**Mask Up Buchanan County!**

**Working Together to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19**

July 10, 2020

*(Independence, IA)* – Show your support for neighbors, family, and friends by choosing to wear a face mask when social distancing cannot be observed to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. When two people in contact wear a mask, even if one is an asymptomatic carrier of COVID-19, the transmission probability has been found to be low to very low. BCHC and the Buchanan County Public Health Department are encouraging citizens to become educated on the importance of face coverings and other preventative measures like social distancing, frequent hand washing, and staying home when ill to help slow the spread of the virus, and to do their part in keeping their community safe and well. Because of this, Buchanan County Public Health has put together the following FAQ about face coverings and how using them, along with other protective measures, can help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

1. **Why have the recommendations for face masks changed?**

The Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) now recommend cloth masks for the general public. Early on in the pandemic there were two things preventing this recommendation: 1) limited supply of PPE for health care workers; and 2) not much evidence that face masks for the public would help slow the spread of the virus. Experts now say the most current evidence is clear that masks can help, especially now that we know people can spread the disease before they start to have symptoms or if they don’t have any symptoms, yet are still infected with the virus.

1. **How many people in the community really need to wear a mask to slow the spread of COVID-19?**

Ideally 100% of people should wear masks in public areas or around people outside of their household. In one research simulation it was predicted that if 80% of the population would wear a mask it would do more to reduce the spread than a strict lockdown. According to the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation, if 95% of people wear masks in public it would prevent 33,000 deaths by October 1st.

1. **What type of face masks should I wear? How should I wear it? How do I take care of it?**

The best mask to wear is one that you can wear comfortably and consistently. Reserve surgical and N95 masks for healthcare, and choose a cloth mask. Masks should cover the mouth and the nose, and should fit snug. Don’t touch your mask while wearing it. Remove your mask by the ear loops/ties. Wash your hands immediately after removing masks. Regularly wash your mask with soap and water in the washing machine.

1. **Who shouldn’t wear a face mask?**

Anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, or is unable to remove the mask without help.

Children under 2 years of age should not wear masks. There are also considerations for feasibility and adaptations for some individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities or those who are hearing impaired who rely on lip-reading to communicate.

1. **What should I know about face shields?**

Currently the CDC does not recommend face shields for the general population or as a substitute for a cloth face mask.

1. **If I practice social/physical distancing do I still need a mask?**

Face masks are definitely not a substitute for distancing. The combination of the 3 W’s provide you with the best protection & prevention: **W**ear a mask, **W**ash your hands, **W**atching your distance.

Free face masks are available for pick-up at the Independence Food Pantry, Winthrop City Hall, and Jesup City Hall. BCHC and the Buchanan County Public Health appreciates the public’s help in encouraging family and friends to wear a face covering and practice preventative measures to help decrease the spread of COVID-19. To show how you and your family are supporting mask wearing in public, submit your photo on Buchanan County Health Center’s Facebook page to be featured in an upcoming community social media video. To stay up-to-date with the latest news and announcements regarding COVID-19, please follow Buchanan County Public Health and Buchanan County Health Center on Facebook.

###