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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**AS COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS EASE RESIDENTS MUST NOT EASE  
SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES!**

*Social Distancing isn't just about protecting yourself but protecting others as well*

(Toms River) – As restrictions are gradually being relaxed across the state of New Jersey, Ocean County residents need to remember easing social distancing measures are not an option.

“We are certainly pleased to see our residents are slowly getting back to doing some of the things they enjoy,” said Ocean County Freeholder Gerry P. Little, liaison to the Ocean County Board of Health. “Whether its spending time at our beaches and boardwalks, parks and golf courses or just enjoying the beautiful weather, people must remember this pandemic is far from over and maintaining social distancing measures are still mandated. Lives are still at stake.”

Governor Murphy recently announced that phase two of his restart and recovery plan will permit non-essential retail businesses and child daycares to reopen, youth sports leagues and summer camps to commence, schools and universities to hold graduations - all with modified business plans. But the Ocean County Health Department (OCHD) advises that there is no mixed message regarding the easing of restrictions.

“The last thing the public health community wants to see is a trend backwards. It’s so imperative people not perceive the loosened restrictions to mean they can just move on from the social distancing measures including outdoors in public spaces,” explained Daniel Regenye, Ocean County Health Department Public Health Coordinator/Health Officer. “No one said that social distancing is optional. While there are more vulnerable populations than others, it’s still everyone’s responsibility to do their part in protecting their communities.”

The OCHD released a COVID-19 public health response summary last week confirming that older adults are still our most vulnerable residents. As of June 1, 2020, slightly over 30% of the 8,770 confirmed COVID-19 cases in the county were individuals over 65 years of age and accounted for 79.72% of all deaths. Ocean County has one of the highest senior populations in the Garden State with nearly 300,000 older adults.

However, Regenye went on to explain that the COVID-19 virus does not discriminate. The OCHD report also identified that individuals aged 19 to 64 made up slightly more than 62% of all COVID-19 cases and approximately 15% of deaths in the county. “We just want people to play it smart as we move forward. We are still in uncharted waters and while we are learning so much more everyday about this virus we still need our residents’ cooperation as restrictions are eased and more people start to congregate whether it’s outdoor or indoor spaces,” he said.

The OCHD advises it’s important to continue to follow these public health recommendations;

- Wear a cloth face covering if out in public.
- Practice social distancing (keep at least 6 feet away from you & others).
- Follow good respiratory hygiene recommendations.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve, not your hands.

- Wash hands often with soap and water. Use an alcohol-based sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Stay home if you are sick and avoid sick people.
- Review CDC travel advisories if planning travel.
- No mass gatherings.

“There will be many more restrictions being revised and new phases implemented as we move forward during the pandemic, but the message is clear – follow the rules for everyone’s sake and we can all hope to have a happy and healthy summer,” added Little. “Don’t let some of the images you currently see on TV and social media allow you to think that large gatherings of people not adhering to social distancing measures is the right thing to do. We understand that people are anxious to return to some normalcy but let’s just do it the right way.”

For more information regarding COVID-19 guidelines please visit the **OCHD** website at [www.ochd.org](http://www.ochd.org). The OCHD is also providing a general COVID-19 Information Call Hot Line for residents and clinicians to answer questions regarding the coronavirus. The number is 732-341-9700 ext. 7411.

The NJDOH (NJPIES) hotline is available for questions around the clock at 1-800-222-1222 or by dialing 2-1-1. Other related sources; for medical COVID-19 questions call [1-800-962-1253](tel:1-800-962-1253) (24/7) or **Text NJCOVID to [898-211](tel:898-211)** to receive alerts.

Additional information can be found at:  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/summary.html>  
or New Jersey Department of Health website at:  
<https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml>

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