



# Sullivan County Regional Health Department

## The Road to Good Public Health

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March 30, 2020

Honorable Richard S. Venable  
Sullivan County Courthouse  
3411 Highway 126  
Blountville, TN 37617

Honorable Mayor Patrick Shull  
City of Kingsport  
225 West Center Street  
Kingsport, TN 37660

Honorable Mayor Margaret Feierabend  
City of Bristol  
801 Anderson Street  
Bristol, TN 37620

Honorable Mayor Irene Wells  
City of Bluff City  
P.O. Box 70  
Bluff City, TN 37618

Dear Honorable Mayors:

Attached is an executed Sullivan County Safer at Home Health Order issued by Andrew Stephen May, M.D., FAAFP our Regional Medical Director/Health Officer. We request the Order to be ratified by your respective governing bodies or your signature.

Also attached is a guidance document to help you with questions from citizens. We believe this Order is necessary to help protect the public health of all citizens in Sullivan County.

Respectfully,

Gary Mayes  
Regional Director



[www.sullivanhealth.org](http://www.sullivanhealth.org)

March 30, 2020

## **Sullivan County Safer at Home Public Health Order**

Pursuant to the Declaration of Public Health Emergency adopted by the State of Tennessee on March 12, 2020, and in response to the global pandemic of COVID-19 and pursuant to *Tennessee Code Annotated § 68-2-609*, which empowers the county health officer to order:

- (1) The quarantine of any place or person, if the county health officer finds that quarantine is necessary to protect the public health from an epidemic;*
- (2) The closure of any public establishment, facility or building if the county health officer finds unsanitary conditions of such a nature and extent to significantly threaten the public health; or*
- (3) The closure of any public establishment, facility or building, if the county health officer is otherwise authorized by law to take that action.*

This Order is being issued to protect the public health of the citizens of Sullivan County, to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, to bend the curve, and to disrupt the spread of the virus, with the goal of saving lives and reducing strain on regional healthcare resources as much as possible.

Citizens of Sullivan County are urged to shelter at home as much as possible. When individuals leave their homes or places of residence, they should practice appropriate social isolation, staying six feet apart, and should assume others are infectious, regardless of whether they exhibit symptoms.

All gatherings are strongly discouraged, and those with more than 10 people are prohibited. Gatherings include any event or convening unrelated to essential services that brings together groups of individuals, including, but not limited to: community, civic, public, leisure, faith-based, or sporting events, parades, concerts, festivals, conventions, fundraisers, and similar activities.

City and County parks may remain open. Citizens using these open spaces are directed to adhere to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance on social distancing and hand hygiene, remaining 6 feet apart.

Individuals experiencing homelessness, who may include individuals in shelters and homeless encampments, shall not be subject to this order but shall be encouraged to follow CDC guidance on social distancing and hand hygiene.

All businesses not performing essential services shall close their business facilities, subject to exceptions stated in this Order. Facilities shall remain accessible as needed to service computer and other equipment, process mail, and maintain security.

Nothing in this Order shall prohibit any business possessing applicable licenses or permits from conducting deliveries; however, CDC guidance on social distancing shall be followed when possible.

Nothing in this order is intended to prohibit individuals from performing business functions of nonessential businesses from their own homes, provided that such business functions comply with existing law and are only performed by residents of that home.

This Order does not apply to activities necessary to maintain continuity of operations of critical infrastructure sectors as outlined at <https://www.cisa.gov/identifying-critical-infrastructure-during-covid-19>. As set forth by the Federal Department of Homeland Security in the link above the federal government has identified 16 critical infrastructure sectors whose assets, systems and networks, whether physical or virtual, are considered so vital to the United States that their incapacitation or destruction would have a debilitating effect on security, economic security, public health or safety, or any combination thereof. Individuals working in these 16 critical infrastructure sectors may continue their work because of the importance of these sectors to the health and well-being of individuals residing or working in Sullivan County.

Daycare and childcare business shall prioritize children of parents working for essential infrastructure sectors, businesses, or service providers to the extent practicable.

Assisted living facilities, nursing homes, adult daycare centers, home health businesses, and senior residential facilities shall follow CDC guidance on social distancing and hand hygiene to the extent practicable. Non-essential social and educational programs at senior citizen and other assisted living communities and centers shall end until further notice.

Hotels, short term rental properties, commercial lodges, and dormitories shall cease entertainment or dine-in services, subject to allowing food and beverage pick-up and room-service.

Essential services, especially grocery stores and pharmacies, shall make best efforts to establish hours of operations during which their services are available only to senior citizens or otherwise vulnerable populations.

Essential services shall continue to adhere to CDC guidance on social distancing and hand hygiene in the workplace, including encouraging work-from-home and allowing employees when possible to work on-site in shifts to optimize social distancing in the workplace, where possible.

Essential services are encouraged to utilize, to the maximum extent possible, any telecommuting or work-from-home procedures they can safely utilize.

If any provision, sentence, clause, phrase, or word, of this Order or any application of it to any individual, business, or circumstance is held to be invalid by a decision of a court of competent jurisdiction, then such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions or applications of this Order.

This Order shall be effective at 12:01AM EDT on March 31, 2020 and shall remain in effect. Sullivan County Regional County Health Department will closely monitor the situation every day to determine the Order's duration and any changes that may be necessary.

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Andrew Stephen May, M.D., FAAFP

Date: 3-30-2020

Regional Medical Director/Health Officer

Sullivan County Regional Health Department

## **THE BOTTOM LINE**

Residents of Sullivan County are should to stay inside their homes unless they are engaged in certain “essential activities.” On those occasions when you are out of your home for necessary tasks, stay at least six feet away from others.

## **YOU CAN ...**

- Go to the grocery, convenience or warehouse store
- Go to the pharmacy to pick up medications and other healthcare necessities
- Go to medical appointments (check with your doctor or provider first)
- Go to a restaurant for take-out, delivery or drive-thru
- Care for or support a friend or family member
- Take a walk, ride your bike, hike, jog and be in nature for exercise — just keep at least six feet between you and others.
- Walk your pets and take them to the veterinarian if necessary
- Help someone to get necessary supplies
- Receive deliveries from any business which delivers

## **YOU SHOULD NOT ...**

- Go to work unless you are providing essential services as defined by this Order
- Visit friends and family if there is no urgent need
- Maintain less than 6 feet of distance from others when you go out
- Visit loved ones in the hospital, nursing home, skilled nursing facility or other residential care facility, except for limited exceptions as provided on the facility websites.

## **Is this Order mandatory? What happens if I don't comply?**

Though this is not a criminally enforceable order, for industries public health has regulatory authority over, SCRHD will be performing spot checks for compliance. For other businesses we are relying on business owners to do the right thing and follow the order.

## **Why is this happening now?**

This Sullivan County Regional Health Department Emergency Order is being issued now because it is urgent that we slow and stop the spread of COVID-19 in Sullivan County.

The virus spreads easily, and this Order is also intended to prevent the disease from overwhelming our health care system. The goal here is to “flatten the curve” to slow down the spread of the virus and ensure we have adequate health care resources for those who get sick with COVID-19 and those who need emergency medical care for accidents, heart attacks, strokes, and other routine medical conditions.

**What is the difference between “Safer at Home” and “social distancing”?**

Safer at home is a stricter form of social distancing. There are some differences. Safer at home means:

- Stay home (stay unexposed and do not expose others)
- Only go out for essential services
- Stay six feet or more away from others
- Don’t gather in groups

The other concepts from social distancing will continue to apply when you are out shopping or walking or going to the doctor. These include washing hands, using hand sanitizer, disinfecting surfaces, not going out if sick, and staying at least six feet away from others at all times.

**When does the Order go into effect?**

The Order goes into effect 12:01 a.m. EDT, Tuesday, March 31, 2020.

The Sullivan County Regional County Health Department will closely monitor the situation every day to determine the Order’s duration and any changes that may be necessary.

**What are essential activities and what businesses that will stay open?**

The following essential activities will remain open:

- Federal and state offices and services, including post offices and airports
- Essential Sullivan County government functions including law enforcement, transportation, and businesses that provide government programs and services
- Food and beverage: grocery and beverage stores, farmers markets, food banks, catering, convenience stores selling food, agriculture, food processing, feed mills, and other businesses that directly support the food supply
- Health care, mental and behavioral health, and biomedical research and businesses that directly support the healthcare industry including health information technology, staffing and supplies
- Sanitation and waste removal businesses and services
- Energy, water, and sewage businesses and services

- Pharmacies and medical supply businesses, and other businesses that directly support the drug and medical supply pipeline
- Vehicle fuel, support, service stations and businesses
- Banks, savings and loans, insurance companies, accounting businesses, and other business that directly support the insurance and financial services sector
- Legal and judicial services
- Laundromats/laundry/cleaning services
- Home and business repair, hardware supply
- Warehousing and storage
- Construction and facilities design businesses
- Product logistics, transport, and distribution businesses
- Parcel transportation and delivery businesses
- Veterinary and pet supply business and services including agricultural services and the caring and feeding of all livestock and farm animals
- Home and business cleaning and maintenance services
- All businesses which rely upon deliveries may continue, including florists
- Internet and telecommunications systems (including the provision of essential global, national, and local infrastructure for computing services, business infrastructure, communications, and web-based services)
- Print, online and broadcast media

In addition:

- Daycare and childcare business will remain open, but will prioritize children of parents working in essential services.
- Hotels and commercial lodges will remain open, but must end entertainment or dining services in restaurants or group settings. Pick-up and room-service food services may continue.
- Housing and rental services may continue, but agents should practice social distancing, hold no open houses, or gather in groups larger than 10.
- Essential services listed above may continue as long as appropriate distancing is physically possible and encouraged. These businesses will adhere to CDC guidance on social distancing and

hand hygiene in the workplace, including encouraging work-from-home and allowing employees when possible to work on-site in shifts to optimize social distancing in the workplace.

- All essential services, especially grocery stores and pharmacies, will make best efforts to establish hours when only available to senior citizens or otherwise vulnerable populations.

#### **What about Government Employees?**

This Order does not apply to employees of government agencies working within the course and scope of their public service employment. Employees of Sullivan County, Kingsport, Bristol, and Bluff City shall follow any current or future directives issued by the Mayor(s) or City Manager's.

#### **What about infrastructure and construction?**

Individuals may leave their residences to provide any services or goods or perform any work necessary to the operations, maintenance and manufacturing of essential infrastructure, including without limitation:

- Construction of commercial and institutional buildings, and residential buildings and housing
- Airport operations, food supply, concessions, and construction
- Water, sewer, gas, electrical, oil extraction and refining.
- Roads, highways, public transportation and rail.
- Solid waste collection and removal.
- Flood control and watershed protection.
- Internet and telecommunications systems (including the provision of essential global, national, and local infrastructure for computing services, business infrastructure, communications, and web-based services)
- And manufacturing and distribution companies deemed essential to the supply chains of the above industries