Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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St. Lawrence County Public Health Recommends Social Distancing

Canton, NY. The St. Lawrence County Public Health Department recommends county residents use social distancing in all daily activities—stay home more often and keep your distance. Social distancing means staying away from crowds and others’ personal space to reduce the spread of the novel corona virus, or COVID-19. Social distancing measures can reduce the spread of the virus by decreasing the frequency and duration of social contact among persons of all ages. These measures limit face-to-face contact, which reduces person-to-person transmission. While St. Lawrence County currently has no confirmed cases of COVID-19, now is the time to proactively put in place strategies that will help control the spread of COVID-19.

So why social distancing and what does it mean? “Our healthcare system does not have the capacity should we have a substantial outbreak of COVID-19. We need to act. We need to act now and fast. Without a vaccine, these strategies are what we have, and they have worked in the past” said Dana McGuire, Public Health Director for St. Lawrence County. Social distancing is a community level non-pharmaceutical intervention, or NPI, a first line of defense in the early stages of a pandemic. “Now is the time to avoid public spaces and limit moving about. We should all stay home more often and keep our distance from others.” By implementing social distancing, we can:

1. Delay the number of confirmed cases we see in St. Lawrence County.
2. Reduce the peak number of cases in St. Lawrence County thereby reducing the demand and burden on our hospitals and healthcare system.
3. Decrease the total number of overall cases and the health effects.
Social distancing measures can be implemented in a variety of community settings such as schools, workplaces, and public places where people gather (parks, religious institutions, theaters, and sports arenas). Recommended strategies include:

1. Increase the distance between you and others to at least 6 feet.
2. Limit face to face meetings and appointments: consider email, phone, and/or online encounters.
3. Modify, postpone, or cancel activities and events: consider group size and target audiences. Reduce the number of people at each offering and think about high risk populations that may be present.
4. Alter work environments and schedules: consider telework options, staggering schedules, arranging offices for increased spacing, limiting open hours, and offering open by appointment only.
5. Consider the necessity of going out: Do you need to? What essentials are needed? Can it wait?

In addition to these essential recommendations, personal and environmental NPI strategies remain just as important. Continue to use proper hand hygiene and cough etiquette, refrain from touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, self-monitor your own symptoms and stay home if you are sick, and clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.

The next few weeks will be challenging as regular routines will be disrupted. Implementing these strategies on a community-wide basis will be important in slowing down the person-to-person transmission, reducing the overall effects, and preventing the collapse of our healthcare system.

If we plan ahead to prepare, and work together to support each other, we can mitigate the impact of the novel coronavirus. If you have questions or concerns regarding COVID-19, contact the St. Lawrence County Public Health Department at 315-386-2325, or visit our website at https://www.stlawco.org/Departments/PublicHealth/.

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