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*COVID-19 positive case identified in Boquet Valley Central School employee*

On Sunday, July 12, a positive case of COVID-19 in a BVCS employee was reported to the Essex County Health Department (ECHD). “In this instance, the employee was asymptomatic, so we issued an order of isolation as soon as we learned of their results, and we conducted a thorough investigation by looking at everyone they came in contact with 48 hours prior to their test date and up until the time they were isolated,” noted Linda Beers, Director of Public Health for ECHD. “Once this list is established, all of those individuals are placed in a 14 day quarantine, starting from the date of their last known contact with the positive case,” Beers summarized.

The health department is working closely with BVCS school administration and the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and all potential contacts have been identified. “Our standard is to speak with all positive cases within 24 hours and with all contacts of positive cases within 48 hours,” stated Andrea Whitmarsh, Public Information Officer for ECHD. “We continue to maintain this standard and our focus today will be to complete all quarantine orders for contacts of this case,” Whitmarsh continued.

NYSDOH guidance outlines specific criteria for individuals to be considered a contact of a positive case and therefore, needing a quarantine. “We get a lot of calls and questions from concerned citizens about brief encounters - or that because a loved one or friend was in contact with a positive case, that the caller also needs to be quarantined even though they were never in contact with the case. As you can imagine, in small, close-knit communities like ours, this would result in half a town being quarantined and doesn’t make sense from an epidemiological standpoint This is not how contact tracing works and we do not quarantine contacts of contacts or those who had a very minimal interactions,” Beers emphasized.

All individuals placed under quarantine are encouraged to get a viral COVID-19 test; however, this does not shorten the duration of a quarantine or eliminate the need for one. The purpose of the quarantine is to closely monitor individuals for symptoms over the 14-day incubation period and to quickly identify and isolate any new cases that develop. A negative test at day 3 of a quarantine does not mean a person previously exposed to the virus won’t develop symptoms and test positive at day 10.

BVCS administration is cooperating with this investigation and for the time being, has closed both campus locations – Mountain View and Lake View – as a precautionary measure, and also due to the number of employees that will need to honor their quarantine orders. The school is being cleaned and disinfected per NYSDOH cleaning guidelines during this time. “This has been an opportunity for the school to review their COVID-19 prevention measures and practices – mask wearing requirements, cleaning and disinfection protocols, social distancing criteria, frequency of handwashing/sanitizing, etc.,” Beers noted. “As we have done all along, we will continue to work with our schools and other organizations to help ensure that guidelines and

recommendations are being implemented to the highest possible standard. The Regional Control Room and our local representative and Chairman of our Essex County Board of Supervisors, Shaun Gilliland, has been instrumental to our response.”

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