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COVID-19: let's work together to end the stigma

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- The prolonged uncertainty of when the COVID-19 pandemic might come to a close has us all on edge and feeling many emotions, including fear and anxiety.

The Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) is asking the public to not let these emotions turn into social stigma by labeling or stereotyping those who are either connected to the pandemic in some way or believed to be connected.

Social stigma and discrimination can occur when people link a disease, such as COVID-19, with a certain population, community, or nationality.

Groups who may experience stigma during the COVID-19 pandemic include:

- People who tested positive for COVID-19, have recovered from being sick with COVID-19, or were released from isolation or quarantine;
- Certain racial and ethnic minority groups;
- People who have disabilities or developmental or behavioral disorders who may have difficulty following recommendations;
- People who have underlying health conditions that cause a cough;
- People living in group settings, such as people experiencing homelessness.

Stigmatized individuals may experience isolation, avoidance, rejection, depression, anxiety, public embarrassment, verbal abuse and even physical violence. These actions can negatively affect the emotional, mental, and physical health of stigmatized groups, as well as their family, friends, caregivers and the communities they live in.

Stigma hurts everyone in the community by creating more fear or anger toward ordinary people instead of focusing on the disease that is causing the problem. Stigma can also make people more likely to hide symptoms or illness, keep them from seeking health care, and prevent individuals from adopting healthy behaviors. This means that stigma can make it more difficult to control the spread of the outbreak.

Stopping stigma is important to making our communities safer and healthier. Everyone can help stop stigma related to COVID-19 by knowing the facts and sharing them with others.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

We take action to protect, maintain and improve the health of our community.

Advancing innovative solutions to achieve healthier outcomes

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