North Country Set to Welcome Students Back

Plattsburgh, August 13, 2020. As North Country residents return to work and school, local health officials are urging community members to continue to be respectful and responsible. While active cases of COVID-19 have remained low in the region over the past month, many residents have expressed concerns of potential rising numbers as students return to local schools and colleges. As of 8:00 am Thursday, August 13, there were two active cases of COVID-19 in Clinton County.

“It is important to remember that school faculty, staff, and many students are members of our community. They reside in our community year-round just like us and have a vested interest in the health and safety of their neighbors,” stated Erin Streiff, Director of Health Care Services at the Clinton County Health Department (CCHD). “Local colleges and school districts have done extensive work and planning to ensure the safest possible return for students and staff, as well as to mitigate any impact their return may have on our community.”

SUNY Plattsburgh has already begun the process of registering and housing students who will undergo a precautionary quarantine prior to the start of classes. They have also been working on measures to ensure the health and safety of their campus community, including upgrading air filters and implementing classroom social distancing occupancy. In addition, all college sponsored events, both on and off campus, must adhere to a social distancing and face covering policy. Student conduct processes can be leveraged to ensure compliance with such policies. To learn more about the college’s Fall 2020 Restart Plan, residents can visit www.plattsburgh.edu/covid-19.

Local school districts have received the go-ahead to resume instruction this fall and are also working diligently to prepare. CCHD staff members have been working closely with District Superintendents throughout this process. “Many parents are struggling with the decision to send their children back to campus. At this time our local schools are hard at work to ensure the best possible learning environment while prioritizing student safety. We encourage parents to engage in dialog with their district leaders by attending scheduled reopening forums,” stated Ms. Streiff.

Students or staff members who have been deemed close contacts of a lab-confirmed positive case will be contacted by the local health department and will undergo precautionary or mandatory quarantine protocols. Close contact is defined by NYS Department of Health as a “person who has been in close contact (6 ft.) for longer than ten minutes with someone who is positive for COVID-19.” The New York State Department of Health will be issuing additional guidance as the school year progresses, and we will expect updates to recommendations as we move forward.

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“The most effective way to keep our community safe is to continue the practices we have been emphasizing from the start. Maintaining a 6 foot separation from others, wearing face coverings, avoiding gatherings, washing hands often, and frequently disinfecting commonly touched surfaces can help stop the spread of this virus in our community,” added Ms. Streiff.

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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