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For Immediate Release

Athens County continues to prepare for the arrival of COVID-19.

The President of the United States has declared a federal state of emergency for all states and territories in response to COVID-19. According to an executive order signed by Governor DeWine on Sunday, March 15, all restaurants and bars in Ohio can only provide pick-up or delivery services to increase social distancing. Unemployment benefits are being strengthened for service workers in Ohio (unemployment.ohio.gov). The Governor is also encouraging those with children in day care, to think about a plan for future closures. Local government, social service providers, and the health department are meeting regularly to address the developing situation.

During Monday’s press conference, Governor DeWine recommended postponing Ohio’s primary election until June 2nd. Residents are being encouraged to vote by absentee ballot. Grocery stores, banks, and pharmacies will remain open. Other closures specifically listed in the Governor’s press conference are gyms, indoor recreation centers, and movie theatres. The Governor also reduced the number of people who can gather from 100 to 50. President Trump, in his press conference, recommended limiting gatherings to less than 10 people.

If you are experiencing respiratory symptoms and are preparing to see a doctor, call your physician’s office, urgent care, or emergency department before arriving for care. Let them know that you believe you are experiencing symptoms related to the COVID-19 virus. Your doctor can determine if you need to be tested.

High risk individuals are those over 60 or those who have chronic or severe medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart, lung, or kidney disease. Special consideration should be given to these groups. People who are high-risk are strongly encouraged to social distance themselves. If they can work from home, it is recommended.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as of March 16, 2020, there are 3,774 cases of COVID-19 in the United States. Currently, there are 50 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in
Ohio. There are no confirmed cases in Athens County, but it is understood that COVID-19 could be present in Athens County. The Ohio Department of Health has opened a call center for specific questions about COVID-19, 1-833-4 ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634). For Athens-specific questions regarding COVID-19, contact the Athens City-County Health Department at 740-592-4431.

The health department encourages residents to continue to wash hands several times a day with soap and water (warm if possible) for at least 20 seconds. Regularly clean surfaces that are frequently touched by many people. Avoid touching your face, cover your cough, and stay at home if you feel ill.

For the most recent information regarding COVID-19, visit the Athens City-County Health Department website www.athenspublichealth.org and Facebook page, twitter@acchd_oh, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov, and the Ohio Department of Health Coronavirus page, www.coronavirus.ohio.gov.

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