



EAST-CENTRAL DISTRICT Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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[Schuyler, NE] – As part of the effort to expand COVID-19 testing across the state, the East Central District Health Department (ECDHD) facilitated a mass public health testing event Friday, April 24, in Schuyler, Nebraska, with the assistance of the Nebraska National Guard. There were 106 persons tested at the event.

Increasing the number of persons tested for COVID-19 is a high priority for Governor Ricketts, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), and local public health districts like ECDHD. For that reason, local health departments have been matched with National Guard units to help implement public health-led COVID-19 testing across the state. Each local health department is responsible for:

- Finding a time and place for testing within its jurisdiction, coordinating with its dedicated Guard unit.
- Developing a list of persons to be tested.
- Organizing employees or volunteers who can help with any needed translation or other tasks.
- Reporting the results of the tests to test subjects and their healthcare providers.
- Any contact tracing that is necessary after the results of the tests are provided.

The role of the National Guard unit is to work with the local health department to administer the tests, using the health department's swabs. For the ECDHD event, the list of persons tested was developed with cooperation from local businesses/manufacturers, and included people who were symptomatic for COVID-19, or considered at high-risk for exposure. All tests were scheduled in advance; no walk-in tests occurred. Testing materials are supplied by the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory.

The results from the testing event will be available within 2 to 3 days. Test results will be sent directly to ECDHD and to each tested individual's healthcare provider. Those persons who do not have healthcare providers will be

contacted directly by ECDHD with the results, and referred to Good Neighbor Community Health Center for further care, if needed. Contact tracing for any positive cases will be done by ECDHD, following its usual contact tracing protocols.

Numerous community partners were involved in putting the testing event together, and include: Centro Hispano; CHI Health Hospital, Schuyler; the Nebraska National Guard; Colfax County Emergency Management; the City of Schuyler; Schuyler Fire Department; and Columbus Community Hospital Occupational Health.

Currently in Nebraska, and in the United States, COVID-19 testing is not widespread, with the result that many cases go undiagnosed and unreported. It should be assumed that there several times the number of cases of COVID-19 than those that have been identified through testing, and that community spread has occurred in all four ECDHD counties. For these reasons, ECDHD urges all residents to continue other protective measures, including frequent hand washing; staying six feet from others; using a tissue or the crook of your arm to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze; limiting essential errands and; wearing facemasks when out in public. ECDHD believes its counties are just entering into the peak period of the pandemic.

A statewide COVID-19 information line is available to help answer general questions and help keep Nebraskans informed. The number is (402) 552-6645 and the line is available 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. CST, seven days a week. Information on COVID-19, along with press releases, can be found on the ECDHD website at <https://ecdhd.ne.gov> or on Facebook at East Central District Health Department.

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