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MEDIA RELEASE

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Health Department Announces County-wide Sentinel Testing Plan

The Missoula City-County Health Department announced its county-wide Sentinel Testing Plan today at the County Testing Clinic at the Missoula Fairgrounds. The health department formed a COVID-19 Testing Taskforce to develop, implement, and evaluate a coordinated, county-wide testing program broadening the scope of testing across Missoula County. While we continue prioritizing our resources and protecting our healthcare infrastructure, we now have additional supplies and an informed strategy to test more individuals for COVID-19.

Starting next Monday, June 22, the County Testing Clinic will expand its operations by screening and accepting appointments for county residents that are not experiencing symptoms compatible with COVID-19 that have been in high-risk environments for viral exposure and transmission. Individuals meeting the County Testing Clinic criteria include, but are not limited to, healthcare workers and first responders, service industry and personal care workers, and County residents returning to Montana. The Clinic will continue testing symptomatic residents as it has been since April 4.

One of the reasons that sentinel testing is now possible is because Governor Bullock designated Missoula County as one of 20 "high visitation communities" in Montana. This is an acknowledgment that our county is both a tourist destination, as well as a gateway to other beautiful parts of the state. This designation comes with increased funding and resources for community testing and contact tracing. Incident Commander Cindy Farr reported, "We'll continue moving forward thoughtfully and strategically with these additional resources while keeping in mind that we need to address current and anticipated health and safety needs."

Testing in Missoula County is an integrated effort: different organizations are meeting the needs of different demographics with the ultimate goal of providing services to all through the network. The health department thanks Providence St. Patrick Hospital, Community Medical Center, Cost Care, Partnership Health Center, Missoula County Detention Facility, Western Montana Clinic, Rocky Mountain Eye, and Big Sky Surgery. Our integrated efforts mean that a single organization should not exceed its capacity while we continue serving greater Missoula County together.

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