**Public Health Briefing by Columbus Public Health, Franklin County Public Health, Licking County Health Department, and Union County Health Department**

**Educational Service Center of Central Ohio**

**March 3, 2020**

Mr. Joe Mazzola, Franklin County Public Health Commissioner, thanked the school district representatives for their attendance this morning for an initial dialog on the Coronavirus disease. Mr. Mazzola informed the group that this is a fluid situation and information is changing daily and sometimes hourly. The Public Health offices are working diligently to prepare and plan regionally for a potential case in Central Ohio. He stressed that there are no cases in Ohio. As with all infectious diseases, his staff is working with healthcare partners on preparedness.

Mr. Mazzola displayed his department’s website that contains a wealth of information on the local level and also includes the latest information from the Federal level and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Handouts were also provided to the attendees on the subject of the virus in respect to children and guidance for school administrators on how to plan, prepare and respond to the disease from the CDC. Handouts of public health messages from the local public health agencies were also provided.

It was strongly recommended that school district refer parents and staff to these websites for the latest information on the local level. The Public Health agencies are working collaboratively with school districts to provide the tools they need to put plans in place in the event closure is necessary. The CDC is also stressing the need for sick individuals to stay home and not go to public events. In most cases, the virus is only causing minor illness.

Common sense practices are very important – washing hands frequently (the number one preventative measure and routine cleaning with typical products. These are the same prevention measures used to combat the spread of the flu. The estimated incubation period for Corona virus is 14 days – this may change.

Mr. Mazzola stressed that if a case occurs in a school district’s community, the local health departments will be there for guidance. The school districts will not be on their own to deal with the situation. The health departments also can provide the school districts with handwashing sign.

Mr. Mazzola informed the attendees that the local health departments only have the authority to declare a public health emergency – not the State of Ohio. When testing kits are received from the CDC, Central Ohio can expect to discover confirmed cases. Isolation measures will be in effect for those individuals. The local public health agencies are monitoring individuals with respiratory symptoms on a daily basis.

Masks recommended for use by individuals who are sick – not well persons. Masks are not tight fitting and will not prevent the transfer of a virus.

Following presentations by representative from the public health agencies from Franklin County, Columbus, Union County and Licking County, Mr. Mazzola opened the floor to questions and concerns from the district representatives.

* The need for a one-page document to provide to parents for talking with their children about the virus. *[To be provided to the districts within 48 hours – will be distributed by the ESC of Central Ohio to the Superintendents and Public Information Officers.]*
* The need for a document to provide parents information regarding Spring Break travel – domestic and foreign countries. *[To be provided to the districts within 48 hours – will be distributed by the ESC of Central Ohio to the Superintendents and Public Information Officers.]*
* Should International school trips be cancelled? [*The concern is if the travel restrictions to a country change while on the trip, there would then be the need for a 14-day quarantine.]*
* Discussion on precautions regarding the Arnold event in Columbus. *[Columbus Public Health has been working vigorously with the Arnold organizers to take every precaution and to screen participants from foreign countries.]*
* The need for a link to direct parents and school district staff to their local health department websites. *[School districts are encouraged to contact local health departments, not the CDC.]*
* The need to translate information for the many non-English speaking families.
* Question regarding the length of the season*. [A length has not been determined at this time – the public health departments are anticipated the need to be prepared for several more months.]*
* Determining the need to close a school. *[The public health departments will work closely with school districts if a case is confirmed to determine possible closing and will also provide contact tracing. They will also assist with possible closing for deep cleaning.]*
* The need to purchase specific cleaners. *[Districts were informed that only normal cleaning products are necessary.]*
* The need for Districts to prepare for payroll departments to work remotely if the necessity arises. Districts also need to be prepared for distance learning if needed. *[META Solutions and the ESC of Central Ohio are ready to assist in these areas.]*
* Playgrounds. *[It was recommended that some extra cleaning be done to playground equipment.]*