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## **Hopi Tribe Takes Precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19**

As a growing number of states and counties across the country endeavor to stop the spread of the COVID-19 Coronavirus by restricting the movements of their citizens, the Hopi Tribe followed suit on March 23, 2020 by issuing an Executive Stay-At-Home Order to its residents and non-essential employees in an effort to protect the health and welfare of the community at large. This Executive Order which will remain in effect until April 17, 2020 unless otherwise extended, is similar to Executive Orders currently in effect in a number of states, advising residents to *stay at home* but allowing them out, in limited numbers for necessities and emergency medical purposes only.

Implementation of this Stay-at-home order came just days before The Hopi Health Care Center (HHCC) received confirmation of its first positive case of Coronavirus or COVID 19. The patient who was tested at the Hopi Health Care Center in Polacca, Arizona, and does not reside on the Hopi Reservation was discharged home with explicit instruction to self-quarantine. Furthermore, in this same notice issued on March 25, 2020 the HHCC Department of Community Health stated that it is following up with potential contacts and in partnership with Tribal, County and State authorities will notify any individuals of possible exposure, and the recommended actions to take.

While testing is ongoing for the COVID-19 virus for persons who come to the Hopi Health Care Center meeting the criteria and exhibiting the key symptoms put forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the latest figures released by the Indian Health Service (IHS) show

that as of the date of this publication, out of a total number of 39 individuals tested, 7 patients have tested positive, 21 patients have tested negative and 11 are pending.

“This news should be an indication of just how important it is that people comply with the stay at home order,” Said Hopi Vice-Chairman Clark Tenakhongva. “This means staying where you are, not going out, not traveling to or from any place outside the reservation, practicing good hygiene and avoiding unnecessary social interaction and large groups.”

“Adhering to the Social Distancing recommendations put out by the CDC and reiterated in the Stay-at-home order that was issued by the Hopi Tribe, have been shown to prevent the spread of the virus,” said Royce Jenkins Director of the Hopi Department of Health and Human Services. “But these precautions, as well as many of the other guidelines and protocols our department has issued for restaurants and grocery stores on the reservation are only effective *if* they are followed to the fullest extent”

In consideration of the growing number of cases in the surrounding areas and in light of information provided to the Hopi Tribe from federal agencies and the CDC, which predict COVID-19 cases will reach an apex during the month of April and likely extend well into the proceeding months, Chief School Administrators from each of the seven (7) schools on the Hopi Reservation as well as the Director of Hopi Head Start, Childcare and Early Intervention Programs issued a collective decision to extend the closure of all Tribally Controlled Schools through to the end of the Academic Year and to suspend school nutrition programs indefinitely.

“[We feel that] to continue with in-person academic instruction and the community nutrition programs, in this precarious atmosphere, would unnecessarily endanger the public health and welfare of our residents, both young and old,” Tribal leadership wrote in a joint letter to Tony Dearman, Director of the Bureau of Indian Education. “Therefore, in an effort to prioritize the Health and safety of our students, parents, staff and stakeholders we have taken what we feel are crucial and necessary precautionary measures.”

“As matters progress with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, additional advisories and Orders may follow,” said Hopi Chairman Timothy Nuvangyaoma, “but we are implementing what precautions and restrictions that we feel are currently warranted to ensure the public health and welfare of our people. It is important to remember, as has been said before, ‘a virus does not move, people move it’, so we encourage the Hopi public to take charge of their own health and welfare and be cautious in their daily interactions with others during this time.”

Individuals with questions regarding permissible operations and/or activities within the community, as well as information regarding protocols for donation are asked to call the Hopi Incident Command Line at (928) 734-3661 during business hours or (928) 205-7295 after hours.

Information regarding Essential Tribal Programs and Services, Public Health Information and Educational Material as well as information on Hopi Tribal Government Announcements, Orders and Directives in Response to COVID-19 can be found at <https://www.hopi-nsn.gov/information-regarding-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/>