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Silver Thread Public Health District recognizes the need to institute as many proactive steps as possible to ensure our community members stay safe and their health is protected. While we have not had a confirmed positive case (or even a presumptive positive case) in Hinsdale County, we support Hinsdale County elected officials in their decision to declare a state of emergency. Their declaration allows us, as the Board of Health, to implement stronger actions to enforce social distancing among community members, such as social gatherings, events, etc. Many of our neighboring communities have already begun increasing these standards.

We are committed to implementing protocols that would assist in limiting exposure and reducing transmission of COVID-19. That said, the Board of Health is currently drafting Public Health Orders that will limit social gatherings and events for Hinsdale County. We do not have a confirmed case in our county, but given the spread of the disease happening in Gunnison County and the amount of business our community members do in Gunnison on a daily basis, we would be neglectful if we did not address the need to establish tighter protocol around social distancing.

The age, condition, and health of a significant portion of population in Hinsdale County places it at risk of serious health complications, including death, from COVID-19. Although most individuals who contract COVID-19 do not become seriously ill, persons with mild symptoms and asymptomatic persons with COVID-19 may place other vulnerable members of the public at significant risk. A large surge in the number of persons with serious infections can compromise the ability of the healthcare system, particularly in the high-country counties currently affected by community transmission, to deliver necessary healthcare to the public.

The limitations on large gatherings and use of social distancing decreases the risk of COVID-19 transmission to our most vulnerable populations, and is especially important for people who are over 60 years old and those with chronic health conditions due to their higher risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19. These limitations will reduce the likelihood that many individuals will be exposed to COVID-19 at a single event, and will therefore slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

While the Board of Health takes time to develop such actions as the institution of Public Health Orders that we feel are necessary to the protection of our most vulnerable community members, we would like to **STRONGLY** encourage organizations, businesses and individuals to recognize the importance of social distancing and consider voluntarily suspending gatherings and social events until further notice.

Tara Hardy  
Public Health Director  
Silver Thread Public Health District