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The State of Florida Issues COVID-19 Updates

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. - The State of Florida is responding to COVID-19. In an effort to keep Florida residents and visitors safe and aware regarding the status of the virus, the Florida Department of Health will issue this update every day, seven days per week.

Governor Ron DeSantis is in constant communication with Florida Division of Emergency Management Director Jared Moskowitz and State Surgeon General Dr. Scott Rivkees as the State of Florida continues to monitor and respond to the threat of COVID-19.

Today, Governor DeSantis held briefings at the Palm Beach County testing site and the testing site at the Hard Rock Stadium in Miami, where he announced additional efforts to respond to COVID-19:

- Governor DeSantis issued Executive Order 20-89 to provide unified and locally supported direction to Monroe, Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties.
  - This order will require Monroe, Broward and Palm Beach County residents to follow the same directives with respect to essential and non-essential businesses as provided in the executive orders signed by Mayor Gimenez of Miami-Dade County beginning on March 19.
- Governor DeSantis issued Executive Order 20-88 to allow recently retired law enforcement and healthcare personnel to immediately return to the workforce.
- Governor DeSantis announced that a new testing site is opening Tuesday in Palm Beach at the FITTEAM Ball Park of the Palm Beaches. The Florida Division of Emergency Management has delivered 1,000 collection kits to get the site started and Governor DeSantis deployed 75 Florida National Guard soldiers to assist with traffic and logistics.

Actions the state has taken to respond to COVID-19:
At the direction of Governor DeSantis, State Surgeon General Dr. Scott Rivkees declared a Public Health Emergency for COVID-19 in Florida. Governor DeSantis announced that the State ordered an additional 2,500 test kits to supplement the adequate resources already available to test for COVID-19. These additional test kits will enable the Department of Health, working with Florida health care providers, to test up to an additional 625,000 individuals. The Governor also suspended non-essential in state and all out-of-state travel for state employees for 30 days.

Established an Incident Management Team to coordinate response operations.


Activated a dedicated incident command post for on-site response activities.

Conducted three public health and health care stakeholder conference calls to provide statewide updates on the current outbreak situation, response actions and guidance for pandemic planning. Over five hundred participants joined the calls.

Established a public call center for questions regarding COVID-19. The call center launched Monday, March 2 and is open 24/7.

Developed and distributed COVID-19 presentation materials to County Health Departments (CHD) for use at community meetings.

Activated the Joint Information Center in coordination with the Division of Emergency Management.

Developed and implemented protocols for investigation, surveillance and monitoring for COVID-19 to rapidly detect and contain cases.

Established mechanisms for monitoring and coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding epidemiological activities.

Distributed CDC Interim Guidance for public health personnel evaluating Persons Under Investigation (PUI) and asymptomatic close contacts of confirmed cases at their home or non-home residential settings to CHDs.

Approved and disseminated an updated Clinician Screening Tool for identifying COVID-19 PUIs.

Implemented testing at all three State Public Health Laboratories.

Distributed updated CDC guidance for schools to CHDs and the Department of Education.

Distributed updated laboratory guidance regarding implementation of testing at State Public Health Laboratories.

Developing a laboratory surge plan.

Identifying and monitoring close contacts of presumptive cases. Any close contacts with symptoms will be tested.
- Implemented private lab testing.
- Developed and disseminated pandemic planning guidance.
- Advised CHDs and HCCs to retain expired personal protective equipment until further notice.
- Developing infographics for first responders (fire, law enforcement and EMS) regarding infection control and personal protection for COVID-19.
- At the Governor’s direction, a public-private partnership has been put in place between Memorial Healthcare in Broward and the National Guard to set up a mobile testing unit.
- At the direction of Governor DeSantis hiring additional epidemiologists from university health programs to help with workload.
- Governor DeSantis directed the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to extend all existing nursing home and assisted living facility licenses for 90 days to remove distraction from patient care.
- Launched an interactive data tracking dashboard on floridahealthcovid19.gov that is updated twice daily.
- Developing protocols for County Health Departments in the protection of their staff and clinic activities through the development of safety and health guidance.
- Continue to have daily hospital calls and began having daily calls with the aging and vulnerable population groups.
- Continue to coordinate efforts for obtaining lab testing supplies.

DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

- To support communities responding to COVID-19, Governor DeSantis has directed FDEM Director Jared Moskowitz to expedite the delivery of more than $170 million in Hurricane Irma reimbursements to cities, counties and hospital districts that have now reached the 50-percent auditing threshold to receive funds.
- After conducting a thorough assessment of needs, Director Moskowitz has requested the following supplies through Direct Federal Assistance. Supplies are being delivered on a rolling basis, and inventory is being distributed throughout the state 24 hours a day.
  - 5 mobile intensive care units
  - 5,000 ventilators
  - 5,000 hospital beds
  - 50,000 two oz. bottles of hand sanitizer
  - 250,000 coveralls
  - 500,000 gloves
  - 500,000 gowns
  - 500,000 collection kits
  - 100,000 16 oz. bottles of hand sanitizers
- 150,000 Personal Protective Equipment kits, including coveralls, gowns, and goggles
- 2 million N95 face masks

Find more information on DEM’s response to COVID-19 [here](#).

**AGENCY FOR HEALTH CARE ADMINISTRATION**

- To address the ability of facilities to hire staff at this critical time and recognizing the inability to obtain timely fingerprints for background screening, AHCA has issued [Emergency Order No. 20-001](#), which expires 30 days from the date of the order. This order establishes guidelines for health care providers, Medicaid providers, and health care contractors to conduct background screenings to prevent staff shortages during this emergency.
- AHCA sent an alert to long-term care facilities notifying them that emergency medical service personnel will be assisting these providers with assessing and improving their preparedness for responding to COVID-19.
- AHCA distributed guidance on behalf of the Department to hospitals in regard to COVID-19 testing of Persons Under Investigation, outlining actions to take for testing individuals prior to being transferred to other facilities.
- AHCA and the Department issued guidance for Senior Living Communities (independent living) on COVID-19 best practices, advising facilities to cease communal activities, practice social distancing and restrict community outings.
- AHCA distributed telemedicine guidance to health care providers for behavior analysis services.
- AHCA distributed an overview to iBudget providers of the revised payment methodology that will be used over the next few months to help support providers of adult day training, residential habilitation, life skills development level 1-companion and in-home personal supports. Retention payments will be made to give necessary financial support to providers who would otherwise not receive payment due to current public distancing requirements.
- Secretary Mayhew is working directly with hospitals and large health systems to identify potential vacant wings or buildings to provide additional hospital inpatient capacity should it become necessary.
- On March 16, Florida became the first state to receive [CMS approval](#) of its 1135 Medicaid Waiver giving AHCA more flexibility for its COVID-19 response efforts. This federal action lifts Medicaid prior authorization requirements for critical health care services and allows for expedited provider enrollment.
• AHCA will be granting a 90-day extension to all licenses for health care providers and regulated facilities.
• AHCA is distributing information regarding regulatory flexibilities created by waivers from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) related to skilled nursing facilities, critical access hospitals, home health agencies, durable medical equipment, provider enrollment, etc.
• Find more information on ACHA’s response to COVID-19 here.

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION**

• DBPR issued an emergency order, [EO 2020-04](#), which allows association boards of a condominium, cooperative, or homeowners’ association to exercise certain emergency powers during the state of emergency unless specifically prohibited by the provisions of the association’s governing documents. The order suspends and tolls the timing requirements pertaining to the preparation, submittal, or filing of certain financial reports and statements of a condominium association, cooperative association, or timeshare plan. The order waives the assessment of pilotage earned by harbor pilots for March and April, 2020, and extends the deadline for the filing of a harbor pilot’s annual earnings statement from April 15, 2020, to July 15, 2020. The order suspends any restriction of chapter 474, F.S., or chapter 61G-18, F.A.C. which would prohibit an active Florida-licensed veterinarian from practicing telemedicine on a patient.
• DBPR has distributed a document titled [Frequently Asked Questions Related to EO 20-71 Related Restaurants and Alcoholic Beverage Vendors](#) pursuant to Executive Order (EO-20-71). This document helps to clarify the agency’s role in the enforcement of the Executive Order as well as guidelines for restaurants and alcohol vendors per the Governor’s directive.
• Find more information on DBPR’s response to COVID-19 here.

**DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

• DCF is working with DOH to develop precautionary protocols for child welfare professionals and adult protective investigators who may have to make in-person visits to ensure the safety of those vulnerable populations.
• At the request of Governor DeSantis, and in accordance with the federal Families First Coronavirus Act, DCF waived work requirements for individuals participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.
• Find more information on DCF’s response to COVID-19 here.
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

- New inmate commitments from county jails have been temporarily restricted.
- Anyone entering a correctional institution will be screened in accordance with CDC and Department guidelines.
- FDC has suspended visitation and volunteer programs at all correctional institutions statewide through April 5, 2020.
- Outside inmate work squads have been restricted.
- Find more information on FDC’s response to COVID-19 [here](https).

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

- Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) recently announced $100 million of additional funds available to local governments in communities impacted by Hurricane Irma through the Rebuild Florida Infrastructure Repair Program. Local governments may apply individually or as a regional group for funding. Funding can also be used as leverage to match funding for other federal programs to carry out eligible, federal CDBG-DR infrastructure activity. The deadline to complete an application is June 30, 2020. For more information about the program, including how to complete an application, visit the Rebuild Florida Infrastructure Repair Program’s [webpage](https).
- Governor DeSantis waived the work search and work registration requirements for individuals requesting Reemployment Assistance benefits. Individuals filing an application in CONNECT, the online Reemployment Assistance application, for benefits from March 15, 2020 until May 2, 2020, will not be required to complete the work registration in Employ Florida. For additional questions about Reemployment Assistance, please visit the [Frequently Asked Questions](https).
- Florida’s 24 local workforce development boards are available to provide career and business services remotely, with services and technology varying by location. For more information, visit careersourceflorida.com.
- Governor DeSantis’ request to the federal U.S. Small Business Administration to make the Economic Injury Disaster Loan program available for Florida’s small businesses impacted by COVID-19 has been granted. Small businesses are eligible to apply for the SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loans that offer up to $2 million in economic assistance to help small businesses overcome the temporary loss of revenue resulting from COVID-19.
- The Business Damage Assessment survey is activated to assess the impact of COVID-19 on Florida’s local business operations. The survey, managed by DEO, will evaluate businesses affected by COVID-19 and the impacts the virus has had on the local economy so actions to implement appropriate relief programs can begin. The survey can be taken online [here](https).
- Find more information on DEO’s response to COVID-19
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- DOE created a website that consolidates hundreds of free resources for teachers, parents, and students as they transition to distance learning. It includes best practices for distance learning, frequently asked questions, guidance from the department, and resources in Spanish. It can be found here.
- Commissioner of Education Richard Corcoran strongly recommended public and private K-12 schools, colleges, and career and technical center campuses to close through April 15 and institute distance learning by March 30.
- To support students with identified IEP-related services who may have a disruption in services, school districts are given flexibility for the remainder of the school year to provide alternative services or delay services until later in the summer months, in coordination with a student’s parents and IEP team.
- Find more information on The Department of Education’s response to COVID-19 here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ELDER AFFAIRS

- Distributed the 30-day AHCA Background Screening Waiver to all Area Agencies on Aging (AAA). This action allows an increased number of needed health care workers to report at elder care facilities.
- Provided all Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) with upcoming webinar information on Volunteer Florida’s Volunteer Connect platform. The training webinars will allow a AAA or their local service providers to obtain and review more volunteer applications for meal delivery or other needed services.
- Continued ongoing technical assistance to the all eleven Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) regarding meal procurement, distribution, telephone reassurance, and feeding elders not currently enrolled in food programs.
- Find more information on DOEA’s response to COVID-19 here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

- At the direction of Governor DeSantis and to successfully uphold CDC guidance to maximize social distancing and avoid gatherings larger than 10 people, DEP closed all Florida State Parks to the public effective Monday, March 23. Park field staff are taking full advantage of this time to perform maintenance and other park improvements so that when we are ready to welcome visitors again, we will be better than ever.
- In addition, since Tuesday, March 24, public access to lands within DEP’s Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas has been closed. This closure includes state-owned uplands, such as beaches, islands, sand bars and
emergent shoals within Aquatic Preserves. Vessel landings are strictly prohibited.

- Find more information on DEP’s response to COVID-19 here.

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAY SAFETY AND MOTOR VEHICLES**

- The Florida Highway Patrol is assisting with the implementation and enforcement of Executive Order 20-86 at the direction of Governor DeSantis.
- At the direction of Governor DeSantis, the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles has issued an Emergency Order extending all Florida driver licenses, commercial driver licenses and identification cards that will expire now through April 15, 2020.
- Pursuant to Executive Order 20-52 issued by Governor DeSantis, FLHSMV Executive Director Rhodes has waived commercial truck hours of service regulations and other related regulations so that emergency supplies, equipment, commodities and resources can be moved more quickly and efficiently throughout the state.
- Find more information on FLHSMV’s COVID-19 response here.

**OFFICE OF INSURANCE REGULATION**

- OIR has issued Informational Memorandum OIR-20-04M providing general guidance on the treatment of policyholders as part of the state’s ongoing efforts to protect Floridians. Guidance within this memorandum includes:
  - Encouraging regulated entities to be flexible with premium payments in order to avoid a lapse in coverage and only consider cancellation of policies if all possible efforts to work with consumers to continue coverage have been exhausted;
  - Removing exclusions on certain personal auto exclusions;
  - Exploring virtual options for underwriting and adjusting claims and for premium audits of employers’ records; and
  - Other general considerations, including a 30-day extension for the filing of annual statements for certain regulated entities.
- OIR has issued Informational Memorandum OIR-20-03M directing all insurers and other entities regulated by OIR to review and update their business continuity and/or continuity of operations plans. Companies are directed to immediately contact OIR if their continuity plans are activated and/or if business operations become compromised so it can work with insurers to avoid any disruption in consumer services.

OIR has issued