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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: June 29, 2020

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### **Gatherings and Community Event Attendance**

The upcoming Fourth of July Weekend will allow for many opportunities for individuals to gather under a variety of social settings. Portage County Health and Human Services-Division of Public Health has received numerous questions and concerns about hosting or attending gatherings safely. Whether gathering at the lake, for a cookout, attending a parade, or to watch fireworks, there are no current state or local orders that prohibit large gatherings. Although there are no legal consequences against hosting or attending a large gathering there are health and safety ramifications that can directly impact the rate of community spread of COVID-19 in our community. Currently Portage County is identified as having a high activity level for COVID-19 which supports community spread of the disease, by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. The Portage County Division of Public Health does not advise either hosting or attending large gatherings while Portage County is experiencing high activity levels for COVID-19.

We trust that event organizers and community members will make wise choices and act in the community's best interest by limiting gatherings and even considering postponing an event to help control the spread of COVID-19 happening in our county. Portage County Division of Public Health has been busy responding to numerous cases of COVID-19 recently reported, many of which can be traced back to attending a gathering or other type of social outing, with the largest demographic of cases being in the 20-29 age group.

If a gathering must be held, organizers should provide for physical distancing of at least 6 feet and recommend guests wear face coverings if possible. Hold events outdoors and limit the amount of people to no more than 50. Avoid serving food that is buffet style or is self-service. Hand sanitizer should be offered, and bathrooms should be cleaned and sanitized before, during, and after the event.

COVID-19 can be prevented by:

- Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available
- Covering coughs and sneezes
- Avoiding touching your face in public
- Staying home when ill
- Practicing physical distancing of at least 6 feet from people not in your household
- Avoiding large gatherings
- Avoiding non-essential travel
- Wearing a cloth face covering in situations where physical distancing can't be maintained

Vulnerable populations, including the elderly and immunocompromised, have increased risk for serious and life-threatening complications, but anyone can develop symptoms or become seriously ill if infected with COVID-19. It is also important to remember that COVID-19 can also be spread by those who are not experiencing symptoms, as recent cases in Portage County have shown.

To view the current status of COVID-19 activity in Portage County visit <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/local.htm> .

If you have questions or would like additional guidance, please call or email our department at (715) 345-5907 or [PCPublicHealth@co.portage.wi.us](mailto:PCPublicHealth@co.portage.wi.us).

If you have general COVID-19 questions call 2-1-1 or text your zip code to 898211 Monday-Friday from 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

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