



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE May 21, 2020

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

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 continue to issue this update every day through Phase 1 of Florida's reopening plan. Once the state moves into Phase 2, DOH will provide this update once per week. However, DOH will continue to update the COVID-19 dashboard and post the state report daily.

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.

Recent actions the state has taken to respond to COVID-19:

- To date, the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) has made more than 1,400 onsite visits to facilities and nearly 14,500 telephone calls to residential providers statewide to provide support and determine emergent needs of facilities.
- As part of its phased reopening, beginning May 21, Florida State Parks will offer limited camping availability for guests. For the protection of both staff and visitors, camping will not be available at all parks and cabins will remain closed. Additional safety measures such as reduced visitor density may also be in place.

- The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is leading the coordination of DOH and the Florida Highway Patrol to implement Executive Order 20-86. To date, more than 39,500 traveler forms have been collected at the I-10 and I-95 checkpoints.
- FDOT continues to coordinate with public use airports, DOH and law enforcement to implement Executive Order 20-80. To date, more than 39,400 traveler forms have been collected at public use airports across the state.
- Approximately 2,179 Florida National Guardsmen (FLNG) are mobilized to support Florida's response to COVID-19.
- FLNG has expanded its support to mobile testing teams and the community-based and walk-up test sites. To date, the FLNG has assisted in the testing of more than 244,810 individuals for the COVID-19 virus.

Additional actions the state has taken to respond to COVID-19:

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

- To date, the Florida Department of Health has reported more than 1,000 contact tracers who are assisting with COVID-19 efforts across the state.
- DOH announced that the list of long-term care facilities in Florida associated with COVID-19 cases will now include active cases in each facility in order to provide real-time data. The list of long-term care facilities with active COVID-19 cases is available [here](#).
- DOH is providing a report detailing surveillance data for every Florida county. Previously, this information was only available for select communities. The surveillance data report is available [here](#).
- At the direction of Governor DeSantis, State Surgeon General Dr. Scott Rivkees declared a Public Health Emergency for COVID-19 in Florida.
- DOH established a public call center for questions regarding COVID-19. The call center launched Monday, March 2, and is open 24/7.
- DOH established mechanisms for monitoring and coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding epidemiological activities.
- DOH 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.
- DOH approved and disseminated an updated Clinician Screening Tool for identifying COVID-19 PUIs.
- DOH implemented testing at all three State Public Health Laboratories and distributed updated laboratory guidance regarding implementation of testing at State Public Health Laboratories.
- DOH has worked to implement additional private lab testing.

- DOH has developed and disseminated pandemic planning guidance.
- Advised CHDs and HCCs to retain expired personal protective equipment until further notice.
- DOH is continuing support for long-term care facilities with REST teams. DOH strike teams have completed assessments for 3,874 long term care facilities to determine immediate unmet needs and promote appropriate infection control practices.
- DOH strike teams are continuing to respond to long term care facilities with COVID-19 positive patients.
- In an effort to increase testing, Governor DeSantis has directed Surgeon General Dr. Scott Rivkees on an emergency temporary basis to allow licensed pharmacists in Florida to order and administer COVID-19 tests.
- DOH is working with Florida's Board of Pharmacy and Florida's Department of Business and Professional Regulation on mobile pharmacy compliance guidance.

FLORIDA DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

- To date, the Florida Division of Emergency Management has sent the following PPE to support health care workers and first responders:
 - 26 million masks
 - More than 10.4 million gloves
 - Nearly 1.7 million face shields
 - More than 1.1 million shoe covers
 - More than 465,000 gowns
 - More than 200,000 containers of hand sanitizer
 - Nearly 90,000 goggles
 - 39,000 coveralls
- For long-term care facilities alone, the Division has sent:
 - More than 10 million masks
 - 1 million gloves
 - More than 500,000 face shields
 - 160,000 gowns
- The Florida Division of Emergency Management has launched a website to track the mobile lab that is testing long-term care facilities across the state. The website is available [here](#).
- At the direction of Governor DeSantis, the state has established 15 drive-thru and 15 walk-up testing sites across the state, with more coming online. More than 196,000 people have been tested at these sites. Floridians can find a site near them [here](#).

- Find more information on DEM's response to COVID-19 [here.](#)

FLORIDA AGENCY FOR HEALTH CARE ADMINISTRATION

- To date, the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) has made more than 1,400 onsite visits to facilities and nearly 14,500 telephone calls to residential providers statewide to provide support and determine emergent needs of facilities.
- AHCA issued [Emergency Order NO. 20-003](#) providing financial relief to nursing homes and Intermediate Care Facilities during the state's public health emergency. The emergency order extends the deadlines for March and April 2020 Quality Assessment payments until June 15, 2020 for Intermediate Care Facilities, and June 20, 2020 for nursing homes.
- AHCA issued [Emergency Rule 59AER20-2](#) and [Emergency Rule 59AER20-3](#). These rules require nursing homes and assisted living facilities to grant access to the Florida Department of Health or their authorized representative for the purpose infection prevention and control, including mandated COVID-19 testing of both on-duty and off-duty staff when arranged by the Department.
- At the direction of Governor DeSantis, AHCA issued [Emergency Rule 59AER20-1](#) requiring hospitals to test all patients for COVID-19, regardless of symptoms, prior to discharge to long-term care facilities.
- AHCA sent out an email to nursing homes requiring the transfer of residents with verified or suspected cases if they cannot be appropriately isolated and adhere to the CDC recommendations for COVID-19 response.
- AHCA issued a provider alert announcing additional flexibilities within the Medicaid program made at the direction of Governor DeSantis. Authorization requirements and services limits for medically necessary behavioral health care for are now waived.
- AHCA created a new temporary Personal Care Attendant program to help long-term care facilities fill staffing shortages. The program provides an 8-hour training on assisting with direct care so that personal care attendants can temporarily perform additional duties.
- AHCA has been working with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to ensure current Medicaid recipients maintain benefits during the state of emergency. Medicaid application deadlines have also been extended.
- Find more information on AHCA's response to COVID-19 [here.](#)

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

- On May 18, DBPR Secretary Halsey Beshears presented information on Governor DeSantis's full phase one

reopening plan to the Florida Chamber of Commerce during their local chamber webinar. Secretary Beshears addressed the reopening plan as it pertained to vacation rentals and restaurants.

- DPBR has distributed [Additional Information for Barbershops and Cosmetology Salons Pursuant to Executive Order 20-120](#) and [FAQs for Executive Order 20-120 – Expanding Phase 1: Safe. Smart. Step-by-Step. Plan for Florida’s Recovery](#) to provide additional information and guidelines for barbershops, cosmetology salons, and cosmetology specialty salons.
- DBPR issued emergency order [EO 2020-05](#), which suspends existing license renewal deadlines until June 1, 2020 for existing renewals between March – May 2020. It also applies to continuing education requirements and waives all late fees.
- Find more information on DBPR’s response to COVID-19 [here](#).

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- As part of her *Hope for Healing Florida* initiative, First Lady Casey DeSantis recently announced that the Department of Children and Families (DCF) will be receiving a \$1.9 million emergency grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, which will provide crisis counseling and other mental health support for Floridians impacted by COVID-19.
- Per DCF’s request, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) approved Florida’s waiver to permit the state to launch a pilot project that will allow families to purchase groceries online with their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card beginning April 21, 2020.
- Under Governor DeSantis’ direction, DCF has temporarily increased Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients’ benefit amount to the maximum monthly allotment based on household size through May 2020.
- DCF worked with the Department of Health (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.
- Find more information on DCF’s response to COVID-19 [here](#).

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

- The Florida Department of Corrections (FDC) has distributed cloth face coverings to all correctional officers and inmates at correctional institutions statewide.
- FDC is closely aligned with the [CDC Interim Guidance on Management of COVID-19 in Correctional and Detention Facilities](#).

- New inmate commitments from county jails undergo additional screening and 14-day quarantine before placement within the general population.
- FDC has suspended visitation and volunteer programs at all correctional institutions statewide.
- Find more information on FDC's response to COVID-19 [here](#).

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

- To comply with federal law, beginning May 10, 2020, individuals with Reemployment Assistance claims will be required to return to the CONNECT system every two weeks to request their benefits. For more information, [click here](#).
- Governor Ron DeSantis has directed DEO to continue waiving the work search and work registration requirements for claimants through May 30, 2020.
- The Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program that provides unemployment benefits to those that may not otherwise be eligible under Florida's state Reemployment Assistance program is available. Eligibility includes independent contractors, gig workers and individuals who are self-employed. Working Floridians who have been impacted by COVID-19 and believe they may be eligible for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, can visit [org](#) and select "File a Claim" to apply and be considered for PUA. Individuals may also call 1-833-FL-Apply (1-833-352-7759) for any questions they may have.
- Beginning April 20, DEO will provide updates on the efforts made to address the challenges to Florida's Reemployment Assistance program in response to COVID-19. This includes a [new State Reemployment Assistance Claims Dashboard](#) that will be updated daily to reflect the total number of Reemployment Assistance Claims submitted, verified, processed and paid.
- DEO announced more than 1,000 small businesses have been awarded more than \$49 million from the [Florida Small Emergency Bridge Loan program](#).
- The Business Damage Assessment survey is activated and continues to accept surveys to assess the impact of COVID-19 on Florida's local business operations and determine the appropriate actions for recovery. Click [here](#) to access the survey.
- Find more information on DEO's response to COVID-19 [here](#).

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- On May 13, 2020, Florida Education Commissioner Corcoran issued Emergency Order 2020-EO-02 that:
 - Extends Professional and Temporary Educator Certificates expiring on June 30, 2020, to December 31,

2020.

- Suspends the requirement for school districts to conduct annual evaluations for teachers and administrators for the 2019-20 school year;
 - Extends deadlines for English Language Learners to exit ESOL programs and suspends date of providing or extending services until schools re-open;
 - Suspends requirement for districts to determine how to meet differentiated pay requirements for teachers on the performance pay schedule;
 - Suspends testing requirement to student eligibility into college-credit dual enrollment courses;
 - Extends deadlines related to Individual Educational Plans;
 - Extends deadlines for provisional and annual licenses issued by the Commission for Independent Education; and
 - Allows remote assessment for determining eligibility and priority for Vocational Rehabilitation services.
- The Department of Education's (DOE) Office of Early Learning, in coordination with local early learning coalitions, has prioritized and increased access to childcare services for first responders and health care professionals by creating an expedited referral process to swiftly provide priority access.
 - Florida College System institutions and private institutions across the state have donated more than 130 ventilators typically used in medical training programs to local hospitals, community medical centers and other facilities.
 - Since April 1, 2020, when DOE announced the waiver of certification exam fees, more than 31,000 educators have signed up to take the Florida Teacher Certification Examination using the waiver. This translates into over 62,000 actual exam registrations for a savings value of more than \$8 million for Florida educators.
 - Governor Ron DeSantis and Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran announced that 32,614 laptop computers are being distributed to 34 mostly small, rural school districts throughout Florida and the Florida A&M University Developmental Research School.
 - DOE has delayed the deadline for teacher certification requirements and offered a fee waiver for testing. More than 22,000 teachers have taken advantage of the fee waiver so far.
 - The Florida Virtual School has created the Online Learning Community with engaging and informative content for teachers and parents of K-12 students.
 - Governor Ron DeSantis and Commissioner of Education Richard Corcoran recommended that all Florida public and private K-12 schools continue distance learning and keep school campuses closed through June 3, the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year. DOE has compiled dozens of free distance learning resources on its emergency response page

- Find more information on DOE's response to COVID-19