JEFFERSON COUNTY UNIFIED COMMAND CENTER UPDATE FOR JUNE 12, 2020

Birmingham, AL – The Jefferson County Unified Command Center (JCUC) and its partner agencies continue to help provide information, goods and services to the people of Jefferson County throughout the COVID-19 pandemic response. Dr. Mark Wilson, Jefferson County Health Officer, and Jim Coker, Director of Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency serve as the co-leaders of the Unified Command Center.

Increasing COVID-19 Cases in Jefferson County

Jefferson County has seen the highest number of new cases of COVID-19 reported in the past week than in any other week since the pandemic began. Some of the cases reported by the Alabama Department of Public Health over the weekend partially skewed the weekly count higher because of a backlog of previously unreported cases, but since then we have continued to have high numbers of new cases reported for Jefferson County. While there has been some increase in testing, the percentage of tests that were positive increased during this past week compared to the week before.

We need everyone’s help to keep this from getting out of control and once again threatening to overwhelm our hospitals. If you are a young and healthy person and contract COVID-19, your chances of being hospitalized or dying are low. Even so, as you make personal decisions about going shopping, going out to eat, or otherwise interacting with other people, carefully consider who else you might be putting at risk, especially those who might be at higher risk of serious complications.

There was quite a bit of confusion several days ago about a statement made by Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove of the World Health Organization. Some took her statement to mean that people without symptoms of COVID-19 rarely spread the disease. That statement was taken out of context, and was later walked back and clarified. It is the clear consensus of experts that people infected with COVID-19 can spread the infection to others during a “pre-symptomatic” period of time. In other words, people infected with COVID-19 can spread it to others before they develop any symptoms of the disease themselves, especially 1 to 3 days before they develop symptoms. This is believed to be responsible for a significant amount of COVID-19 spread.

Now as much as ever, everyone is urged to continue taking these precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

Measures needed to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 are as follows:

- Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from others not in your household.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, even inside your home.
- Stay home if you are sick, except to get tested or to seek medical care for serious symptoms.
- Use cloth face coverings when in public.
- Do not touch your face, and wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after touching surfaces others may have touched.
COVID-19 Testing and Hepatitis A Vaccinations at Correctional Facilities

The Jefferson County Department of Health has partnered with the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office to provide hepatitis A vaccinations and COVID-19 testing to inmates given concurrent outbreaks of hepatitis A and COVID-19 in the general community. Persons that are incarcerated are considered a high-risk group for contracting hepatitis A and COVID-19. Although there has not been an outbreak of either viral infection in the County Jail, we are taking proactive steps to decrease the risk to inmates.

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