

Dear Leadership of Westchester Jewish Council Member Organizations:

Since we communicated last evening, there is much more to share with you including an outstanding working meeting with our elected and public officials. Here goes.....

There are now 11 confirmed cases of the virus. Added to the list is a local New Rochelle family of five consisting of a husband and wife and three children that are students at the Westchester Torah Academy which is hosted at Bet Am Shalom Synagogue in White Plains. The school and synagogue will be closed for the remainder of the week for planning and sanitizing. SAR High School in Riverdale will be closed till Wednesday and the SAR Academy will reopen on Monday. Westchester Day School and Westchester Hebrew High School are scheduled to reopen on Monday. Hastings Public Schools will be closed as a health precaution for the remainder of the week as well. (All the information above is of course subject to change). We of course wish a full and complete recovery to all those afflicted.

Thank you to the Heads of School of our area Orthodox day schools, the President of Yeshiva University and other Jewish community leaders that joined together for a meeting and press conference on Wednesday with Governor Cuomo, (with thanks to Jewish community liaison Michael Snow), County Executive Latimer, Chairman of the Board of Legislators Boykin, New Rochelle Mayor Bramson, NYS Department of Health Commissioner Zucker and County Health Commissioner Amler. We had an open and extensive conversation as to how to best combat the ongoing coronavirus and to stay safe and healthy.

Here are some of my top 19 takeaways from the meeting for your use followed by an official update from the Westchester County Department of Health:

1. The Coronavirus is.... a "virus" and as such, one should use appropriate sanitation and health precautions as one would with any virus
2. The elderly, and those with weakened immune systems, etc. are at a higher risk than the population at large and should take extra precautions
3. 80% of the people that contract this virus will usually not even be aware that they have contracted it, as they will have little to no symptoms.
4. The mortality rate for this virus is greater than for a standard flu, but statistically still very small.
5. There is no general health advisory or directive against attending or organizing large scale events. Good hygiene should be followed in all gatherings.
6. The virus has a lifespan of 24-48 hours if left untreated on a contact surface
7. The virus is spread via direct contact with an infected individual. As a rule, direct contact is usually defined as being within a 6 foot radius of an infected person with enough time for the infection to be transmitted.
8. The infection has an incubation period of ~14 days.
9. If one is test swabbed at 7 days, that does not mean that the virus cannot show on days 8-14
10. The severity of the virus is only surpassed by the anxiety about the virus.

11. As the capacity of the number of people that can be tested grows, the number of people that will test positive will likely also increase (due to the increased testing factor).
12. A key way to fight the virus is through washing hands, proper cleaning of facilities, and minimizing the spread of germs from person to person.
13. If you exhibit symptoms of the virus, contact your health care provider for guidance and possible testing.
14. People who have a confirmed case of coronavirus will need to be quarantined as will those that have had direct contact with that individual within the incubation period.
15. People under self-quarantine or possible exposure to known cases should call the Westchester County hotline at 866 588 0195 or the NYS hotline at (888) 364 3065.
16. In addition, the United Way of Westchester/Putnam is providing guidance via their existing “211” hotline. (The number does not always work on all office phones. In such cases, try from a cellular phone). Thank you to our friend and colleague Tom and his team at the United Way.
17. If the NCAA can ban handshaking so can we. Let’s make his a “no handshake/contact” community for a while. This will slow the spread of germs.
18. In between updates like this, visit our website at www.wjcouncil.org for the latest information available for our Westchester (and environs) Jewish community. We will try to keep the website as updated as possible. NEWS12 as well as lohud.com have proven to be accurate news resources as well.
19. Our partners at the JCRC of NY remain a ready resource—visit them at jrcny.org

The above items are some basic notes from the meeting and beyond and can be used in conjunction with published Health Department guidelines and your own health protocols. (Our notes are not meant to be exhaustive nor authoritative and are subject to change as conditions change). If you have any questions or need clarification contact the Council office at 914 328 7001 during office hours or email at elliott@wjcouncil.org or the County Health Department hotline. The Council is here for you each and every day.

We are pleased to share this official update from the County Department of Health.

**FROM THE WESTCHESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Update March 4, 2020**

Am I likely to become infected with COVID-19?

While there are known cases of COVID-19 in New York State, including Westchester County, the risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 remains low. If widespread cases were to occur in our area, most people are likely to experience mild to moderate disease with full recovery. In addition to staying informed, you can reduce your risk of becoming infected by taking proper prevention measures similar to what is recommended to avoid the common cold and flu.

What is a coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a group of viruses that can cause either mild illness, such as a cold, or can make people sick with pneumonia.

What is a novel coronavirus?

A novel coronavirus is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. Recently, a novel (new) coronavirus called COVID-19 was detected in thousands of people worldwide, primarily in China. Multiple cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in the U.S. and it is expected that more cases of COVID-19 will be identified in the future. For the most recent case information, visit the [CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Situation Summary webpage](#).

How is COVID-19 spread?

Many of the initial patients with COVID-19 in China had links to a large seafood and live animal market, suggesting animal-to-person spread. However, cases being reported at this time have been occurring through person-to-person spread. The virus is thought to spread mainly:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The most common symptoms include fever, cough and shortness of breath. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.

What should I do if I (or someone I know) traveled to an area where COVID-19 is spreading?

Anyone who has traveled to a CDC Level 3 destination (one that is experiencing widespread sustained transmission of COVID

19) should self-quarantine at home for 14 days following their return. For the most recent travel alerts, visit the [CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel webpage](#). You should monitor your symptoms and call your health care provider if you feel sick with fever, cough, or have difficulty breathing.

If you need to go to your doctor's office or an emergency room, call ahead and tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms. The same precautions should be taken if you have been in close contact with someone who has confirmed COVID-19. You should also avoid contact with others.

Who can be tested for COVID-19?

New York State is now able to perform testing for COVID-19. All testing performed on patients in Westchester County must be approved by the Westchester County Department of Health. The CDC has developed specific criteria for who can be tested for COVID-19. As the situation evolves, the criteria may change. For the most current testing criteria, visit the [CDC Evaluating and Reporting Persons Under Investigation \(PUI\) webpage](#).

Is there a vaccine or treatment for COVID-19?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. There is also no specific treatment for COVID-19 disease at this time. However, most people will recover on their own after resting and drinking plenty of fluids. To relieve symptoms, people with the virus can take pain and fever medication, use a room humidifier or take hot showers to help ease a sore throat and cough.

What can I do to protect myself?

You should go about your daily life, but take the same precautions that you would during cold and flu season:

- [Wash your hands](#) often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use alcohol based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue (not your hands), then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a cleaning product that contains bleach.

Will wearing a surgical mask protect me from COVID-19?

Surgical masks do not protect the person wearing the mask from infection with COVID-19. Surgical masks should only be worn by people showing symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of disease to others. In addition, N95 respirator masks are not recommended for the general public and should only be worn by health care workers who have been properly fitted for them.

Should I travel during the COVID-19 outbreak?

If you are planning to travel, visit the [CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel webpage](#) for the latest travel advisories related to COVID-19.

Hotline Phone Numbers

People under self-quarantine or exposure to known cases, call (866) 588-0195 NYS Department of Health

COVID-19 Hotline (888) 364-3065 Westchester County
COVID-19 Information Call 211

Additional Resources: Visit the Westchester County Department of Health

Website: www.westchestergov.com/health

In closing, how fortunate we are to live and/or work in a County/community that is blessed with elected officials, public officials, health care providers, Jewish communal leaders and more that work tirelessly together for the public good. Feel free to share this update as you responsibly see fit. It is only being sent to the top leadership of our community.

With continued prayers for those that have taken ill and wishes for a quick and complete recovery.