

Public Health Director: New York State on Pause: Please Stay Where You Are

March 25, 2020

As of March 22, 2020, New York State is practicing the “pause” on most public, personal, and commercial activities in attempt to slow the transmission of novel coronavirus (COVID-19). All non-essential businesses are now closed and residents are asked to remain in their home, with the exception of emergencies, seeking medical care, solitary local exercise, and shopping for food and other necessities. Travel within the United States is not recommended, especially for vulnerable populations, who are more likely to contract the virus. Just to be clear, even if you conclude you are not vulnerable, you are wrong. We all have a responsibility for protecting others.

Hamilton County is the least populated county in New York State, with approximately 4,500-year-round residents, most of which are over the age of 65 years. We are experiencing a large influx of travelers into the county to occupy second homes and short-term rentals. Our current healthcare infrastructure is able to care for year-round residents, but we are not equipped for this influx, nor will State resources be available to come north for quite some time.

Escaping to the Adirondacks may seem like an attractive and safe solution to decrease your risk of exposure to COVID-19, however there are several things to consider in terms of health, safety, and your wellbeing. While you may be looking for a way to isolate your family, you also will be isolating them from healthcare and supplies. Most small businesses in Hamilton County are closed and while our convenience stores are still open to the public, there is a limited supply of food and other necessities.

Hamilton County Public Health and our primary care providers **do not have testing kits. We do not have a hospital within the county or a hospital within reasonable travel distance for COVID-19 testing.** If you or your family member becomes sick, there will be a delay in healthcare delivery and follow up services.

Hotels are considered essential services and are regulated by NYSDOH for cleanliness and safety. Airbnb, Vacation Rental by Owner, and other rental sites are not regulated by NYSDOH. If you are renting out your home through one of these organizations, the risk and responsibility for cleanliness falls on you. **We politely request that you remove your short-term rentals from these websites, and refrain from renting during this pandemic.** Please understand this is for your protection, plus the protection of anyone who might be entertaining the idea of staying in your rental. Your long term success will be far greater if the news stories don't start to revolve around those sickened or trapped without health care in a short term rental unit.

We truly appreciate all you do to stimulate our small communities and economy, and hope that you will take this information into consideration before coming to the Adirondacks during this public health pandemic. Lastly, if for some reason your personal situation absolutely requires you to come here, we ask that you consider the CDC recommendation of self-isolating for 14 days once you arrive. Your health and the health of others depend upon it.

Please contact Hamilton County Public Health at (518) 648-6141 with any questions.