



ITASCA COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

ITASCA RESOURCE CENTER

1209 SE 2nd Avenue, Grand Rapids, Minnesota 55744-3983

Hearing Impaired Number TDD: 218-327-5549

(218) 327-2941

Visit us at: www.co.itasca.mn.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kelly Chandler (Itasca County Public Health Division Manager) 218-327-6144

Grand Rapids, Minn. The third and fourth laboratory confirmed cases of COVID-19 (coronavirus) have been identified in Itasca County. One case is an employee from an area skilled nursing facility and the other is an employee from an area group home. Both confirmed cases had contact with known positives.

Kelly Chandler, Itasca County Public Health Division Manager, reports, “We have been in contact with the facilities where the cases were confirmed to discuss their protocols, further recommended testing and personal protective equipment needs. We’ll continue to provide support to them as needed.”

The community should continue to take proper precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect the most susceptible and vulnerable community members. “We strongly encourage you to wear a cloth mask when in public, ensuring that you are covering your nose and mouth. Please stay home whenever you can and continue to practice social distancing when you must leave your home!” continues Chandler.

According to Marc Halpert, Chief Operating Officer for Monarch Healthcare Management, the company that operates The Emeralds at Grand Rapids, “We are able to confirm that one staff member tested positive for COVID-19. The employee does not have any symptoms and has not had any contact with residents or staff since finding out her family member tested positive. Once finding this out, the employee was very responsible and stayed out of the facility. At this time, no other staff members, nor residents, have any symptoms nor tested positive.”

According to Michael Sarafolean, President of Orion Corporation of Minnesota, the company that operates the group home facility with the confirmed case, “Last Thursday evening, one of our employees notified us that she had been in close physical contact with a family member who had tested positive for COVID-19. We immediately removed the employee from the schedule and directed her to seek



medical evaluation. She received confirmation Saturday night that her results were also positive.“

We have worked closely since then with the Itasca County Public Health and Emergency Management Divisions, Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital, and have been in contact with the MN Department of Health. Grand Itasca moved quickly to arrange for testing of the people who live at the affected home as well as the employees who may have been exposed. We are extremely grateful for the timely, effective, and efficient response from all of the Itasca County personnel in providing the necessary assistance to aid in our ability to respond to this incident.”

Grand Itasca President & CEO, Jean MacDonell says, “We understand the peace of mind that a test result brings and are happy to significantly expand our testing criteria to include all symptomatic patients with underlying medical conditions. This is in addition to the testing of emergency and health care workers, childcare providers and those with known exposure to positive COVID-19 patients. If patients meet the criteria for testing, they should call our appointment line at 218-326-7344 to schedule a telephone visit for a curbside COVID-19 test.”

###

Media briefing invite: April 28, 2020 at 1 PM. Details to follow.

Orion Corporation:

The Orion Corporation provides residential services and support to people with intellectual disabilities. We have been operating in Itasca County for more than 30 years, serving over 40 people in eight small, residential settings and in individual and family homes.

The Emeralds at Grand Rapids:

The Emeralds at Grand Rapids mission is to change the way short-term rehabilitation and long-term healthcare is delivered. Through our commitment to Innovative Care and 5-star Customer Service, we strive to put our residents, tenants, and families first. We have been servicing the Itasca County community for decades and look forward to working together to flatten the curve.