



For Immediate Release
Contact: Kelly Ferrara / 314-221-2251
Kelly@StratCommRx.com

COVID-19 Regional Response Team Forms to Meet Social Needs *Coordinated team to focus efforts on region's most vulnerable populations*

(April 8, 2020) – The COVID-19 pandemic is a public health challenge unlike anything we have faced in over a century. As with prior crises, it is the most vulnerable who stand to suffer and lose the most. Already stretched social service providers are working hard to respond to a new reality that requires residents to remain in their homes with no open schools, limited childcare, dramatically reduced employment, and underlying health conditions and other risk factors. No single organization or institution can respond to this crisis alone. The only effective response is a coordinated one. The COVID-19 Regional Response Team seeks to build on the learnings and experiences of organizations skilled in crisis response to create a centralized, regional system of response to meet these social needs for the bi-state area.

The City of St. Louis, St. Charles and St. Louis counties (Mo.) and Madison and St. Clair (Ill.) will benefit from this social needs response infrastructure. Efforts of the COVID-19 Regional Response Team are also being coordinated with the existing disaster response infrastructure through the St. Louis Area Regional Coalition of COADs (Community Organizations Active in Disaster) and informed by and using the already established infrastructure of the United Way's 2-1-1 information and referral service and Volunteer Center.

"I am very grateful to all of the providers and partners who are coming together to respond to the critical needs of our most vulnerable residents," stated St. Louis County Executive Dr. Sam Page. "This type of regional response is exactly what is needed at this time."

"Pandemics ignore regional boundaries. We have to focus on how we come together as a region to not only stop the spread of COVID-19, but to care for those most impacted in our community," added St. Louis Mayor Lyda Krewson.

"It will take everyone across the bi-state region to respond to this unprecedented challenge. Standing together as a region is necessary to have an impact against this pandemic," said Mark A. Kern, St. Clair County Board Chairman.

Led by Jason Q. Purnell, PhD, MPH, Associate Professor in the Brown School at Washington University and Director of Health Equity Works, the COVID-19 Regional Response Team has four goals:

1. Identify and prioritize the critical needs of vulnerable populations

2. Share effective solutions and approaches between providers in different areas of need
3. Deploy critical resources in an efficient and coordinated manner
4. Highlight needs and opportunities to funders, decision makers, and the broader community

“Our region’s most vulnerable populations are historically underserved and this pandemic requires us to provide care and services in ways that no individual agency can accomplish on their own,” explained Purnell. “An equitable response to this pandemic requires that we focus our attention on those at greatest risk of contracting this virus and those whose lives were lived in risk before this crisis.”

Social needs will be addressed by teams across six clustered areas of coordination. These include:

- food, housing, and basic needs
- physical and behavioral health
- children and education
- employment
- justice and legal supports
- services for older adults and people with disabilities

If your organization would like information on joining the Regional Response Team, please email your contact information to Info@C19RRT.org. A virtual town hall for organizations responding to meet social needs during the pandemic is also planned, and the link will be available online at C19RRT.org.

A current list of organizations and agencies participating in the COVID-19 Regional Respond Team:

Behavioral Health Network of Greater St. Louis
Catholic Charities of St. Louis
Center for Women in Transition
Chestnut Health Systems
Connections to Success
East Side Aligned
EducationPlus
Land of Lincoln Legal Aid
Legal Services of Eastern Missouri
Metropolitan Congregations United
Metropolitan St. Louis Equal Housing & Opportunity Council
Oasis
Office of Children, Youth, and Families, Mayor of the City of St. Louis
Operation Food Search
Paraquad
Salvation Army Midland Division
St. Clair County
St. Louis Area Agency on Aging
St. Louis Area Foodbank
St. Louis Area Regional Commission on Homelessness
St. Louis Area Regional Coalition of COADs

St. Louis City Senior Fund
St. Louis City
St. Louis City-County COAD
St. Louis Community Foundation
St. Louis County
St. Louis County Continuum of Care
St. Louis County Human Services
St. Louis County Library
St. Louis Integrated Health Network
St. Louis Regional Health Commission
United 4 Children
United Way of Greater St. Louis

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