

**HOOD COUNTY
OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
& PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTOR**

Hood County Public Health & Recommendations – March 16, 2020

These steps are recommended until April 20, 2020 or until otherwise noted.

Event and Large Gatherings Recommendations

Hood County recommends any events over 50 people be canceled. Additionally, we strongly recommend organizers of events of any size in which people will be in close contact to cancel or postpone such events, if possible.

If you cannot avoid bringing a group of people together, we recommend the following guidelines:

- Anyone who is sick or has a member of their household that is sick should not attend.
- Those who are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness should not attend.
- Increase the frequency of sanitizing common touchpoints.
- Try to encourage attendees to stay at least six feet away from each other.
- Keep an adequate supply of hand soap, disinfectants, tissues, and paper towels.
- Encourage attendees to follow increased hygiene, such as:
 - Washing their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
 - If soap and water are not available, attendees should use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
 - Avoid close contact with other people.
 - Avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth.
 - Covering their cough or sneeze with a tissue – if available – or into their elbow.

Recommendations for Workplaces and Businesses

Employers should take steps to make it more feasible for their employees to work in ways that minimize close contact with large numbers of people.

Employers should:

- a) Maximize telecommuting options for as many employees as possible.
- b) Activate their continuity of operations plan.
- c) Urge employees to stay home when they are sick and maximize flexibility in sick leave benefits.
- d) Urge employees to stay home or telecommute if another member of their household is sick.

- e) Consider staggering start and end times to reduce large numbers of people coming together at the same time.
- f) Clean and disinfect frequently touched areas (doorknobs, tabletops, countertops, phones, key boards, etc.)
- g) Prioritize protective actions for employees who are at higher risk of severe illness.

Recommendations for Schools

Hood County Public Health Authority is currently recommending schools to extend their Spring Break for 14 calendar days beginning at the end of their currently scheduled Spring Break. Hood County Public Health Authority will be working with schools on further guidance and evaluation of their situation.

Recommendations for Free Standing Day Care Facilities

Hood County Public Health recommends keeping free standing day care facilities open at this time. However, the following standard operating procedures should be adopted:

- Screen of all students and staff for fever, cough, shortness of breath (checklist to be provided by Hood County Public Health)
- Send all ill students or staff home
- Avoid movement of students between classrooms
- Lunches should be served in the classroom
- Practice social distancing (keeping students at least 6 feet apart)
- Wipe/Disinfect high touch areas often
- Restrict visitors to classrooms and offices
- Require medical clearance to return to facility for children absent because of illness

If COVID-19 is associated with a day care facility, closure will be required for 2 weeks.

Recommendations for Senior Living and Assisted Living

Senior living facilities, assisted living facilities, and other facilities with populations at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness should limit interactions with the general public as much as possible. These facilities should:

- Implement social distancing measures:
 - Reduce large gatherings (e.g., group social events)
 - Alter schedules to reduce mixing
 - Limit programs with external staff
 - Consider having residents stay in facility and limit exposure to the general community
 - Visits should be limited and restricted to residents' rooms
- Implement temperature and respiratory symptom screening of attendees, staff, and visitors.
- Implement short-term closures as needed (e.g., if cases are identified among staff, residents or clients who live elsewhere) for cleaning and contact tracing.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces daily.

Recommendations for People at Higher Risk for Severe COVID-19 Illness

People at higher risk of severe illness should stay home and away from large groups of people as much as possible, including public places with lots of people and large gatherings where there will be close contact with others. Gatherings of seniors or other people at higher risk of severe illness should be canceled or postponed. Those at higher risk include:

- People 60 and older
- People with underlying health conditions (e.g. heart disease, lung disease, diabetes)
- People who have weakened immune systems
- Pregnant women

Caregivers of children with underlying health conditions should consult with healthcare providers about whether their children should stay home. Anyone who has questions about whether their condition puts them at increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness should consult with their healthcare provider.

Those without a healthcare provider should contact the local Department of Health (817) 573-8186

Mental Health Resources

The outbreak of COVID-19 may be stressful for people throughout the community. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Accordingly, we suggest the following recommendations:

- People with preexisting mental health conditions should continue with the treatment plans, stay connected with your healthcare provider, and monitor for any new symptoms.
- Call your healthcare provider if stress reactions interfere with your daily activities
- **Contact MHMR of Hood County 24/7 call line by phone at 1-800-772-5987 if you are experiencing emotional distress related to COVID-19.**

Recommendations for people who are sick

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Do not go out in public when you are sick.
- If you are ill in any way, call your doctor's office first before going in.
- Do not go to the emergency room unless you are experiencing a medical emergency. Emergency rooms need to be able to serve those with the most critical needs.
- If you have symptoms like cough, fever, or other respiratory problems, stay home and self-isolate until you have contacted a healthcare professional.

Recommendations for the General Public

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer when you cannot wash your hands. Hand sanitizer does not replace washing of hands with soap and water.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and throw the tissue away. If you don't have a tissue, use the elbow of your sleeve. Don't use your hands to cover coughs and sneezes.
- Even if you are not ill, avoid visiting hospitals, long-term care facilities or nursing homes to the extent possible. If you need to visit one of these facilities, limit your time there and keep at least six feet away from patients.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, especially if you are at a higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness.
- Get plenty of rest, drink plenty of fluids, eat healthy foods, and manage your stress to keep your immunity strong.
- Clean household surfaces with standard cleaners.

Stay informed. Information is changing frequently. **Visit www.dshs.state.tx.us/coronavirus/** frequently for updates.

Recommendations for Travel

Hood County Public Health Authority recommends all non-essential travel be cancelled at this time.