

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 17, 2020

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Gov. Evers Directs DHS to Limit Gatherings to Less Than 10 to Slow Spread of COVID-19

Measures also being taken to manage testing capacity in Wisconsin

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today directed Department of Health Services (DHS) Secretary-designee Andrea Palm to issue an agency order prohibiting mass gatherings of 10 people or more to slow the spread of COVID-19. The order makes exceptions for transportation, educational institutions, child care, hotels, military, law enforcement, food pantries, hospitals, long-term care facilities, restaurants and bars can only offer take-out or delivery, grocery stores and convenience stores, utility facilities, job centers, and courts. See full order and list of exemptions [here](#). Additionally, schools will be closed for the duration of the public health emergency.

“Our top priority at this time is to keep Wisconsinites safe and healthy by reducing the spread of COVID-19, especially for those who are considered high-risk. With limited tests available nationwide and continued community spread, we have to take every precaution to protect ourselves, our families, and our neighbors,” said Gov. Evers. “I know what this means for our small business owners and the struggles they and their workers will face in the coming weeks, but we are committed to working with our federal partners, state officials, and stakeholders to ensure we are doing everything we can to assist during these uncertain times.”

Community Spread

We are seeing community spread of COVID-19 in Wisconsin. This means that there are people who have tested positive who have no exposures to a known case nor did they travel to a location where there is known community spread. Today, we have cases in Milwaukee, Dane and Kenosha counties indicating that there is community spread happening in Wisconsin. Social distancing will help keep you, your family, and our community from increased risk of exposure.

DHS and Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene to move to tiered COVID-19 testing to manage capacity

Despite The Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH) significantly increasing their capacity for COVID-19 testing, the number of testing specimens being received far exceeds their daily capacity. In order to conserve supplies for testing, WSLH and DHS are now prioritizing two tiers of cases for testing:

Tier One (Individuals who):

- are critically ill and receiving ICU level care with unexplained viral pneumonia or respiratory failure
- are hospitalized (non-ICU) with fever or signs and symptoms of lower respiratory tract illness (cough, shortness of breath) and either known exposure to a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient or travel to an area with sustained community transmission

Tier Two (Individuals who):

- are hospitalized (non-ICU) with unexplained fever and signs/symptoms of lower respiratory tract illness
- are health care workers with unexplained fever and signs/symptoms of a lower-respiratory illness, regardless of hospitalization

Test requests that do not meet these criteria will be sent to other labs in the state and country for testing, resulting in longer wait times.

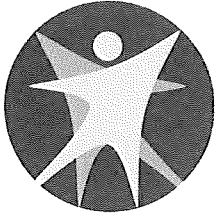
Information for healthcare providers on the testing tiers is available at dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/index.htm. Patients without symptoms and patients with mild upper respiratory symptoms who are not health care workers should not be tested in order to ensure that there is capacity to test ill people.

People should follow simple steps to prevent illness and avoid exposure to this virus including:

- Avoid social gatherings with people of all ages (including playdates and sleepovers, parties, large family dinners, visitors in your home, non-essential workers in your house);
- Frequent and thorough hand washing with soap and water;
- Covering coughs and sneezes;
- Avoiding touching your face;
- Staying home when sick.

This is a rapidly evolving situation and we encourage you and the public to frequently monitor the [DHS website for updates](#), and to follow @DHSWI on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), or dhs.wi on [Instagram](#). Additional information can be found on the [CDC website](#).

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State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Tony Evers, Governor
Andrea Palm, Secretary

EMERGENCY ORDER #5
PROHIBITING MASS GATHERINGS OF 10 PEOPLE OR MORE

1. Under the authority of Wis. Stat. § 252.02(3) and at the direction of Governor Tony Evers, I, Andrea Palm, Secretary-designee of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, order a statewide moratorium on mass gatherings of 10 people or more to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. This order supersedes any previous Emergency Order that conflicts with this order.
2. Effective at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 17, 2020, all public and private mass gatherings are prohibited in the State of Wisconsin.

“Mass gathering” is any planned or spontaneous, public or private event or convening that will bring together or is likely to bring together 10 or more people in a single room or single confined or enclosed space at the same time.

All gatherings that bring together or are likely to bring together less than 10 people in a single room or confined or enclosed space at the same time must:

- a. Preserve social distancing of 6 feet between people, and
- b. Follow all other public health recommendations issued by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and Centers for Disease Control.

Voluntary cancellation, closure, or limitations on size of gathering beyond the requirements of this order are permitted.

3. Effective at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 17, 2020, all bars and restaurants shall close in the State of Wisconsin, except as provided below for restaurants.
4. Effective at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, all public and private schools and institutions of higher education in the State of Wisconsin shall close for instructional and extracurricular activities at 5:00 p.m. Such institutions shall remain closed for the duration of the

public health emergency or until a subsequent order lifts this specific restriction.

This order may include, but is not limited to mass gatherings at: public or private schools, auditoriums, theaters, movie theaters, museums, stadiums, arenas, conference rooms, meeting halls, exhibition centers, taverns, health and fitness centers, recreation centers, licensed pools, and places of worship and religious gatherings.

This order exempts the following:

1. TRANSPORTATION:
 - a. Airports as long as restaurants comply with the restrictions in Section 11 below.
 - b. Mass transportation.
2. EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
 - a. Public, private, and charter schools only for noninstructional purposes, such as medication pickup, childcare services, providing meals, and when operating as polling places.
3. CHILDCARE
 - a. Childcare locations (including those that operate within a facility that is otherwise prohibited), residential care centers, and group homes.
4. HOTELS AND MOTELS
 - a. Hotels and motels as long as restaurants comply with the restrictions in Section 11 below.
5. GOVERNMENT
 - a. Military and National Guard facilities.
 - b. Law enforcement, jails, secure treatment centers, and correctional facilities, including any facility operated by the Department of Corrections, and any facility used to respond to natural disasters or public health emergencies.
 - c. State and local government facilities, including government service centers, unless prohibited elsewhere in this order or another order.
 - d. Facilities operated by the Wisconsin Legislature or Wisconsin Court System.
6. RELIEF FACILITIES
 - a. Food pantries and shelter facilities, including day centers, for individuals and families.
7. RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS
 - a. All residential buildings.
8. RETAIL
 - a. Retail establishments, including gas stations and auto-repair facilities, where large numbers of people are present but are generally not within arm's length of one another for more than 10 minutes. Indoor shopping malls shall close.

9. HEALTHCARE

- a. All health care facilities, including hospitals, medical facilities, home health agencies, personal care agencies, hospices, adult family homes, and pharmacies;
- b. Long-term care and assisted living facilities, as long the facility follows all current Department of Health Services' Recommendations for Prevention of COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Facilities and Assisted Living Facilities and all Centers for Disease Control recommendations.
- c. Alcohol and drug treatment centers or similar facilities.

10. FACILITIES FOR VOTING

- a. Libraries when operating as polling places.

11. FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS

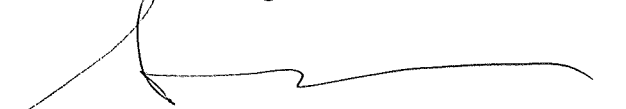
- a. Restaurants may remain open for take-out or delivery service only. No seating may be provided, and food may not be consumed at the restaurant. Restaurants shall preserve social distancing of six feet between customers during pick up.
- b. Retail food establishments (grocery stores, convenience stores, farmer's markets) as long as the requirements listed below are followed:
 - i. Close all seating intended for consuming food;
 - ii. Cease self-service operations of salad bars, beverage stations, and buffets; and
 - iii. Prohibit customers from self-dispensing all unpackaged food.

12. COMMERCIAL AND NON-PROFIT ENTITITES

- a. Office spaces. Such facilities shall implement social distancing, including teleworking, as much as practicable.
- b. Manufacturing, processing, distribution, and production facilities.
- c. Utility facilities.
- d. Job centers.

This order will remain in effect for the duration of the public health emergency declared in Governor Evers' Executive Order #72, or until a superseding order is issued.

Violation or obstruction of this order is punishable by imprisonment, fines, or both. Wis. Stat. § 252.25.



Andrea Palm
Secretary-designee
State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

3/17/2020
Date