



Public Information Release

Quarantine Shelters and “Sudden Sleepovers”

September 8, 2020

Over the weekend rumors started circulating that students could be suddenly quarantined in FEMA-style camp shelters. Madison County Public Health, along with the Ohio Department of Health and Governor Mike DeWine, want all Madison County residents to know there is no truth to this rumor at all.

Rumors of the creation of makeshift quarantine locations, termed “sudden sleepovers,” stemmed from a combination of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updating existing general preparedness guidance for communities and the recent renewal of the state order for non-congregate sheltering on August 31st. The state order, entitled “Director’s Order for Non-Congregate Sheltering to be Utilized Throughout Ohio” has been in place since March 31st. It allows the state to use FEMA funding to provide shelter to people who are unable to safely quarantine in their homes. Madison County Health Commissioner Cook explained that non-congregate sheltering has been used in most Ohio counties during the pandemic. “This is nothing new. Counties have offered empty college dorms, hotels, camps or lodges for isolated or quarantined people who do not have living conditions at home that allow for social distancing from other household members,” he said. Often this also includes victims of domestic violence, homeless individuals, or healthcare workers and first responders who choose not to return home at the end of the workday to avoid exposing a vulnerable family member.

During Governor DeWine’s press conference today, he was very clear that these rumors have no substance behind them. “I am aware that there are rumors on the internet that incorrectly claim these orders allow children to be separated from their parents without permission. Let me just say this is absolutely ridiculous. It is not true. There is no intention that anyone has to separate children, but somehow this has been reported on the internet.” DeWine also said that there was “no truth to the rumors, at all. Families will not be separated. Children will not be taken away from their loved ones.”

Health Commissioner Cook echoed the Governor’s comments and explained that “the CDC has always had disaster response guidance for children and adults on their website as part of their general emergency preparedness education.” Cook also noted that September is National Preparedness Month. “This entire month has been dedicated to helping communities prepare for all types of disasters.” Cook said that the connection between the state order being renewed and September being National Preparedness Month is arbitrary. “This is purely someone trying to create a story where there isn’t one,” Cook said. “Social media can be a great way for people to remain connected but can also be used to push false information right in front of people.”

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