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County Executive Page Announces Team of Experts to Help During Coronavirus Crisis

ST. LOUIS COUNTY (March 14, 2020) – St. Louis County is building a team of experts to work closely with the Department of Health to review and draft policies that allow the county to remain at the forefront of fighting the coronavirus.

Among those on the new Technical Specialists Team are Rob Gatter, a professor of health management and policy at St. Louis University, and Jason Purnell, an associate professor at Washington University’s Brown School.

“I’m really pleased to see the county is being proactive in light of the need to still contain the disease,” Gatter said. “And I’m pleased the county is reaching out to a variety of experts to have the best possible information at hand when needed. I’m happy to be of service.”

“This is an unprecedented moment in modern public health,” said Gatter, whose has written about pandemics and quarantine. With no vaccine to promote immunity, quarantine, isolation and social distancing are the primary tools, he said.

Purnell’s research focuses on how socioeconomic and sociocultural factors influence health behaviors and health outcomes and on mobilizing community action to address the social determinants of health. During a health crisis, not everyone has the same resources to respond effectively, creating more disparity in communities already challenged by inequities, he said.

“We are facing a critical challenge and it is time for people to contribute in any way they can,” Purnell said. “A lot of my career has been about the health and well-being of the St. Louis community. This Technical Specialists Team is directly in line with not only what I care about professionally, but personally. This is my community.”

“Our community is filled with tremendous talent. With the coronavirus, we must tap into that talent,” said County Executive Sam Page. “As we continue to assemble this team, I thank each member for devoting their expertise to this public health challenge.”

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