

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
April 9, 2020

Healthcare Workers Acquire COVID-19 in Merced County

MERCED COUNTY, CA – The Merced County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) has confirmed that 10 healthcare workers from the Sutter Health Rural Health Clinic (Clinic) in Los Banos have tested positive for COVID-19 (novel coronavirus). Clinic staff is working with Public Health Officials to identify and contact all individuals who may have been exposed. The Clinic is currently closed to allow for proper disinfection and notification procedures.

“I would very much like to applaud the cooperation of Sutter Health and this facility with the Merced County Public Health Department in their efforts to slow the spread of this illness by assisting in the identifying and contacting all those possibly exposed and in bringing their health care facility back on-line rapidly and safely,” says Merced County Health Officer, Dr. Kenneth Bird.

Multiple outbreaks are being reported throughout the state and rates of infection among healthcare workers are higher than in most fields because of daily interaction and contact with ill patients. The affected healthcare workers have been ordered to remain under isolation at home. MCDPH is working to notify all individuals exposed to the affected healthcare workers. At this time, there are no hospitalizations or deaths related to the exposures.

If you visited the Clinic on or near the dates of March 29 – April 8 and are experiencing symptoms associated with COVID-19 (shortness of breath, fever, and cough), please call your medical provider. Do not go in for testing without calling in advance.

Once the Clinic is properly cleaned, it will re-open with limited services and teleservices will be available.

“Healthcare providers are on the front lines of battling this pandemic and their role puts them at a high risk for exposure. Please do not panic or be fearful. We know that healthcare workers are vital to our community and hope for a successful recovery for those affected by COVID-19,” says Public Health Director Dr. Rebecca Nanyonjo-Kemp.

EVERYONE SHOULD:

- ✓ Stay home, especially if you’re sick and not invite visitors into your home
- ✓ Only leave home for essential services
- ✓ Practice social distancing which means keeping at least 6 feet between you and any person, especially when outside of your home
- ✓ Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds as often as possible.
- ✓ Not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands
- ✓ Call your health care provider first if you think you have COVID-19

Please check the MCDPH webpage at www.countyofmerced.com/coronavirus for the most-up-to date information about the current cases in Merced County. For general information pertaining to COVID-19, please contact the MCDPH information line contacted at **209-381-1180** (English, Spanish, Hmong).

For media outlets, please contact the Public Health Communication Office at 209-381-1187 for media related questions or to schedule a phone interview.

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