New Face Covering Requirements

Plattsburgh, April 15, 2020. As of Wednesday, April 15, 2020 at 8:00pm, New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) Executive Order 202.16 requires face coverings to be worn by public and private employees interacting with the public during the COVID-19 outbreak. Executive Order 202.16, which can be accessed at https://on.ny.gov/3bbXP5X, states:

For all essential businesses or entities, any employees who are present in the workplace shall be provided and shall wear face coverings when in direct contact with customers or members of the public. Businesses must provide, at their expense, such face coverings for their employees.

Since this directive was announced on April 12, there have been many local discussions among both employers and employees around what this guidance means. In Clinton County, there are a number of local partners working together to help employers meet these expectations. John Kanoza, Director of Public Health in Clinton County, reminded both employers and employees that, “Face coverings don’t have to be surgical masks, N-95 respirators or face shields. These face coverings can include cloth coverings such as homemade sewn, quick cut, or bandana.” The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has provided simple, easy-to-follow instructions for making these types of face coverings, which can be accessed at https://bit.ly/3epHg8A. Mr. Kanoza also noted, “Employees are allowed to use their own face coverings; but, if they do not have one their employer must provide one to them, for free.”

Erin Streiff, Director of Health Care Services of Clinton County Health Department (CCHD), reminded residents that, “Cloth face coverings should fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face and be secured with ties or ear loops. They should include multiple layers of fabric, but users should still be able to breathe easily.” In addition, Ms. Streiff emphasized, “Cloth face coverings MUST be routinely washed.”

Another common question from residents has been what constitutes “direct interaction.” According to Interim Guidance provided by the NYSDOH, direct interaction with the public is determined by the employer, but, at a minimum, includes any employee who is routinely within close contact (i.e., 6 feet or less), with members of the public. This includes, but is not limited to, both customers and clients. Interim Guidance provided by the state in response to the Governor’s Executive Order may be found at https://on.ny.gov/3cg8BrK.

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If employers have questions about the Executive Order, they may contact the North Country Chamber of Commerce by email at info@northcountrychamber.com. Employers are also encouraged to visit the Chamber’s website, www.northcountrychamber.com, for additional resources. Residents wishing to donate cloth face coverings may contact the United Way of the Adirondack Region at 518-563-0028 to set up an appointment for drop off.

As of Wednesday morning, the Clinton County Health Department (CCHD) is reporting 48 lab-confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 among Clinton County residents; 31 of these individuals have recovered and 2 have died. CCHD also reports 3 probable cases (lab-indeterminate) of COVID-19; 2 of these individuals have recovered and 1 has died. Lastly, there are currently 41 suspect cases of COVID-19, of whom 25 have recovered.

When considering current lab-confirmed, probable and suspect cases, CCHD reports 31 active cases of COVID-19 in Clinton County. To date, 443 tests have been administered to Clinton County residents.

About the Clinton County Health Department:

The Health Department is an accredited full service department serving the residents of Clinton County. The Health Department’s Mission is to improve and protect the health, well-being and environment of the people of Clinton County. Visit our website at www.clintonhealth.org or connect with us on Facebook (@clintonhealth), Twitter (@ClintonCountyHD), and Instagram (clintoncountyhealth).

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