

Illinois e-News Release

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State of Illinois and City of Chicago Issue New Guidance to Minimize COVID-19 Spread

Chicago — Following CDC guidance and recommendations by local public health experts, the State of Illinois and the City of Chicago are issuing new guidance to residents to prevent further spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). These new precautionary measures were developed with large events and gatherings in mind, and will promote social distancing practices – a key recommendation to prevent community spread of the disease with the least disruption possible to people’s daily lives.

“The guidance I am issuing today is for the entire state of Illinois. We have seen what works and what doesn’t work from other countries around the world – especially in the earliest days of community spread of this virus. Don’t be fooled into thinking your community is immune,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “I am not going to hesitate to take the most aggressive measures possible to protect the people of our state. We need to reduce social contact in order to try and control the spread of the virus and prevent our medical infrastructure from dealing with too many cases at one time. We all have responsibilities to the most vulnerable among us and that means making sacrifices in the immediate term.”

“As we’ve said before, and as we will continue to say, the health and wellness of residents not only throughout the city, but also the entire state, is our top priority as we continue to learn more about COVID-19 and adjust our response plans accordingly,” **said Mayor Lightfoot**. “This new guidance is not meant to elevate fear, but rather allow the City to prevent further spread throughout the community and safeguard the health and wellness of the general public, and we will continue to review and amend these protocols and procedures as the situation evolves.”

Specifically, the State of Illinois and City of Chicago are issuing the following guidance:

COMMUNITY EVENTS

- The State and City are mandating all large-scale events exceeding 1,000 individuals be cancelled for the next 30 days. The City of Chicago will be enforcing this ban.
- Additionally, the State and the City are encouraging that community events of 250 people or more should be cancelled or postponed until May 1. This includes personal and social events. Residents should use good judgment about canceling events in their own communities.
- For events less than 250 people, residents should closely consider who is likely to attend the event and, if it includes vulnerable populations, strongly consider canceling.
- All major sporting events with large spectator crowds should be cancelled until May 1. This should include school and college events as well as major league sporting events. The Governor has spoken with the owners of all the major sports teams in Illinois and they are in full support of these measures to protect the health of their fans and will cancel all games until May 1.

SCHOOLS

- At this time, the City and the State do not recommend that school be cancelled. While schools will remain open, local jurisdictions should develop their own local guidance.
- The State of Illinois is working closely with school districts around the state on their own guidance and policies, and currently recommends schools do not hold large assemblies, including sports with spectators exceeding 250 people. While every school district is different, the State encourages school administrators and faculty to make responsible decisions, guided by recommendations from the CDC and the state, that are in the best interest of the health and safety of their students.
- Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is issuing guidance for cancellation of events of 50 people or more and has cancelled sports. CPS will also restrict access to school buildings to essential personnel, and limit district-sanctioned trips beyond city limits.
- Chicago Public Schools (CPS) system has collaborated with CDPH to issue its own unique guidance, which includes cancellation of events of 50 people or more and suspending sports until further notice. CPS will also restrict access to school buildings to essential personnel, and limit district-sanctioned trips beyond city limits.

GOVERNMENT

- The Office of the Governor will remain open and operating, as we are fully committed to ensuring that the government will continue to serve the people of Illinois during this time.
- The Office of the Governor is working closely with all state agencies to ensure essential services will continue to be provided, while taking steps to protect the health and safety of state workers.
- The James R. Thompson Center will be closed to people who don't have business with the state in the building for the foreseeable future, beginning Monday. The essential government functions that the people in this building perform will continue during this time.
- City Hall will remain open, and there is no plan to cancel meetings of the City Council for the next week. However, the City is strongly recommending, in accordance with guidance from CDPH and the CDC that residents view next week's meeting via livestream instead of in-person to ensure City business moves forward safely and efficiently.

BUSINESSES AND WORKPLACES

- The State encourages businesses across the state to take advantage of teleworking capabilities.
- Every business that can have employees work remotely should consider doing so immediately.
- For those who cannot, we encourage employers to take proper precautions to keep individuals safe in the workplace. This includes reminding staff to stay home when sick or with a fever; considering a plan for teleworking where feasible; remaining flexible on leave policies; and promoting robust mitigation approaches, such as hand washing, cleaning, and offering hand sanitizer. The City is also developing an addendum to its sick leave policies, as well as guidance on teleworking for employees.

ELECTIONS

- The election will proceed as scheduled on Tuesday, March 17. This is a fundamental function of government, and the state is committed to making sure the election proceeds with as little disruption as possible.
- Local jurisdictions are encouraged to expand hours for early voting over the weekend to reduce the number of people who would need to vote on Election Day.
- Voters who have not already submitted a vote by mail application can pick up a vote by mail ballot through Monday at their local election offices.

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

- The State and the City continue to focus outreach efforts for those most vulnerable to severe illness from the coronavirus, our elderly and immunocompromised residents.
- Individuals who fall into these categories should take extra caution when attending gatherings of any size and avoid exposure to large groups of people whenever possible.

- The state has implemented new staffing procedures and strict guidelines restricting visitors at state-operated long-term care facilities and is also working closely with private nursing home and assisted living associations on the adoption of similar guidelines.

“Although there is no evidence of spread in community across Illinois, we anticipate there will be,” **said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike.** “Now is the time to implement aggressive strategies to limit introduction or spread of the virus in communities. This will mean small, and sometimes large sacrifices, but these strategies are vital for the health of our state and we ask for everyone’s help in protecting our most vulnerable populations.”

“I want to echo Mayor Lightfoot and reiterate the health and wellness of Chicagoans remains our top priority as we continue our robust response to the Coronavirus 2019 outbreak,” said Allison Arwady, M.D., Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health. “Our team has been working around the clock and communicating with health experts at every level to develop the proper response to address this constantly evolving situation. Most importantly we urge those in vulnerable populations to use additional caution and stay home whenever possible.”

The Illinois Department of Public Health has a statewide COVID-19 hotline and website to answer any questions from the public or to report a suspected case: call 1-800-889-3931 or visit [IDPH.illinois.gov](https://idph.illinois.gov).

Chicago specific updates on COVID-19 can be found at chicago.gov/coronavirus, and for additional questions you can also contact the Chicago Department of Public Health at coronavirus@chicago.gov.

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