NEWS

**CPH Pediatric Team Ready to Assist Schools**

POTSDAM, NY – As area students prepare to head back into the classroom, a group of St. Lawrence Health System (SLHS) providers have created a Pediatric Response Team, and set up a Pediatric Sick Clinic to assist with any possible coronavirus-positive youngsters.

The Pediatric Sick Clinic is located in the lower level of the EJ Noble Building, 80 East Main Street, Canton, in the After Hours Clinic area (which has been closed due to the pandemic). A pediatric hot-line has been established through SLHS at (315) 261-5869. Appointments may be scheduled for Monday - Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm.

Pediatrician Kathleen Terrence, MD, pointed out the New York State Department of Education has reported they want any child presenting with COVID-19 symptoms to be sent home from school.

“School nurses are in a tough situation, as a cough and sore throat or runny nose are COVID symptoms, but could just be a cold or allergies,” Dr. Terrence said. “The Pediatric Response Team is available to receive calls from the nurses and consult on the patient.”

If a child is sent home from school and told to be evaluated, they are not required to go to the Pediatric Sick Clinic, and are encouraged to contact their own family provider. However, the Urgent Care was created so Primary Care offices are not inundated with children who potentially have COVID-19 or the flu.

“We need a safe environment for them to come into. We want to keep potentially exposed children separate from those who have a broken bone, rash, or other reason why they have to see their provider,” Dr. Terrence said. “The Pediatric Sick Clinic is an isolated office, and children and their parents will spend minimal time inside.”

When parents/guardians and the child arrive for their appointment they will be asked to call the number on the posted sign in the parking lot, and will be told when to enter the office building. Providers will be donned in personal protective equipment, and parents/patients entering the office are required to wear a mask.

“We are currently able to see children on the same day, or next day to be evaluated. We want those who are well to be able to go to school, and for those who are not to be kept home and quarantined,” Dr. Terrence said. “If a child is really struggling to breath, they should immediately be taken to the Emergency Department.”

Not every child who comes to the Clinic will need to be tested for COVID-19. Dr. Terrence noted after the child is fully evaluated, it will be up to the provider’s discretion if a test will be administered. Should a test be deemed necessary, and based upon availability, the provider will determine if a rapid test (with results in approximately 30 minutes) or a standard test (with results in 2-3 days) will be given. Children will currently receive the same nose swab test as adults.

The Pediatric Response Team is comprised of six pediatricians, and one nurse practitioner who will be working in the Sick Clinic on a rotating basis. They are seeing children ages 2 months to 18 years.

“We want to calm the fears of anxious parents and classmates. Should a child be tested positive, we will be relaying the information to St. Lawrence County Public Health as we are required,” Dr. Terrence said.

Current pediatric symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, muscle aches, nasal discharge, headache, nausea/vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea, and loss of taste or smell.