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For immediate release:

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Chaffee County Public Health Gives COVID-19 Update

Over the weekend, Chaffee County Public Health (CCPH) was made aware of two new positive cases of COVID-19, bringing the total case count to 70. The patient investigation and contract tracing has determined very low risk of spread of the virus due to the limited personal contact that they had and the prevention measures they had taken such as wearing masks. The new cases are members of the same household.

Related to the Safer at Home phase:

Short-term rentals continue to remain closed until further notice. CCPH does not know the specific date that the state will lift its restrictions and provide guidance and requirements. However, CCPH is working on a way to streamline short-term rentals to certify their safety once they are approved for a reopening.

The maximum number of people in a social gathering remains 10. CCPH is waiting for guidance on when the number of people at a gathering can increase and whether or not that will vary depending on indoor versus outdoor activities.

CCPH is amending local public health order 2020-07 to increase the indoor occupancy of restaurants from 30% to 50% to be in line with the anticipated state-wide order that was announced on 5/25/20.

A recent report shared with CCPH indicates that:

- Mobility has continued to increase in Colorado (May 14, 2020 mobility report). Mobility, as measured by time spent away from home using anonymized and aggregated mobile device data, was lowest in early April and has been increasing steadily since mid-April.
- COVID-19 hospitalizations have declined in Colorado since mid-April as a result of the statewide Stay at Home order, which went into effect at the end of March. Researchers have only been able to measure one week of the Safer at Home policy period, so far. Whether the decline will continue is not certain.
- The estimated net effect of physical distancing, mask-wearing, and case isolation has been to reduce the reproductive number below 1 during the state-wide Stay at Home order, which ended statewide on April 26 and was extended to May 8 for six counties of the Denver metro region.
• It is too early to say with confidence what the impact of the transition to Safer at Home has been on the course of the COVID-19 epidemic in Colorado. There is an approximate 13-day lag between infection and hospitalization, the indicator that guides the modeling. Additionally, the change to Safer at Home was not abrupt (e.g., retail did not open until May 4) and approximately 50% of the state’s population remained under Stay at Home through May 8 because of the extension of Stay at Home in six counties of the Metro-Denver region. The modeling team anticipates the earliest they will be able to make preliminary estimates as to the impact of the transition to Safer at Home statewide will be May 29.

• The updated modeling results in this report continue to indicate that all control measures available, including relatively high levels of physical distancing need to be utilized. Increases in case detection and isolation, mask-wearing, and physical distancing of approximately 65% can prevent a surge in infections in excess of hospital capacity in the coming summer months.

• If Colorado moves to lower levels of physical distancing (55%), older adults need to maintain physical distancing at the level seen during the Stay at Home in order to avoid exceeding hospital capacity. If only half of older adults adopt high levels of physical distancing under a 55% physical distancing scenario, the state is at risk of exceeding hospital capacity this summer. The modeling imply that policy measures should continue to emphasize the need for older adults to adopt measures to minimize their close physical contacts outside of their homes, thereby reducing their risk for infection, hospitalization, and death and preventing exceedance of hospital capacity.

• Relaxation of physical distancing to lower levels (45%) is predicted to lead to a surge in sick people in excess of hospital capacity by mid-summer, even if implemented with mask-wearing, increased case detection and isolation, and higher levels of social distancing by all older adults.

• Around mid-August, the date at which schools generally open, the epidemic curves under all scenarios will rise.

• The uncertainty highlighted in this report regarding the current course of the COVID-19 epidemic under Safer at Home will lessen over the coming days. Estimates of the trajectory of the outbreak under Safer at Home will be valuable for making decisions concerning further relaxation of social distancing.

• The state will continue to review data and model findings as the pandemic continues to inform future policy decisions.

“It is concerning to learn that relaxation of physical distancing to lower levels (45%) is predicted to lead to a surge in sick people in excess of hospital capacity by mid-summer. Currently, Chaffee County’s social distancing/Stay-at-Home Index is 40.4, well below the expectation under the Safer at Home order. This is a decline of 43.1% since the Stay-at-Home order. CCPH urges everyone to limit their travel outside the home as much as possible. With the nice weather and lifting of some restrictions, it is natural for all of us to want to get out to have some fun. However, this is a good reminder that we got to this point because we followed all of the requirements and need everyone to be mindful of that.” Andrea Carlstrom, Director, Chaffee County Public Health and local COVID-19 Incident Command.