



# NEWS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 13, 2020

### **COVID-19 UPDATE: ST. CHARLES COUNTY EXECUTIVE DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY; HEALTH DEPARTMENT WORKS WITH GROUPS TO DETERMINE BEST ACTION FOR UPCOMING EVENTS**

**ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO** – St. Charles County Executive Steve Ehlmann has declared an emergency in the county as a result of the Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). Earlier this week, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. Today, President Donald Trump declared a State of Emergency for the United States, and Gov. Mike Parson issued the same declaration for the state of Missouri.

“This is not a time for us to panic, but to implement all strategies to slow the spread of COVID-19 in St. Charles County,” says Ehlmann. “I am declaring this as an emergency to better arm the county against the unknowns of this pandemic, and so that we can access potential federal funding should the need arise. Our Department of Public Health is advising the public to not attend gatherings of 250 people or more in a single indoor space, and for persons especially vulnerable to COVID-19 to not attend gatherings of 10 or more people.”

At this time, St. Charles County is not prohibiting any events. “We are working with organizations, groups and event planners to discuss what is best for their specific event,” Ehlmann says. “When making that decision, crowd size, venue, and audience age and health are considered. Any events that have been cancelled or postponed in St. Charles County have been the decision of the organizer.”

For several weeks, the St. Charles County Department of Public Health has been collaborating with local, regional, state and federal agencies to monitor and investigate individuals who may have been exposed to COVID-19. On Saturday, March 7, St. Charles County Government stood up its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and activated the Incident Command System (ICS).

“We will continue to monitor cases of individuals with symptoms and those who have traveled in areas where COVID-19 is prevalent,” says St. Charles County Public Health Director Demetrius Cianci-Chapman. “It is important for residents to keep everything in perspective and to continue good handwashing and other hygiene practices to help us keep the spread of this illness at a minimum.”

Cianci-Chapman said the County has tested eight individuals for COVID-19. Seven tests have been negative and Public Health is waiting for results of one test from the state of Missouri lab. There have been four positive cases in Missouri.

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**COVID-19, cont.**

“I cannot stress enough that, even as there are more positive cases found across the United States, the best prevention is proper handwashing,” Cianci-Chapman says. “Additionally, do not touch your face, stay away from others if you are ill, and avoid contact with those who show symptoms similar to colds and flu to lessen the spread of this illness.”

The St. Charles County Department of Public Health recommends the following:

**INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES AT HOME:**

- Continue to monitor local information about COVID-19 in your community.
- Practice personal protective measures (handwashing, sanitizing workspaces, etc.).
- Continue to put household plans into action.
- Individuals at increased risk of severe illness should consider staying at home and avoiding gatherings or other situations of potential exposure, including travel.

**SCHOOLS/CHILDCARE:**

- Implement social distancing measures:
  - Reduce the frequency of large gatherings and limit the number of attendees per gathering.
  - Alter schedule to reduce mixing, such as recess in schools and entry/dismissal times.
  - Limit inter-school/inter-childcare interactions.
  - Consider distance or e-learning/meetings in some settings.
  - Maintain a distance of 6 feet from others whenever possible.
  - Avoid handshakes, fist-bumps, hugs and kisses.
- Consider regular health checks (temperature and respiratory symptom screening) of students, staff and visitors, if feasible.
- Implement short-term dismissals for school and extracurricular activities as needed for cleaning and contact tracing.
- Students at increased risk of severe illness should consider implementing individual plans for distance learning/e-learning.

**ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES/SENIOR LIVING FACILITIES AND ADULT DAY PROGRAMS:**

- Implement social distancing measures:
  - Reduce the frequency of large gatherings and limit the number of attendees per gathering.
  - Consider distance or e-meetings in some settings.
  - Maintain a distance of 6 feet from others whenever possible.
  - Avoid handshakes, fist-bumps, hugs and kisses.

**COVID-19, cont.**

- Alter schedules to reduce mixing (stagger meal, activity, arrival/departure times).
- Limit programs with external staff.
- Consider having residents stay in the facility and limit exposure to the general community.
- Limit visitors and implement screening.
- Consider implementing temperature and respiratory symptom screening of attendees, staff and visitors.
- Implement short-term closures as needed for cleaning and contact tracing.

**WORKPLACES:**

- Encourage staff to telework when feasible, particularly individuals at increased risk of severe illness.
- Implement social distancing measures:
  - Reduce the frequency of large gatherings and limit the number of attendees per gathering.
  - Alter schedules to reduce mixing.
  - Limit inter-work interactions.
  - Consider e-meetings in some settings.
  - Maintain a distance of 6 feet from others whenever possible.
  - Avoid handshakes, fist-bumps, hugs and kisses.
- Limit large work-related gatherings.
- Limit non-essential work travel.
- Consider regular health checks (temperature and respiratory symptom screening) of employees, if feasible.

**CHURCH AND FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS:**

- Implement social distancing measures:
  - Reduce the frequency of large gatherings and limit the number of attendees per gathering.
  - Alter schedule to reduce mixing.
  - Limit inter-church interactions
  - Consider e-meetings in some settings
  - Maintain a distance of 6 feet from others whenever possible.
  - Avoid handshakes, fist-bumps, hugs and kisses.
- Determine ways to continue to provide support services to individuals at increased risk of severe disease (services, meals, checking in) while limiting group settings and exposures.
- Move large gatherings to smaller groups when possible.

For more information and updates, visit [sccmo.org/COVID](https://sccmo.org/COVID).

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***About St. Charles County:***

*Founded in 1812, St. Charles County is one of the fastest growing counties in Missouri, and the state's third largest county in both population and economic share. It is home to 15 scenic county parks encompassing more than 3,643 acres with additional land under development and more in reserve for future development.*

*With a population of 395,504, St Charles County is home to large employers including General Motors, Citi, MasterCard Worldwide and Boeing. It is ranked among the top 25 counties in the nation in high-tech job growth by the Progressive Policy Institute and consistently has the lowest unemployment rate in the Metropolitan St. Louis area.*

*St. Charles County Government employs nearly 1,100 in more than 30 departments and offices, who work to make the county an excellent place to live, work and shop. For more information, please visit [sccmo.org](http://sccmo.org).*