquin County but also seven (7) regional counties as well:

- Providing consistent consultations to health partners regarding biosafety, sample collection requirements, and storage and shipping parameters.
- Coordinating pick-ups for health partners with a turnaround time of sample results between 8 to 48 hours.

Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention (HPCDP)

As the unit responsible for educating and informing the public on a variety of public health and chronic disease topics, HPCDP is also a critical component for risk communication to the public on what is going on and what to do during this pandemic, including:

- Developing news releases and social media posts to inform specific actions for the public, including social distancing and proper handwashing techniques, and to update the current status of the outbreak. For the month of March, PHS Facebook and Twitter accounts received nearly 740,000 views. YouTube and Instagram have been added to further enhance outreach.
- Conducting educational presentations on COVID-19 for key audiences, such as service providers for the homeless, families, and older adults; and developing educational materials such as fact sheets and guides in multiple languages.
- Extending program activities into live webinars and recorded media so that people can view them at home, including exercise demonstrations such as Tai Chi, recipe demonstrations, and resource sharing for community partners on chronic diseases and unhealthy behaviors, such as diabetes and tobacco/e-cigarette use as it relates to COVID-19.

Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health (MCAH)

With stay-at-home orders in-place and everyone practicing social distancing, MCAH staff are continuing to provide vital services to their clients and their families in alternate ways, such as:

- All programs, including Nurse Home Visiting, Black Infant Health, and Cal-Learn, continue to provide case management, health education, and support services over the phone. They are still able to supply some necessities like diapers, formula, baby food, and even portable cribs.
- MCAH staff are directing clients and their families to community resources and helping them understand how to utilize health care services to avoid unnecessary ER trips.

Children's Medical Services (CMS)

Despite being in the middle of a pandemic, children with special needs still require attention and CMS staff are continuing their services to one of the most vulnerable populations by:

- Extending medication authorizations for children with special healthcare needs to ensure they have what they need and do not have to go to the pharmacy as frequently.
- Responding to life-threatening lab values for lead poisoning to ensure the safety of the children at home.
- Providing complex case management for children with medical needs who are in foster care.

“While the bulk of public health response activities, including normal operation, happens behind the scenes,” says Zienna Blackwell-Rodriguez, PHS Director, “the public should find comfort in the fact that the Public Health Services workforce is highly competent and dedicated to protecting the health of all who live, work and play in San Joaquin County. We appreciate the public’s support of our efforts and adherence to our orders and guidelines, as we are in this together.”

For more information, please visit the San Joaquin County Public Health Services website and social media accounts at www.sjcphs.org. In addition, video messages can be found on the San Joaquin County Public Health Services YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/sjcphs>.