



Connie Beck, Director  
Social Services | Public Health | Mental Health

## news release

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March 11, 2020

### Public Health Officials Declare Emergency, Announce Local Testing Capabilities

Humboldt County Health Officer Teresa Frankovich, MD, has declared a Local Health Emergency in response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak in California and beyond.

This action is expected to free up additional resources within the county and increase coordination between local, state and federal authorities working to respond to the outbreak.

Frankovich called the emergency declaration “a timely and important step that will enhance our ability to increase preparedness activities and respond appropriately to any additional COVID-19 cases within the community.” She noted that while this is an important administrative step to take in light of the rapidly evolving situation throughout the world, it does not reflect a significant change in our own community.

“We currently have no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Humboldt County, but we know that is likely to change soon based on what is happening across the state,” Frankovich said. “More cases will mean increased demands not just on Public Health but also on our hospitals, clinics, EMS and other agencies and providers that are such a critical part of every community’s response.”

The emergency declaration will also support the Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory which is now able to begin on-site COVID-19 testing locally.

Although testing capacity at public health labs remains limited at this time, Public Health Lab Manager Jeremy Corrigan said, “It is our understanding that some commercial labs are beginning to offer testing as well, which would increase testing availability for our community.”

Frankovich said providers will be able to make decisions with their patients about testing and route specimens through local public health or commercial labs,

depending on the clinical situation, local lab capacity and provider preference. Local health care providers are being made aware of these options today.

Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services Public Health Director Michele Stephens said the declaration is expected to “open up resources to assist with in-the-moment needs, like staffing and equipment, as well as taking the first step toward potentially recouping costs once the emergency is resolved.”

Per Humboldt County Code 2210-8, the County Health Officer can declare a local health emergency for up to seven days before Board of Supervisors’ authorization is required. The Board of Supervisors must then review and reauthorize the declaration at least every 14 days until the emergency is terminated. The Board is expected to take up the declaration at its March 17 meeting.

Currently, Humboldt County has no known cases of COVID-19. The individual who was previously confirmed to have contracted the virus has recovered and was released from isolation on Feb. 28, after meeting all conditions for clearance required by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). A close contact of the individual was released from isolation March 2.

For current information about COVID-19, visit [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or [CDPH.ca.gov](https://www.cdph.ca.gov). Local information is available 24 hours a day at [humboldt.gov/HumboldtHealthAlert](https://humboldt.gov/HumboldtHealthAlert), or during business hours by emailing [covidinfo@co.humboldt.ca.us](mailto:covidinfo@co.humboldt.ca.us) or calling 707-445-6200.

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