



## Joint Information Center on COVID-19 for the State of Florida

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE March 16, 2020**

**Contact: Joint Information Center on COVID-19 for the State of Florida (850) 815-4940, [ESF14@em.myflorida.com](mailto:ESF14@em.myflorida.com)**

### **The State of Florida Issues Updates on COVID-19**

**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, in a briefing at the Florida Emergency Operations Center, Governor DeSantis announced the following:**

#### **Education**

- Governor Ron DeSantis today made several announcements to keep Florida's students, instructional staff and faculty safe. He announced that all remaining assessments for school readiness and voluntary prekindergarten and all testing requirements for K-12 will be cancelled for the 2019-2020 school year.
- Governor DeSantis also provided more flexibility to local school districts so they can install and establish additional remote learning opportunities for students, including the ability to purchase devices and internet services.

#### **Information on Restaurants, Bars, Nightclubs and Beaches**

- Governor Ron DeSantis issued an [Executive Order](#) that will reduce density and crowds in restaurants, bars, nightclubs and beaches to mitigate the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19).

- **Bars and Nightclubs**
  - Under the direction of Governor DeSantis, all bars and nightclubs throughout Florida will close for the next 30 days. Information is available on the website of Florida's Department of Business & Professional Management (DBPR).
  
- **Beaches**
  - The Governor is directing parties accessing public beaches in the state of Florida to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance by limiting their gatherings to no more than 10 persons.
  
- **Restaurants**
  - Restaurants across the state of Florida will now be required to limit customer entry to 50 percent of capacity. Seating must be staggered and limited to ensure seated parties are separated by a distance of at least six feet, in accordance with CDC guidelines. Restaurants are encouraged to remain open and expand take-out and delivery services. Information is available on the website for DBPR.

### **Reemployment Assistance**

- Governor DeSantis reminded Floridians that if their employment has been negatively impacted because of mitigation efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19, these Floridians may be eligible to receive Reemployment Assistance.
  - Individuals who are eligible for Reemployment Assistance may include:
    - Those who are quarantined by a medical professional or a government agency,
    - Those who are laid off or sent home without pay for an extended period by their employer due to COVID-19 concerns; and
    - Those who are caring for an immediate family member who is diagnosed with COVID-19
- Governor DeSantis and the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) encourage any Floridian whose employment has been negatively impacted as a result of COVID-19 to visit [Floridajobs.org](http://Floridajobs.org) and click on the Reemployment Assistance Service Center to learn more about the program and to watch a short video on how to apply.

### **Private businesses assisting Floridians**

- Governor DeSantis also applauded steps taken by private businesses such as FPL, Duke Energy, TECO, and Uber who are taking steps to assist Floridians with electric bills and delivering free meals to health care workers.

### **Presidential Preference Primary Election**

- Leading up to today's Presidential Preference Primary Election, Governor DeSantis directed Secretary of State Laurel M. Lee to work with Supervisors of Elections throughout Florida to ensure a smooth election. Throughout the day, the Florida Division of Elections remained in constant contact with local elections officials to ensure voters who had not voted prior to election day, had the opportunity to cast their ballot. **The Department of State proactively worked with emergency management officials to ensure that Supervisors had the necessary resources for sanitization and cleaning at polling places to help ensure the safety of voters on Election Day.** Secretary of State Laurel M. Lee held a press conference to share updates from the day, once polls have closed statewide, that will be available for viewing on the Florida Channel.

### **More Information on COVID-19**

To find the most up-to-date information and guidance on COVID-19, please visit the Department of Health's dedicated [COVID-19 webpage](#). For information and advisories from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), please visit the [CDC COVID-19 website](#). For more information about current travel advisories issued by the U.S. Department of State, please visit the [travel advisory website](#).

For any other questions related to COVID-19 in Florida, please contact the Department's dedicated COVID-19 Call Center by calling **(866) 779-6121**. **The Call Center is available 24 hours per day**. Inquiries may also be emailed to **COVID-19@flhealth.gov**.

### **What you Should Know**

COVID-19 can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, including when an individual coughs or sneezes. These droplets may land on objects and surfaces. Other people may contract COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

Symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough and shortness of breath. Symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as many as 14 days following exposure. Most people recover from COVID-19 without needing special treatment. The elderly and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems and diabetes are more likely to develop serious illness.

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus. The Department recommends everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick;
- Staying home when you are sick and avoiding contact with persons in poor health;
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands;
- Covering your cough or sneezing into a tissue, then disposing of the tissue;

- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing;
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty; and
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

The CDC does not recommend that asymptomatic, healthy people wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for [health workers](#) and [people who are taking care of someone in close settings](#) (at home or in a health care facility). A person that experiences a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as fever, cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after travel from any other destination with community transmission should call ahead to their health care provider and local CHD and mention their recent travel or close contact.

If a person has had close contact with someone showing these symptoms who has recently traveled from this area or been in contact with a person with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19, he or she should call ahead to a health care professional and the CHD. The health care provider will work with the Department to determine if the person should be tested for COVID-19.

### **Actions the state has taken to prepare for and 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.

- 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.
- Distributed a health care provider letter regarding enhanced surveillance and preparedness for COVID-19 to associations, licensed providers, Health Care Coalitions and CHDs.
- 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.
- Developing a clinician-level briefing for medical audiences.
- 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 until further notice.
- Continued development of public information resources.
- 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.

## **THE DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

- Today, Governor Ron DeSantis and Division of Emergency Management Director Jared Moskowitz announced that Florida is continuing to order supplies and personal protective equipment in an effort to mitigate and contain the spread of COVID-19 in the state.

- 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
- Director Moskowitz is working with the federal government to determine if there is capacity to add US Navy Mercy-Class ships at Florida ports.
- Three field hospitals are being deployed:
  - One field hospital is currently staged in Orlando and can be deployed to other areas in the state as needed.
  - One field hospital is on its way to Broward County and will be set up there.
  - One field hospital is on its way to Ocala and will be staged there and deployed to other areas as needed.
- Mobile COVID-19 testing is also being implemented.

#### **AGENCY FOR HEALTH CARE ADMINISTRATION**

- 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 distributed a provider alert to licensed health care providers regarding the Division of Emergency Management's new Emergency Order tightening visitation restrictions at residential and long-term care facilities.
- AHCA, in coordination with the DEM and the Department, is hosting ongoing statewide calls for nursing homes, assisted living facilities, intermediate care facilities, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, group homes, and adult family care homes in conjunction with the Florida Health Care Association. Secretary Mayhew and Surgeon General Rivkees are continuing to address critical issues impacting these providers such as restricting visitors and providing updates.
- AHCA, in coordination with DEM and the Department, is hosting ongoing statewide calls for hospitals in conjunction with the Florida Hospital Association. Secretary Mayhew and Surgeon General Rivkees to provide the most up-to-date

information to hospital partners and residential facilities caring for aging and vulnerable populations.

- After previously opening an event on the Emergency Status System (ESS) for hospitals to enter census information, emergency room status updates and isolation beds, AHCA expanded the ESS event to track nursing homes and assisted living facility bed capacity, effective March 15.
- The Agency for Health Care Administration (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.
- AHCA participated in a collaborative call with the Florida Health Care Association, Florida Hospital Association and LeadingAge Florida to discuss patient transfer arrangements between health care facilities such as nursing homes and hospitals.
- The Florida Medicaid Program announced coverage of commercial testing for COVID-19 for dates of service back to February 4.

## **AGENCY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

- APD is implementing telework for employees throughout the state as directed by Governor DeSantis to reduce possible exposure to COVID-19.
- APD and AHCA are hosting a conference call today with provider association leaders to share information on modifications to some existing policies and practices during this state of emergency.
- The agency's three state-run centers in Marianna, Gainesville and Chattahoochee, as well as APD-licensed group homes, are restricting visitors in compliance with the Executive Order to protect the health and safety of our customers.
- APD Adult Day Training programs across the state are screening visitors for possible exposure to COVID-19 using a visitor questionnaire. The questionnaire is also being used to screen visitors coming into APD Regional Offices.
- APD continues to provide an up-to-date status on COVID-19, best practices, preventative tips, and CDC guidance to APD providers, Waiver Support Coordinators, Stakeholders and APD employees.

## **DEPARTMENT OF ELDER AFFAIRS**

- DOEA hosted a Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) conference call. All PACE providers are following CDC guidelines for clients, staff, and vendors. They have called clients to check their status and make sure there are

no outstanding needs, they have implemented disaster plans, and they have shared information across the state and with partner agencies.

- DOEA is coordinating with AHCA to ensure PACE providers continue to receive updated information on testing facilities.
- DOEA continues to provide technical assistance to Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) regarding program flexibilities including meals, transportation, respite monitoring, service delivery models, EHEAP, health and wellness activities, outreach, board meetings, office closures, work from home, HIPPA, and IT concerns.
- DOEA coordinated the delivery of over 3,000 shelf stable meals to a Miami-Dade County senior center who had expressed concern over some clients going without meals.
- DOEA continues to maintain and disseminate county-level statistics on the number and types of services for use in modeling statewide service interruptions. When service interruptions occur, the local Area Agency for Aging (AAA) providers call clients impacted by service interruptions to offer alternative assistance.
- DOEA's Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders (SHINE) / Senior Medicare Patrol program offered to send all online training modules to the 11 Aging and Disability Resource Centers. The distribution of training modules to active and pending volunteers would allow volunteers to train from home, on their own time, over the next several weeks and serve as a re-certification process.

## **DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

- The Department of Children and Families' (DCF) Office of Child Welfare is sending regular communication about COVID-19 specifically to licensed child care providers, directing them to follow the CDC's Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). An FAQ document for providers was also posted prominently on DCF's Child Care webpage.
- DCF's Office of Child Welfare is disseminating a survey to licensed child care providers to assess closures throughout the state. Currently, the decision to close is at the discretion of each individual facility.
- DCF Secretary Chad Poppell sent thorough communication to all DCF staff, contracted partners, and licensed facilities (including child care providers) about COVID-19, including precautionary measures (as outlined by the CDC) and temporary policy updates.
- DCF is working with AHCA, DOEA, and APD to compile and develop guidance for agency staff and stakeholders who work directly with Florida's elderly population and have a higher risk of being exposed to COVID-19.
- DCF is leading status update calls with both internal leadership and leadership from external contracted partners. For the time being, these calls will take place twice weekly, every Tuesday and Friday.
- DCF General Services staff throughout the state are working with lessors and janitorial contractors to increase sanitizing measures in office buildings,

especially restrooms and common areas. They also began taking inventory of sanitizing supplies (disinfecting wipes, Lysol spray, hand-sanitizer, etc.) and are ordering more as needed.

- DCF established strategies for COVID-19 prevention at all three state mental health treatment facilities, as well as the South Florida mental health facilities run by Wellpath Recovery Solutions, a contracted partner. They are reporting daily updates to ensure compliance with virus prevention and monitor potential outbreaks.
- DCF has established a visitation protocol for all state-owned and contracted mental health treatment facilities, as well as vendors and patient families, requiring all outside parties to complete a Visitors Viral Symptoms Screening prior to entering a facility. At this time, there are no cases of patients or facility staff testing positive for COVID-19.
- DCF's Office of Economic Self-Sufficiency is communicating with DEO regarding work requirements and CareerSource operations and availability.
- DCF's Office of Economic Self-Sufficiency implemented screening procedures, including a set of questions that must be asked prior to entry, at all economic self-sufficiency storefronts.

## **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIR**

- Effective March 11, 2020, FDVA is restricting visitor access to its State Veterans' Nursing Homes and Domiciliary until further notice, with the exception of essential visitors, such as family members of those residents undergoing end-of-life care.
- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has also temporarily restricted access to their nursing and community living center facilities to only essential visitors until further notice.
- All VA Medical Centers in Florida are implementing enhanced screening protocols at their facilities. VA Outpatient Clinics are also implementing enhanced screening protocols. Please plan to arrive at the facility well in advance of your appointment to allow additional time for the screening process.
- All VA Vet Centers in Florida providing readjustment counseling and outreach services to veterans and families are open and implementing enhanced screening protocols. At this time, veterans may appear in person or opt in advance for an optional phone consultation.
- Veterans who are concerned they may have symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19) are encouraged to contact the VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center at 1-877-741-3400 (toll free). Clinical staff provide 24/7 virtual care and support, including nurse advice and triage. The service is available at no cost to veterans enrolled for care in the VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN 8).
- Currently, all U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemeteries are open for burial and visitation by the public. Florida has nine National Cemeteries. To schedule a burial, please call 800-535-1117, option 1. In light of concerns regarding COVID-19, some families may prefer to proceed with direct interment of their loved ones and postpone the formal committal services to a later date.

Cemetery administrators will work to accommodate these preferences. In addition, cemetery personnel will be discouraged from handshaking and any unnecessary physical contact to minimize the potential transmission of germs and viruses until the pandemic conditions are under control.

- Suspension of VA Travel Board Hearings - The Board of Veterans' Appeals (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs) is suspending Travel Boards until May 1, 2020, due to COVID-19 response efforts. The Board will work with veterans and veteran service organizations and representatives to continue video hearings and provide virtual hearings where possible.
- All FDVA and VA facilities remain fully operational.

## **DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS**

- There have been over 598 Florida National Guardsmen placed on state active duty in support of COVID-19.
- The Florida National Guard is activating all of their medical professionals (Army Combat medic specialists and Air Force medical technicians) to support Florida Department of Health's drive-through screening operations. Guardsmen have reported in and formed Task Force Medical already.
- The Florida National Guard has activated soldiers to augment the State Logistics Readiness Center in Central Florida.
- The Florida National Guard has activated Guardsmen to augment the State Emergency Operations Center.

## **VOLUNTEER FLORIDA**

- Volunteer Florida is encouraging volunteers to screen themselves for COVID-19 (per CDC and [Florida Department of Health guidelines](#)) before serving.
- Volunteer Florida will be participating in a call with Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) partners today to discuss the anticipated needs of volunteers.
- Volunteer Florida is pushing out VOAD organizational guidance to ESF-15 partners.
- Volunteer Florida is working with state counterparts and FEMA to develop volunteer plans.
- Volunteer Florida's National Service Department has discussed using AmeriCorps members in food banks as feeding needs increase.
- Volunteer Florida continues to work with Mass Care on the anticipated needs of volunteers.
- Volunteer Florida has asked all VOAD partners to review their continuity of operations so that there is no service delivery disruption.

## **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

- Commissioner of the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) Richard Corcoran provided strong recommendations for extending spring break following

[for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) issuing guidance specific to COVID-19 in Florida](#). As all Florida school districts and public charter schools have different schedules, please click [here](#) to see the recommended spring break changes for each district. In addition, the department also announced that the start of state testing will be delayed by a minimum of two weeks. To stay up to date on school closure information, visit: [org/em-response](#).

- FDOE sent updated guidance to school districts and superintendents ahead of spring break. To view that memo, visit: [fldoe.org/em-response](#).
- In an effort to be proactive, and only as a precautionary measure if COVID-19 evolves in Florida, [Florida Virtual School \(FLVS\) has partnered with the Florida Department of Education to offer all school districts student support and teacher professional development tailored to the online learning environment](#). The Florida Department of Education in partnership with FLVS is training an additional 10,000 teachers statewide on the Virtual Teacher Training for COVID-19. Superintendents who are interested in offering their teachers the Virtual Teacher Training for COVID-19 should work with their County Virtual Principals to provide a list of teachers to FLVS through: <https://www.flvs.net/FLVSTeacherTraining>.
- Education Commissioner Corcoran is in constant communication with Florida Superintendents and districts to provide guidance on COVID-19 preparedness and response and will be holding weekly calls to update districts on preparation efforts.
- FDOE has sent weekly memos providing updates to school districts, superintendents, Florida Colleges, parents, teachers and stakeholders.
- FDOE launched a survey to school districts and public charter schools about their preparations, policies, and their capacity to serve their students virtually to help meet and determine any preparedness needs.

## **STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM**

- The SUS has directed all state universities to continue remote instruction through the end of the Spring semester.
- All students who can return home should return home.
- 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.

## **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**

- Florida Department of Corrections (FDC) has no known or suspected cases of COVID-19 within its correctional institutions at this time.
- FDC Community Corrections officers are working with offenders on supervision to adjust reporting schedules to minimize congregating at probation offices and prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- FDC's Office of Health Services coordinates with the Department for guidance on any type of outbreak and is closely monitoring new information as it is disseminated from the Department and the CDC.

- FDC has suspended visitation at all correctional institutions statewide through April 5, 2020. The decision to reinstate the normal visitation schedule will be evaluated in consultation with the Department.
  - Inmates will continue to have access to mail, email, phone calls and video visitation.
  - Legal visits will not be impacted.
  - FDC has partnered with vendors to provide some complimentary phone and video visitation services.
- Volunteer activities within correctional institutions statewide have been suspended.
- Anyone entering a correctional institution will be screened, and entrance will be restricted if they:
  - Have traveled internationally or on a cruise within the last 14 days.
  - Have signs or symptoms of a respiratory infection such as fever, cough or shortness of breath.
  - Have had contact with someone who has been or is under investigation for COVID-19.
- All non-critical inmate transfers have been suspended.
- New commitments and intakes have been restricted.
- Outside inmate work squads have been restricted.
- FDC has a plan in place and dedicated staff members trained in the prevention and containment of infectious diseases.
- FDC initiated its Incident Command System in response to COVID-19.
- Education has been provided to staff, inmates and visitors to prevent the spread of any infectious disease, including COVID-19.
- Precautions are in place at facilities to protect inmates and staff from exposure to flu, COVID-19 or any other respiratory illness; preventative measures are being followed per CDC recommendations.

## **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

- 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.
- FDOT is coordinating with other state and local agencies to help ensure mobility around the temporary testing site in Broward County. Once the site is open, FDOT plans to publicize testing site information on highway advisory radio.
- FDOT completed a request to provide necessary supplies to harbor pilots working at seaports.
- At the direction of Governor DeSantis, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Secretary Kevin J. Thibault, along with Surgeon General Dr. Scott Rivkees, hosted a conference call with all Florida ports and their governing bodies as well as all public use airports to discuss Florida's ongoing response to the COVID-19 virus.

- FDOT Secretary Thibault and staff from the department continue to host weekly conference calls with all passenger seaports and public use airports to provide updates related to COVID-19.
- FDOT is monitoring temporary lane closures near hospitals and Department of Health facilities. If congestion near these facilities and lane closures occur, FDOT will remove lane restrictions to help ensure mobility within the area.
- Pursuant to Executive Order 20-52 issued by Governor DeSantis, FDOT Secretary Thibault has suspended size and weight restrictions for divisible loads on any vehicles transporting emergency equipment, services, supplies, and necessary agricultural commodities on state roads.
- COVID-19 educational materials have been posted in FDOT facilities, which include welcome centers, service plazas and rest areas across the state.
- COVID-19 materials have been posted at all FDOT work sites across the state to help educate contractors, vendors, and stakeholders.
- FDOT toll collectors have been given additional training and are required to wear gloves as well as continue with enhanced cleansing.
- SunRail has posted COVID-19 educational materials inside all trains and on all platforms, focusing on areas near entrances and bathrooms.
- SunRail trains are being cleaned and sanitized daily and SunRail staff have been provided sanitizing towelettes and encouraged to wash their hands frequently throughout the day.

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

- At the direction of Governor Ron DeSantis, the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor has issued an [Emergency Order](#) extending all Florida driver licenses and identification cards that will expire in the next 30 days.
- FLHSMV continues to encourage Floridians through social media and other channels to use convenient [online options](#), rather than visiting an office location, to complete transactions for driver licenses, ID cards, motor vehicle or vessel registrations, and more.
- FLHSMV has been in regular communication with the Florida Tax Collectors Association as well as Tax Collectors across the state to provide the latest COVID-19 information and guidance from the Florida Department of Health and other state partners.
- FLHSMV has been in regular communication with the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators and other state motor vehicle administrators to discuss best practices and strategies related to COVID-19 preparations and response.
- Pursuant to Executive Order 20-52 issued by Governor Ron 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.

## **DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

- Governor Ron DeSantis activated the Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program to support small businesses impacted by COVID-19. The bridge

loan program, managed by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (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, 20. Interested businesses should visit [org](#) for more information.

- Governor DeSantis has requested the federal Small Business Administration (SBA) make the Economic Injury Disaster Loan program available for Florida's small businesses impacted by COVID-19. The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) stands ready to assist Florida's small businesses in accessing this funding when available.
- Governor Ron DeSantis has activated the Business Damage Assessment survey 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 at <https://floridadisaster.biz/>.

## **VISIT FLORIDA**

- VISIT FLORIDA is wholly focused on providing health and safety information to travelers and Floridians. This includes the activation of Florida Now, which includes the latest updates from state emergency response professionals hosted on VisitFlorida.com. All promotional media has been paused.
- VISIT FLORIDA is planning for future marketing campaigns to ensure that Florida's tourism industry has a strong, unified voice following COVID-19
- To protect the health and safety of the traveling public and staff, VISIT FLORIDA's four welcome centers will be closed until further notice.
- VISIT FLORIDA is tracking traveler sentiment across online platforms and social media to monitor how COVID-19 may impact travel and travel booking to Florida. VISIT FLORIDA remains in close contact with industry partners and travel organizations and is communicating all new information as it becomes available.

## **DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE**

- The Department has added a dedicated COVID-19 webpage for child support customers at [com/childsupport/coronavirus](#). The new page provides comprehensive information for alternative options for handling many routine child support case activities without visiting a local child support office. Efforts also include rescheduling genetic testing sample collection appointments and postponing other types of appointments.
- The Department of Revenue is advising child support customers who are scheduled for court hearings related to their child support cases to check with the local courts where the hearings are scheduled in case the courts have new requirements, such as appearing telephonically.
- The Department of Revenue has established a dedicated team to address tax-related issues pertaining to COVID-19 and has created an email

address, [COVID19TAXHELP@floridarevenue.com](mailto:COVID19TAXHELP@floridarevenue.com), where taxpayers can send questions and concerns. The Department encourages all taxpayers to use our e-services applications to [file and pay taxes](#) or contact our call center at (850) 488-6800.

- The Department of Revenue's General Tax Administration (GTA) program is working with its tax processing vendor to ensure continuity in tax data and payment processing.
- The Department has increased messaging on preventative measures through the deployment of DOH/CDC posters, ensured hand sanitizer is available, and increased cleaning of high-traffic areas in the public areas of our service centers.

## OFFICE OF INSURANCE REGULATION

- 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 Insurance Commissioner David Altmaier is actively engaged with insurers and key partners at the state and national level regarding COVID-19. Commissioner Altmaier is collaborating with other state insurance commissioners and the National Association of Insurance Commissioners to share information and resources.
- OIR has issued [Informational Memorandum OIR-20-01M](#) to all health insurers and health maintenance organizations, directing them to:
  - Use every channel available to them to communicate with their policyholders and share official CDC and DOH information;
  - Devote resources to inform consumers of available benefits, quickly respond to inquiries, and avoid and dispel misinformation;
  - Work with public health officials to do everything possible to prepare and respond; and
- Consider all practicable options to reduce the barriers of cost-sharing for testing and treatment of COVID-19.  
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.
- OIR has spoken with multiple insurers who are voluntarily waiving cost-sharing for consumers in an effort to remove barriers to testing for COVID-19.
- OIR is reaching out to insurers regarding their response to COVID-19 and working with insurers to make sure they are properly communicating to consumers.
- OIR has issued notices to all of its employees providing resources regarding COVID-19 and outlining the steps recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Florida Department of Health to take preventative health measures.

## FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) is working with state and local agencies and the Florida National Guard to set up testing collection sites in multiple locations across Florida.
- The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) Regional Operations Centers are working with Regional Domestic Security Task Forces to prepare for any responses needed.
- FDLE's Office of Mutual Aid prepared and distributed a law enforcement guide on COVID-19 for law enforcement partners and state agencies and FDLE's General Counsel prepared a law enforcement guide for protocols in a quarantine.
- FDLE Commissioner Rick Swearingen sent an email to all members outlining simple ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as well as links to the Florida Department of Health and CDC websites. Signs have been posted in all FDLE Regions and at Headquarters with prevention information.

## **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE**

- The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice's Office of Health Services developed COVID-19 guidance for all facilities serving DJJ youth. This guidance included Center for Disease Control criteria on how to assess and care for youth who are exhibiting fever and respiratory symptoms and environmental cleaning and disinfection recommendations.
- The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice has modified screening protocols and procedures for youth taken into custody by law enforcement who are brought to juvenile assessment centers and detention screening units to now include precautionary coronavirus screening questions and protocols. This modified screening protocol was shared with law enforcement partners statewide.
- The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice has developed a visitor screening tool which is now mandatory to use inside of our juvenile detention centers and residential commitment programs to ensure both the safety of the youth and staff in these programs. The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice has sent a notice to parents and guardians of youth in programs regarding the new visitor screening requirements.
- The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice has instituted additional screening measures for outside vendors who work within juvenile facilities and non-essential travel of staff members has been stopped. Visitors are limited to business-related visitors only (i.e., vendors, no personal visitors, no volunteers at this time). The department will work with these entities on alternatives to visiting programs to ensure critical services are not interrupted. Clinical personnel, however, are still permitted to visit youth for treatment purposes, and attorneys are still permitted to conduct legal visits with youth.

## **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION**

- DBPR shared information with all agency staff statewide pertaining to the declaration of a state public health emergency, state response protocols as ordered in EO 20-51, and FDOH information and resources available on the dedicated FDOH COVID-19 webpage. DBPR communication with staff has emphasized the best practices and preventive steps recommended by FDOH for impeding the spread of respiratory illnesses.
- DBPR's Emergency Coordinating Officer and State Mass Care Coordinator is supporting the initiation of FDOH's joint information center and providing assistance as requested of State Emergency Support Function 6.
- DBPR added a web banner with information on COVID-19 and link to the Florida Department of Health's dedicated COVID-19 webpage at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/COVID-19>.
- DBPR is incorporating informational comments on all on-site inspection reports issued to public lodging, public food service, and alcohol and tobacco license holders that will promote situational awareness of the current public health emergency and will direct parties to the FDOH COVID-19 webpage for guidance and resources related to prevention best practices. Copies of informational flyers from the FDOH COVID-19 toolkit will also be available for inspectors to distribute when interacting with managers of these premises.
- DBPR has suspended all official business visits, including inspections, that involve licenses located at a facility covered under the visitation restrictions implemented pursuant to FDEM Emergency Order 20-002.
- DBPR issued an emergency to extend license renewal deadlines and renewal requirements for a period of 30 days for licenses with an existing renewal deadline occurring in the months of March or April, 2020.
- DBPR is monitoring release of CDC guidance related to recommendations for bars and restaurants and will coordinate with FDOH on state guidance when recommendations are released by CDC.
- DBPR is establishing a dedicated emergency information page with direct links to the FDOH COVID-19 webpage as well as information on agency emergency orders, schedule and meeting changes for divisions and boards, and other important departmental information during this emergency.
- DBPR is providing guidance to appointed professional licensing boards related to procedural considerations and available technology options for remote, web-based or telephonic board meetings.
- DBPR hosted a senior management meeting with all program directors on Monday, 03.16.2020, to discuss the latest departmental actions and preparations associated with COVID-19 in Florida.

## **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

- DMS Secretary Jonathan Satter issued an emergency order that waived rules to allow for state employees to use any type of accrued leave for instances related to COVID-19, including self-isolation after potential exposure, staying home with children due to child care or school closures, and time needed to take care of dependents like an elder parent. The order also waived rules to expand the ability for employees to donate leave to fellow employees.
- Governor DeSantis directed the Department of Management Services Secretary Jonathan Satter to allow state employees to donate and transfer their available leave time to other state employees to mitigate the impacts of school closures.

- The Florida Department of Management Services' (DMS) Emergency Support Function-7 (ESF-7) Logistics team continues to coordinate with the Department of Health and the Division of Emergency Management on identifying the equipment or supplies that may be necessary for a mass response to COVID-19.
- DMS' Division of Human Resource Management has provided guidance to agencies on implementing preventive actions in the workplace, reporting symptoms, using leave, utilizing health insurance benefits, and applying travel restrictions and telework policies.
- DMS' Division of State Group Insurance continues to coordinate with health plan providers to ensure that state employee health plan members receive the health benefits that can assist them and their dependents if needed.
- DMS' Division of Real Estate Development and Management (REDM) continues to provide guidance to agency facility managers across the state on steps to take to prevent workplace contamination and to pre-position environmental vendors to mobilize in the event a viricidal cleaning is needed.
- DMS' Division of Real Estate Development and Management continues to identify, purchase, and distribute additional hand sanitizing gel and cleaning supplies to state-maintained facilities.
- DMS' Division of State Technology-Public Safety Unit continues to coordinate with users and vendor of the Statewide Law Enforcement Radio System (SLERS) vendors to ensure the continuation of mission critical services if a reduction of staffing resources occurs.
- DMS' Division of State Technology-Public Safety Unit continues to coordinate with statewide public safety communications personnel on their plans to ensure emergency communications systems are not impacted by potential reductions in staffing resources.

## **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

- Florida State Parks remain open for recreational day use; however, all State Parks have adjusted their operating hours to [8 a.m. to 5 p.m.](#) The Department continues to monitor new developments closely and will make further adjustments as necessary based on any new Department of Health or CDC guidance received to ensure protection of our staff and visitors. For the latest information on park operating hours and operational status, please visit [floridastateparks.org](http://floridastateparks.org).
- Effective March 17, DEP is cancelling all events, activities, special event reservations, pavilion rentals and camping reservations at Florida State Parks for the next 60 days.
  - Existing overnight camping reservations that begin [Wednesday, March 18](#), will be honored. Visitors must arrive prior to [5 p.m. on March 18](#), to secure their reservation. [After Wednesday](#), all reservations moving forward will be cancelled and refunded. [Beginning Friday, March 20](#), campgrounds and all overnight accommodations will be fully closed.

- [ReserveAmerica](#), the Florida State Parks partner in camping reservations, will reach out to all affected parties to refund camping reservations. ReserveAmerica can also be reached directly at [1-800-326-3521](tel:1-800-326-3521) or TDD [888-433-0287](tel:888-433-0287) if visitors have questions or need to modify existing reservations.
- DEP's Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection facilities will also be closing the following centers until further notice: [Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve](#), [Guana Tolomato Matanzas \(GTM\) National Estuarine Research Reserve](#) and [Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve](#).

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