

Statement from the Minister of Health, the Hon. Kim Wilson, JP, MP:

Good Evening Bermuda.

I can confirm that currently two potential COVID-19 outbreaks concerning work places are actively being assessed and managed based on established protocols.

Contact tracing is underway, and public health guidance has been provided. More details will be provided as they become available.

A lot of misinformation has been occupying social media all weekend concerning our school systems and recent cases.

Two of the recent cases have close contacts with children in our school system. Principals and staff of the schools have been informed and instructions provided consistent with Public Health Guidelines. Testing is also being arranged with these schools, as was the case with the Saltus Grammar School. Some 240 persons were tested over the weekend including students, parents, teachers.

Students in the said classes, as well as their teachers are required to quarantine for 14 days. Siblings of these children who are unable to live separately from their sibling being quarantined are also asked to quarantine. This is only if they are unable to quarantine, albeit living in the same household.

We are acting out of an abundance of caution. Please note that just because persons have been quarantined – this doesn't mean they are carrying the virus. The person may have had a potential exposure to someone currently being assessed. This is a very important distinction. We are actively assessing the close contacts for symptoms and awaiting test results.

I have full confidence in our epidemiology and testing teams to evaluate the extent of any outbreak and ensure that it is contained. We are in control of the situation and are following a well laid out plan to combat any possible outbreak.

As Minister of Health, I want to reassure the public that an uptick in positive cases was expected as we see a surge or second wave in cases in countries such as the USA and UK. My team at the Ministry of Health has been working diligently all weekend, following a well laid out plan to combat any possible outbreak. Again, this includes contact tracing. If you have not been contacted by the team, please do not rely on rumor, or social media to determine next steps. If you are in fact a close contact, you will be contacted by Health.

In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to once again remind the public that the Ministry of Health will contact you only if you have been identified as a close contact and need further instructions to quarantine or get tested. Otherwise, I continue to urge everyone to wear their masks, wash their hands, avoid closed spaces, crowded places and close contact settings.

Also, please note that just because persons are quarantined, does not mean that they are carrying the coronavirus.

As a reminder, the difference between quarantine and isolation is as follows:

- Quarantine – Quarantine/self-quarantine is used to prevent the possible spread of a communicable disease. Quarantine and self-quarantine mean that a person with no symptoms must stay in their home or accommodation, and must stay two metres or six feet away from others.
- Isolation – Individuals are isolated when they have symptoms, including fever and cough. Isolated people must stay at home (or in hospital if critically ill) and can have limited contact with others.

To clarify, when a person is quarantined they don't have the symptoms but are separated from others. When a person is isolated, they have symptoms and are kept away from others. Both of these public health measures are used to prevent the spread of an infectious disease.

Acting out of an abundance of caution, pre-emptive measures are being taken at the schools where close contacts have been identified.

To be clear, Ministry of Health guidelines for schools in this situation state that if you live in a home with a child that attends the same school as a close contact – and has a sibling – but the siblings can properly separate, they should do so. If not, they should quarantine.

I must also reiterate the established workplace guidance. Management should send home any employee who has any of the following new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chill
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea
- Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit
- Known close contact with a person who has tested positive

There will be a COVID-19 Cabinet Subcommittee meeting tomorrow (Monday, November 23rd) to discuss the latest information and discuss further steps.