



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Hawai'i Department of Health reports first COVID-19 case in Kalawao County

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) is reporting the first positive case of COVID-19 in an adult resident of Kalaupapa Settlement in Kalawao County on the island of Moloka'i. Kalawao is a county within the State of Hawai'i under the management of the DOH and was reported to be the last county within the U.S. with no reported positive COVID-19 cases prior to this announcement.

The individual received their positive test result after returning on a local flight to the Kalaupapa Settlement and is in self-isolation with no symptoms. The DOH immediately conducted contact tracing, and close contacts on the same flight are in self-quarantine. At this time, the individual and all recent close contacts are asymptomatic and being monitored for the development of any COVID-19 symptoms.

The Department is coordinating with the National Park Service to ensure support for all of the individuals in quarantine and isolation. "Everyone here recognizes the importance of the 14-day quarantine protocol to assist in protecting themselves, friends, family, and the broader Kalaupapa community," said Ken Seamon, DOH administrator of Kalaupapa Settlement. "The affected individuals are being provided with necessary daily living support, guidance and any assistance required should COVID-19 symptoms develop."

"The individual who tested positive did the right thing in notifying us of the positive test result," added Seamon. "We believe we can contain the virus here without a stay-at-home order for the entire settlement."

Kalaupapa Settlement, on the north shore of the island of Moloka'i, once served as the home for individuals who were forced to relocate under Hawai'i laws for the isolation of Hansen's Disease patients. When the State of Hawai'i abolished the law in 1969, former patients that chose to remain were guaranteed by law that they could continue living in Kalaupapa with the care and support of the State of Hawai'i. Kalawao County, which encompasses the Kalaupapa Settlement, is administered by the Department of Health specifically for the care of the remaining Hansen's Disease patients and works closely with the Kalaupapa National Park Service and State Department of Transportation to support the Kalaupapa community.

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