Good afternoon,
I wanted to update you on Ramsey County efforts involving the novel coronavirus COVID-19. Staff across multiple county departments are working with federal, state, local government, health care and community partners to respond to this public health threat. At this time, Saint Paul - Ramsey County Public Health is the lead agency in our organization’s planning and response. However, our response is a multi-layered effort with county staff connecting in daily meetings and conference calls with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), state and local emergency managers, local health care and community partners. These efforts include sharing information on the latest developments, reviewing contingency plans, and coordinating public messaging to detect and minimize the introduction of the virus in the United States.

**County Preparations and Suggested City Preparations**
The county has pandemic flu response and all-hazards plans which are being reviewed and will be implemented at the appropriate point, if necessary. County departments also have their own occupational health and safety procedures and continuity of operations plans (COOP). Ramsey County Emergency Management and Homeland Security has asked all county department directors to work with their teams to familiarize themselves with their COOP and update them as needed. Reviewing of existing COOP plans and occupational health and safety procedures is something we ask you to do within your own agencies and others that you work with closely, if you haven’t started that already.

**Current Risk**
At this point, there are no confirmed cases in Minnesota and the risk is low; however, the state and county fully expect cases here and are preparing for that. We need your help to promote basic prevention messages:

- Cover your cough.
- Wash your hands thoroughly.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Get vaccinated for the seasonal flu which is widely circulating in Minnesota.

Additionally, it’s important that individuals and families begin to make plans and gather supplies if COVID-19 becomes widespread in our community.

**Stay Up-to-Date**
We have launched a new COVID-19 page at ramseycounty.us/coronavirus with updated information and expanded resources links for the public and partners on how to prepare and take action on coronavirus. This replaces our current Health Issues page where we had previously housed coronavirus information and now has a link to the new page.

**The Role of Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health**
MDH is the lead in monitoring and testing individuals who may have COVID-19. When a case is confirmed, Public Health will do a “contact investigation” to determine others who might have
been infected and who should be tested. Individuals would be asked to self-isolate and our Public Health department will be asked to monitor and ensure individuals receive essential services. This is something we do on a regular basis for other infectious diseases such as measles and tuberculosis.

Public Health has a 24-7 connection point with MDH for notifications of cases and the latest development in the outbreak. County Public Health is connected with local health care partners and uses its Health Alert Network (HAN) to send information as needed. County Communications is participating in a MDH virtual Joint Information Center (JIC) for message coordination, and our role in Emergency Management is to coordinate with you as a liaison with information and meetings.

It is hard to gauge what will happen with COVID-19 in the coming days, weeks, and months in the United States. **We are focused for now on aggressive prevention, but need to prepare for the likelihood we will see cases in our community.** Together, leveraging the resources and expertise we have across our county and working with you and our other community partners, we will respond to this health threat as we have to others over the years.

We will continue to do all we can to share information and stay on top of a developing situation both inside our organization and into the community. I also ask you to do what you can as a leader to help ensure that this information is being shared and that we are doing all we can to keep people calm and practicing the healthy habits that will slow or stop the spread of COVID-19.

**Please let me know if there are additional critical elements that you feel are needed in your community to assist in planning and action on the COVID-19 response.**