



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Health and Social Services

ALASKA PIONEER HOMES
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Dear Alaska Pioneer Home elders and families,

As you are aware, there has been a lot of news stories about the coronavirus. The Pioneer Homes continue to follow our infection control protocol to help prevent the spread of all contagious diseases in the homes, including the flu. These are the same protocols recommended by the Center for Disease Control and the state's Division of Public Health for contagious diseases, including coronavirus. Please help us protect the health of the elders in the homes by not visiting when you have a fever, cough, or generally do not feel well.

As an added precaution, the Division of Public Health is sending updated recommendation on how health care facilities can help prevent the spread of infections, including the coronavirus. The homes will be following all recommendations from Public Health and these will likely change over time. It is likely that the homes will start asking all visitors to sign in and answer a few questions before visiting anyone in the home.

For more information on the coronavirus, please read the enclosed document. Other sources of reliable information include the following:

- State of Alaska Public Health website - <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/Human-Coronavirus.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control website – <https://www.cdc.gov/>

Sincerely,

Heidi Hamilton, ANP

Heidi Hamilton,
Advance Practice Registered Nurse II



What you need to know about the Novel Coronavirus

What is novel coronavirus?

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services is closely monitoring an outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus named COVID-19. This virus was first detected in China in December 2019; it spreads from person-to-person and has the potential to cause severe illness and uncommonly death. Four well-known strains of coronaviruses regularly circulate in human populations globally and are a frequent cause of upper respiratory infections; COVID-19 is new so it's called the novel coronavirus.

How does the COVID-19 virus spread?

There are still many things that are unknown about this new virus. At this time, spread of the virus is believed to happen in the following ways:

- When an infected person coughs or sneezes next to others
- Through close contact (e.g., hugging, kissing, shaking hands)
- Possibly by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching the mouth, nose, or possibly eyes

How severe is the COVID-19 virus?

Reported cases have ranged from mild illness (similar to a common cold) to severe pneumonia and uncommonly death. Persons at increased risk for severe illness include older adults and persons with underlying medical conditions.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms are likely to appear 2–14 days after exposure, and include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.



FEVER



COUGH



SHORTNESS OF BREATH

What is the current travel guidance from CDC?

See wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel for the latest travel guidance from the CDC for recommendations for travel to China.

How can I prevent contracting or spreading respiratory infections?

Steps you can take to prevent contracting flu and the common cold will also help prevent contracting the COVID-19:

- Wash hands often with soap and water; if not available, use hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid contact with people who are sick
- If you're sick, stay home and avoid close contact with others and cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing

There is no vaccine currently available to prevent COVID-19 infections.

For more information, contact the Alaska Section of Epidemiology: (907) 269-8000 or after hours (800) 478-0084.