

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE March 29, 2020**

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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.

#### **Actions the state has taken to respond to COVID-19:**

##### **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

- 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.
- Defined a high-level phased response strategy for COVID-19.
- 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](http://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**

- FDC is aligning operations with the [CDC Interim Guidance on Management of COVID-19 in Correctional and Detention Facilities](#).
- 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.
- All non-critical inmate transfers have been suspended.
- Outside inmate work squads have been restricted.
- Find more information on FDC's response to COVID-19 [here](#).

## **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. The application window will be open for 90 days and DEO staff will be available to provide technical assistance to communities during the application process. 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](#).
- 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.

- Governor DeSantis activated the Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program to support small businesses impacted by COVID-19. The bridge loan program, managed by DEO, provides short-term, interest-free loans to small businesses that experienced economic injury from COVID-19. The application period is open and runs through May 8, 2020. Interested businesses should visit [www.FloridaDisaster.Biz](http://www.FloridaDisaster.Biz) for more information.
- 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](#).
- Find more information on DEO's response to COVID-19 [here](#).

## **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**

- DOEA's Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) held a call with AARP Foundation leadership which oversees AARP Workforce Programs and AARP SCSEP. Program participants will continue to train at home and take surveys over the next 2 weeks regarding any training needs they may have in this regard. This will facilitate the Program participants' continued progress toward unsubsidized employment and allow them to earn a stipend while remaining at home.
- Reviewed, monitored, and assisted in beta testing for Area Agency on Aging websites as they prepare to launch expanded meal delivery services available through the DOEA and Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association (FRLA) partnership.
- 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 [Informational Memorandum OIR-20-02M](#) as a reminder to all health insurers, health maintenance organizations, and other health entities to allow for early prescription refills following the Governor's Executive Order 20-52 declaring a state of emergency in Florida.
- Find more information on OIR's COVID-19 response [here](#).

## **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE**

- The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice has issued an emergency order that will suspend visitation at all state-operated juvenile detention centers and juvenile residential commitment programs until April 15, 2020.
- DJJ has also instituted additional screening measures for outside vendors who work within juvenile facilities.
- Pandemic plans have been developed and disseminated for all state-operated juvenile detention centers and juvenile residential commitment programs.
- Find more information on DJJ's COVID-19 response [here](#).

## **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT**

- At the request of the State Surgeon General with regards to community compliance with Governor DeSantis' Executive Orders regarding COVID-19, FDLE developed and sent out a Law Enforcement survey.
- FDLE worked with FHP, DOH and DOT to open a screening point on I-10 Eastbound and is currently working in partnership to open another on I-95 Southbound.
- FDLE is leading the statewide coordination of law enforcement through the Florida Sheriffs Association and the Florida Police Chiefs Association in airport security for screening at Tampa International, Orlando International, Jacksonville International, Fort Lauderdale International, and Miami International airports.
- FDLE is coordinating with our ESF 16 partners on a variety of law enforcement missions statewide including traffic control for test collection sites.

## **FLORIDA LOTTERY**

- Players who have winning tickets are encouraged to mail them to Florida Lottery Headquarters or their closest district office during this office closure.
- Find more information on Lottery's COVID-19 response [here](#).

## **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

- As directed by Governor DeSantis in Executive Order 20-52, DMS has amended the state employee health plan benefits plan documents to include delivery of covered benefits through telehealth at no additional cost to the employees and to ensure all state employees have access to telehealth through the state's contracted HMO and PPO organization plan without cost sharing during this public health emergency.
- As directed by Governor DeSantis in Executive Order 20-52, DMS has amended the state employee health plan benefits plan documents to cover immunizations at participating in-network retail pharmacies at no cost to the member during this public health emergency.
- Find more information on DMS' COVID-19 response [here](#).

## **DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS**

- There are 1,540 Florida National Guardsmen activated in support of COVID-19.
- The Florida National Guard (FLNG) continues to support the State's COVID-19 response through operational support of Community Based Testing Sites (CBTS), augmentation to airport screening measures, statewide logistics support, coordination, planning and operational mission sets. To date, the FLNG has assisted in the testing of over 11,900 individuals for COVID-19.

- The Florida National Guard has been asked to augment local law enforcement and airport authorities in application of the Governor's order to conduct screening on passengers at major airports.
- The Florida National Guard continues to support the Florida Dept. of Health and airport authorities in application of the Governor's order to conduct screenings at airports in Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, Tampa, Orlando, Jacksonville, Palm Beach International and Ft. Myers.
- The Florida National Guard has activated our medical professionals, Army Combat Medic Specialists and Air Force Medical Technicians in support of the Florida Department of Health's (DOH) Community Based Testing Sites.
- The Florida National Guard has activated Guardsmen to augment the State Logistics Readiness Center (SLRC), the State's Logistics Branch, as well as facilitate statewide logistics needs of the Florida National Guard formations on mission. The FLNG support to the SLRC remains at 24-hours-a-day operations.

### **AGENCY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

- APD issued an Emergency Order to providers suspending certain renewal deadlines due to COVID-19.
- Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) has donated 45,000 pairs of gloves to APD's three centers in Gainesville, Marianna, and Chattahoochee. This very generous donation will help the agency meet the health care needs of the 700 individuals who live at the facilities.
- The Florida Baptist Convention has donated 7,095 N95 masks that will be shared among APD's three centers in Gainesville, Marianna, and Chattahoochee. This very generous donation will help the agency meet the health care needs of the 700 individuals who live at the facilities.
- Find more information on APD's COVID-19 response [here](#).

### **DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE**

- DOR issued an [emergency order](#) extending the March 31 property tax due date to April 15, 2020. More information can be found [here](#).
- DOR issued an [emergency order](#) extending the due dates for March sales taxes for taxpayers adversely affected by COVID-19. More information can be found [here](#).
- The Department of Revenue encourages taxpayers with questions about the sales tax due date extensions to visit our designated [taxpayer COVID-19 information webpage](#), email [COVID19TAXHELP@floridarevenue.com](mailto:COVID19TAXHELP@floridarevenue.com) or contact the call center at (850) 488-6800.
- The Department has a dedicated COVID-19 webpage for child support customers at [floridarevenue.com/childsupport/coronavirus](http://floridarevenue.com/childsupport/coronavirus). The page provides comprehensive information for alternative options for handling many routine child support case activities without visiting a local child support office.
- Find more information on DOR's response to COVID-19 [here](#).

### **CAREERSOURCE FLORIDA**

- CareerSource Florida completed a new survey of all 24 local workforce development boards to gather information on remote services being provided and additional communications needs for outreach and strategic planning purposes.

- In collaboration with DEO, a survey to be distributed March 20 to local workforce development board leaders requesting information on Reemployment Assistance processing needs and other COVID-19 related issues.
- Launched digital advertising outreach campaign March 25, targeting employers in hardest hit counties, directing them to available small business loans and resources via CareerSource Florida's COVID-19 landing page, available [here](#).
- Find more information on CareerSource Florida's response to COVID-19 [here](#).

## STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

- The SUS has directed all state universities to continue remote instruction through the end of the Spring semester.
- The SUS has directed that traditional on-campus commencement ceremonies will not be held in May. Instead, each university is directed to develop an alternate schedule or method of delivery.
- Find more information on SUS' response to COVID-19 [here](#).

## FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

- FDOT is coordinating with DOH and the Florida Highway Patrol to implement [Executive Order 20-86](#).
- FDOT continues to coordinate with seaports across the state to monitor port activity.
- FDOT continues to coordinate with public use airports, DOH and law enforcement to implement [Executive Order 20-80](#).
- FDOT has closed its SunPass Customer Service Walk-In Centers located throughout the state.
- FDOT coordinated with transit agencies throughout the state to ensure the safe return of the Florida residents who were quarantined in Georgia and had previously been aboard the Grand Princess voyage outside of California.
- Find more information on FDOT's response to COVID-19 [here](#).

## FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

- Veterans enrolled for care within VISN 8 can continue to use the VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center for 24/7 virtual urgent care by calling 1-877-741-3400 (toll free) or by using the VA Health Chat App.
- FDVA is restricting visitor access to its network of State Veterans' Homes until further notice, with the exception of essential visitors, such as family members of those residents undergoing end-of-life care. Additionally, admissions in the network of State Veterans' Homes have been temporarily suspended.
- Find more information on DVA's response to COVID-19 [here](#).

## VISIT FLORIDA

- VISIT FLORIDA has launched a new data dashboard available on VisitFlorida.org to track the impact that COVID-19 has had on Florida's tourism industry.
- To protect the health and safety of the traveling public and staff, VISIT FLORIDA's four welcome centers will be closed until further notice.
- Find more information on VISIT FLORIDA's response to COVID-19 [here](#).

## **VOLUNTEER FLORIDA**

- As the lead agency for volunteerism and service, Volunteer Florida is working to support voluntary organizations across the state and nation by pushing resources, surveying needs and requesting that continuity of operations plans be created to avoid any service delivery disruption.
- Find more information on Volunteer Florida's response to COVID-19 [here](#).

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