

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Last Friday, Central District Health Department (CDHD) recorded its 100<sup>th</sup> COVID-19 related death this year. "This is indeed a very sad and very grim milestone for all of us. We extend sympathy to the families and friends of those who have lost loved ones in this pandemic," states Teresa Anderson, CDHD Health Director. She adds, "We expect to see an increasing number of hospitalizations, utilization of ICU beds, and the number of deaths all directly related to COVID-19 through mid-January."

According to the CDC's ensemble forecast updated on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, the number of newly reported COVID-19 deaths will likely increase over the next four weeks. The impact of Thanksgiving gatherings on the number of new COVID-19 illnesses in the Central District is still be evaluating. The virus takes around 7 - 14 days to reflect the protective measures that have been practiced. Fortunately, CDHD did not see a large increase in new cases this past week. However, in the last 14 days, CDHD has reported a total of 872 new cases, an average of 63 new cases each day. Anderson adds, "This is far from over. Even though our healthcare system is managing now, we are asking the public's assistance in preventing additional stress on our health care providers. By practicing social distancing and wearing masks consistently, we are helping our health care professionals. We are also protecting our loved ones from unnecessary illness."

New Directed Health Measures (DHMs) based on new CDC research went into effect last Thursday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, at 5:00pm. While the CDC continues to advise that the full 14-day quarantine after exposure to a close contact is the best way to prevent the spread of the virus, the DHM allows for these three options to end quarantine:

1. After 14 days without testing and without symptoms (0.1% risk of spreading)
2. After 10 days without testing and without symptoms (1-10% risk of spreading)
3. After 7 days and after receiving a negative test result (test must occur on day 5 or later) and without symptoms (5-12% risk of spreading).

In all three options, the quarantined individual must self monitor for symptoms and must wear a mask for the entire 14-day period. Anderson is hopeful that these loosened quarantine measures do not contribute to an increase in the number of cases. "The risk for spread increases as the quarantine duration decreases. We rely on the CDC for science-based guidance and we are following their recommendation, as well as the new DHMs."