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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## IMPORTANT UPDATES: COVID-19 QUARANTINE AND VACCINE

### COVID-19 QUARANTINE UPDATES

The Pepin County Health Department along with local school administrators and neighboring county health departments are working to implement the CDC and DHS options for reducing duration of quarantines as it relates to COVID-19 exposure. Effective immediately, the Pepin County schools are planning to shorten the quarantine timeframe for both students and staff as follows:

- **Employees will be allowed to return to work on day 8 following 7 days of quarantine and a negative PCR test on day 6 or 7 if they remain asymptomatic for the duration of the 14 days.**
- **Students will be allowed to return to school for academics on day 11 following 10 days of quarantine if they remain asymptomatic for the duration of the 14 days.**
- **Students returning to school on day 11 may have alternatives to certain high-risk activities such as physical education, band, choir, recess and lunch locations to assure adherence to the guidelines.**
- **Students may return to use of the school transportation (buses/ vans), athletics and other extra-curricular activities on day 15 following the 14-day quarantine.**

In a Health Alert released on December 4<sup>th</sup>, DHS announced that they support the CDC guidelines for shortening the standard quarantine period from 14 days to 10 days for people who remain asymptomatic, provided that daily symptom monitoring continues for the full 14-day period. This change is based on data that suggests the risk of transmission after 10 days is very low. **Ideally, the quarantine should be continued for the full incubation period, but to lessen the burden to our communities these options are being provided.**

The CDC and DHS have also provided another option for situations where return to work or other activities is essential or critical. In this scenario, the duration of quarantine may be further shortened to 7 days. Individuals may be released from quarantine after 7 days if a test is completed on day 6 or 7, the result is negative, and symptom monitoring continues for the full 14-day period.

At first glance, this appeared to be the relief that was needed and what could be considered a “return to normal” for many. However, these options will not be applicable to all situations and settings. According to the CDC and DHS, for these two alternative strategies to be acceptable, **the following conditions must be met for the duration of the entire 14-day quarantine:**

- **Daily symptom monitoring must continue**
- **Remain asymptomatic**
- **Must adhere strictly to all recommended non-pharmaceutical interventions including consistent mask use, social distancing which includes physical contact and avoiding gatherings**

## COVID-19 VACCINE

The CDC and DHS have been planning for the COVID-19 Vaccine for months and now it is time to transition into the implementation phase. On Friday, December 11<sup>th</sup>, the Food the Drug Administration (FDA) granted Emergency Use Authorization for the Pfizer vaccine product. On Monday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, vaccine shipments began to arrive in Wisconsin at designated regional hubs. DHS is prioritizing hospitals and clinics as initial vaccination sites so as to reach front-line workers, as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices and the State Disaster Medical Advisory Committee. Our local facility, Advent Health, is considered a spoke to that regional hub.

The Pepin County Health Department will not be receiving COVID-19 vaccine for Phase 1A. We have applied and are planning to provide vaccinations to the groups recommended for Phase 1B and after. Advent Health and other agencies that employ the health care providers highlighted in the first phase are working to assure that vaccine is available as soon as possible.

For up-to-date information, please visit the [DHS COVID-19 Vaccine webpage](#).

We are many months away from having enough COVID-19 vaccine supply and reaching high vaccination coverage that we need for herd immunity. In the meantime, please continue wearing masks, physical distancing, washing hands, getting tested, and isolating if you have signs or symptoms of COVID-19.

Even after the first people get vaccinated, it is important to continue using all these COVID-19 precautions so that we stand the best chance of getting our families, communities, schools, and workplaces “back to normal” sooner.