

March 24, 2020

Dear Northern Berkshire County Families,

In partnership with our pediatricians, Town Managers, Town Administrators, and Town Health Inspectors, Mount Greylock Regional School District implores students, families and our wider community to combat the spread of the Coronavirus 2019 Disease ("COVID-19") by practicing "social distancing" most effectively by **STAYING HOME**.

COVID-19 presents an unprecedented health crisis and public health emergency. The virus is easily transmitted, and it has the demonstrated ability to infect substantial sections of the community. While the elderly and people with compromised immune systems are at greatest risk, all people, young and old, can contract, carry and transmit this virus. By interacting and socializing with others, we put people at risk for infection. Regardless of whether we feel ill or well, we have the potential to spread the virus by interacting. There is a single response. **STAY HOME**.

Other countries already grappling with the spread of the virus have seen their health care systems overwhelmed by ill patients. Without the capacity to care for such large numbers, these health care systems have watched thousands of patients die. And now the rampant spread of this virus threatens to overwhelm our community's health care system if we, as a community, do not act proactively and responsibly by distancing ourselves from each other and **STAYING HOME**.

The letter shared below from County Boards of Health, Berkshire Health Systems and the our largest Berkshire County cities articulates succinctly the threat COVID-19 presents to our community, its health services and health care workers fighting this virus and caring for the ill. This is our critical health problem, and it is our responsibility to act to eliminate it.

Sincerely,

Superintendent Kimberley Grady and The Mount Greylock Regional School District Administrative Team  
Town Managers Jason Hoch and Kelli Robbins

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AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE BOARDS OF HEALTH OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY, THE CITIES OF PITTSFIELD AND NORTH ADAMS, THE TOWNS OF ADAMS, CHESHIRE, LANESBOROUGH AND WILLIAMSTOWN AND BERKSHIRE HEALTH SYSTEMS (March 23, 2020)

The Coronavirus 2019 Disease ("COVID-19") presents our community with a public health emergency of unprecedented severity. This virus is easily transmitted, especially in group settings. In other parts of the world it has already demonstrated the ability to infect large segments of a population and overwhelm the capacity of health care systems to care for ill patients. It has resulted in the deaths of thousands of individuals. It now threatens the health of our community, particularly those most vulnerable to the virus and our health care workers.

The most effective tool we have available to combat the spread of this disease is to rigorously follow a straight forward strategy. That strategy is to STAY HOME. Experience in other parts of the world has already demonstrated that effective “social distancing” is an effective way to combat the spread of COVID-19.

Since the first cases of COVID-19 were recognized in Berkshire two weeks ago, we have witnessed an alarming increase in patients requiring hospital care by our health care system. If as a community we fail to implement an effective STAY HOME strategy, the increasing number of ill patients will overwhelm our ability to provide the care necessary for many of them to survive this infection.

Given the presence of the COVID-19 virus in the Berkshires, even with effective social distancing, the number of cases of COVID-19 in Berkshire County will continue to rise for some weeks as we STAY HOME. Among the steps to protect the health of the public and prevent the further spread of COVID-19, as cases of COVID-19 are diagnosed, public health nurses and other health care professionals will be determining the need for some of us to be placed under “Quarantine” and in some circumstances “Isolation.”

Again, full participation by the citizens of Berkshire County is vital to our success in combating COVID-19. Ultimately, it will not be the acute care resources of the health system but our ability to prevent the spread of this disease that will turn the tide in this battle. We all have the responsibility to do what we can to reduce the risk to ourselves, to our families and to our communities. We will only be successful if all of us, not just some of us, adhere to the requirements for social distancing as well as Quarantine and Isolation when indicated.

If we all do our part, together we will save lives and beat this virus.

Mayor Linda Tyer, City of Pittsfield

Mayor Tom Bernard, City of North Adams

Town Manager Jason Hoch, Town of Williamstown

Town Manager Kelli Robbins, Town of Lanesborough

Town Administrator Edmund R. St. John, IV, Town of Cheshire

Town Administrator Jay R. Green, Town of Adams

James Lederer, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Berkshire Health Systems

Laura Kittross, Director, Berkshire County Boards of Health Association, on behalf of the 32 Boards of Health in Berkshire County