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Gov. Beshear Takes Quick Action to Contain Spread of COVID-19

Multiple new actions taken to protect Kentucky families

FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 16, 2020) – This evening, Gov. Andy Beshear announced even more decisive steps he is taking to contain and limit the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Gov. Beshear reminded Kentuckians that throughout this time they must remain calm and be good teammates.

“We’re going to be dealing with this for some time. I cannot tell you how long, but I need everybody to be a good citizen – to remember that this is Team Kentucky. This is us against the coronavirus,” said Gov. Beshear. “At this point, it is all hands on deck. Every single one of us is important in this fight. I hope it gives you a sense of purpose and patriotic duty: to your country, to this commonwealth. What we do is we protect one another. Let’s defeat this. Let’s defeat it on our first try.”

Gov. Beshear encouraged people, when they do good things, help others and do their part in battling the virus, to post about them on social media using the hashtags #TeamKentucky and #TogetherKy.

“Let’s start spreading good news. We need it. At times like this, when we can share good things we are doing, it lifts us all up,” he said.

Gov. Beshear’s new actions, following the morning’s news of the state’s first confirmed death related to the virus, include:

Childcare centers to close by Friday

The policy will be forthcoming, but will include an exception for health care workers, and there will be some on-site employer exceptions.

“I know it’s going to be hard, but it’s all necessary. I wouldn’t be doing it if I didn’t believe that we had to do it,” Gov. Beshear said. “But we will make it.”

Three-month extension on driver’s licenses

To help those who might have a driver’s license expiring in the coming weeks, Gov. Beshear said his administration would be providing a three-month extension on driver’s licenses.

Closing of in-person government services

By 5 p.m. Tuesday, March 17, Gov. Beshear said he was going to close government offices around the state to in-person services.

“We are going to make sure people can get the services they need, but we have to model the type of behavior that we want to see from other people,” he said.

Postponing the May Primary Election

Gov. Beshear said he agreed with [Secretary of State Michael Adams’s recommendation](#) to postpone the state’s Primary Election, which would have been held in May, to Tuesday, June 23, 2020. To view Gov. Beshear’s executive order on elections, [click here](#).

“Postponing the primary was not an easy decision. But the Republican secretary of state and the Democratic governor agree, and so do county clerks of both parties. And they are our front line election administrators,” said Adams.

Issued guidance on closing restaurants and bars to in-person service

Monday afternoon, Gov. Beshear issued an [executive order outlining the specific steps restaurants and bars should take](#) regarding closure, which include:

- By 5 p.m. on March 16, 2020, food and beverage sales are restricted to carry-out, delivery and drive-thru only; no on-site consumption is permitted; and

- The order does not apply to and/or exempt food service in health care facilities or any congregate living facilities, such as long-term care facilities as defined by KRS 216.510 and similar locations; and
- Liquor, beer and wine sales in the Commonwealth of Kentucky are restricted to carry-out, delivery and drive-thru services only, to the extent permitted by law. No on-site consumption is permitted; and
- Establishments offering carry-out, delivery and drive-thru orders shall ensure that patrons and employees engage in appropriate social distancing (staying 6 feet away from each other).

Gov. Beshear said the overriding goal of the order is to minimize in-person interaction, which is the primary means of transmission of COVID-19. The immediate implementation of the order is necessary as patrons of bars and restaurants gather in large numbers, in close proximity to each other and in enclosed spaces, and endanger the health of the staff as well as the patrons.

“The Department for Public Health delegates to local health departments the authority to take all necessary measures to implement the order,” said Gov. Beshear.

Issued unemployment insurance executive order

Monday morning, Gov. Beshear said the state is taking steps to waive the waiting period for unemployment for those who are losing their jobs because of COVID-19 and issued the [executive order](#) Monday afternoon with specific details which include:

Kentuckians who temporarily lose their jobs or are quarantined because of COVID-19 will be eligible for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits, according to Gov. Beshear. In addition, the seven-day waiting period to receive UI benefits will be waived during the state of emergency.

According to the Kentucky Office of Unemployment Insurance in the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet, the following policy has been activated:

1. Individual is laid off and files initial claim application to request UI benefits.
2. After claimant files and requests payment, UI staff conduct eligibility review and process benefit request concurrently.
3. If approved, initial payment is authorized for 14 days of benefits.
4. Claimant may request benefits every two weeks. This process may continue for a maximum of 26 total weeks or until the claimant obtains employment or returns to work.
5. The weekly benefit amount is based on the worker’s past wages.
6. The maximum weekly benefit amount is \$552.

“My obligation is to keep people safe during this time. I realize many of the steps I am taking to protect Kentuckians during this COVID-19 emergency are affecting employers and workers financially. Temporarily waiving some of the UI benefit rules during this time is one step I can do to help protect Kentuckians financially. I know this is a difficult time but we are going to get through this by working together to help each other,” said Gov. Beshear.

On Monday, Gov. Beshear said he wants every Kentuckian to be able to qualify for unemployment and does not want any impediments that keep anyone from being able to get through the difficulties.

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Loans

Gov. Beshear said his administration has [applied for an SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan Declaration](#). The U.S. Small Business Association is offering designated states and territories low-interest federal disaster loans for working capital to small businesses (private and non-profit organizations) suffering from substantial economic injury as a result of the coronavirus.

As of 6:30 p.m. March 16, the state’s COVID-19 patient information includes 25 cases:

- 66 M Bourbon, *passed away March 15*
- 40 F Fayette
- 46 M Fayette
- 31 F Fayette
- 47 M Fayette
- 31 M Fayette
- 27 F Harrison, *fully recovered*
- 67 F Harrison
- 68 M Harrison
- 54 F Harrison
- 60 M Harrison
- 51 M Harrison
- 69 M Jefferson
- 67 F Jefferson
- 68 F Jefferson
- 80 F Jefferson

- 73 F Jefferson
- 56 M Montgomery
- 53 M Nelson
- 49 M Clark
- 54 M Jefferson
- 34 F Jefferson
- 74 M Fayette
- 33 F Fayette
- 51 M Montgomery

“Again, we believe there are cases out there where people aren’t being tested because they are asymptomatic,” said Gov. Beshear. “What we’re dealing with is serious. It shouldn’t scare you, but it should give you a commitment to make sure we are following the guidelines that we have to follow.”

Other actions by Gov. Beshear

Gov. Beshear has continued to take decisive action since the first case was confirmed in Kentucky. To date, Gov. Beshear has:

- Declared a [state of emergency](#) to ensure the state has every resource available to respond
- Issued an [executive order to prohibit price gouging](#)
- Announced Kentucky’s COVID-19 informational website, kycovid19.ky.gov and issued extensive guidance on when to seek care and when to call the state’s hotline, **1-800-722-5725**
- [Issued an executive order](#) to waive copays, deductibles, cost-sharing and diagnostic testing fees for private insurance and state employees and asked providers to expand their networks to patients that may go outside their normal providers
- Announced that those without insurance will be able to get a test in Kentucky
- Announced strong actions to [protect the state’s most vulnerable populations](#) by limiting visitation to senior care and long-term care facilities
- Signed an [executive order](#) allowing pharmacies to refill prescriptions for up to 30 days to ensure those vulnerable communities or those who need to self-isolate will have their needed prescriptions
- Closed all state [prisons](#) to visitors
- Activated the State Health Operations Center and the State Emergency Operations Center, currently at level three

- Recommended the temporary closure of [senior centers](#) to help halt the spread of the virus for those most vulnerable
- Announced that [Kentucky Employers' Mutual Insurance](#) (KEMI) will provide wage replacement benefits for first responders and medical personnel who have been quarantined for COVID-19
- [Announced new guidance](#) that state boards and commissions cancel any scheduled in-person meetings and instead use video teleconference technology
- Recommended schools cease in-person classes beginning Monday, March 16, and as of Friday, March 14, all 172 school districts, the Kentucky School for the Blind and Kentucky School for the Deaf had announced closures
- Announced USDA approved the state's waiver to serve meals during non-traditional instruction days
- Announced the state has taken swift action to get the passengers from the Grand Princess cruise ship back home
- Issued [guidance](#) to state agencies to allow telecommuting where possible to decrease on-site staffing by up to 50 percent to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and suspended out-of-state travel for state employees
- Recommended businesses also utilize telecommuting and allow employees to work from home if possible
- Advised that all community gatherings be canceled
- Provided tips and guidance to assist with physical and mental health during a pandemic
- Recommended childcare centers create plans so if needed they can close within 72 hours
- Asked hospitals cease elective procedures by Wednesday, March 18
- Held daily and most days, twice-a-day media and Facebook live briefings to inform Kentuckians and provide recommended health and safety guidance

More information

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention encourages people to follow these [steps to prevent illness](#). Kentuckians can find regular updates and resources including more information about when to seek medical attention and courses of action for those in counties with positive cases at [kycovid19.ky.gov](#). They are also urged to visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus](#) for up-to-date information. Kentuckians who want advice can call the state hotline at 1.800.722.5725 or call their local health care provider.

To read Gov. Beshear's news releases and watch other news regarding COVID-19 visit [governor.ky.gov](#).

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