News Release

Plattsburgh, May 11, 2020. New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo has outlined benchmarks that must be in place before counties can begin a phased reopening process. John Kanoza, Director of Public Health in Clinton County, stated today, “Clinton County officials are taking all necessary steps to be ready when the Governor’s office gives the OK to move forward.”

Reopening of businesses will occur in 4 phases. The first phase can only begin if a region has met the criteria below. Each phase will last a minimum of 2 weeks and may be halted if new cases case counts, hospitalizations or other factors cause a region to no longer meet the State’s criteria. Phase 1 businesses include:

- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Wholesale Trade
- Select Retail for curbside pick-up only
- Agriculture
- Forestry and Fishing

Detailed information about reopening is now available from New York State in a publication called NY Forward (https://forward.ny.gov/). This comprehensive document includes a section on the phased reopening of businesses. “It answers many of the questions CCHD has been receiving from the public and from our business community,” stated Mr. Kanoza.

New York will re-open businesses on a regional basis as each region meets the criteria necessary to protect public health. Guidelines for reopening depend on meeting 7 metrics that fall into 4 categories:

- The infection rate is sufficiently low;
- The health care system has the capacity to absorb a potential resurgence in new cases;
- Diagnostic testing capacity is sufficiently high to detect and isolate new cases; and
- Robust contact-tracing capacity is in place to help prevent the spread of the virus.

The North Country Region currently meets 6 of 7 criteria. According to Mr. Kanoza, “Public Health partners in each county in our region (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence) reviewed these benchmarks and each has assessed their individual County capacity to meet them. For most of us, testing is the hold-up.”
As of this afternoon, the Governor’s website added information which listed the North Country Region as close to meeting the testing metric (https://forward.ny.gov/regional-monitoring-dashboard). According to this site, the North Country Region has no new hospitalizations, 54% of beds available, 60% of ICU beds available, and 400 new tests are being performed per day (goal of 419).

“Several days ago, the North Country was among several regions in the State deemed to have an insufficient number of contact tracers but the State has put a plan in place to help,” Mr. Kanoza noted. “Contact tracing will be an on-going need for months to come and even though CCHD currently has enough man-power to do this work, there may come a time when help is needed. We are appreciative of the State’s efforts in this area,” stated Mr. Kanoza.

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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