



NEWS RELEASE

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

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MDHHS issues three-week epidemic order to save lives, protect frontline heroes during fall COVID-19 surge

*New order limits indoor and outdoor gatherings where COVID-19
is more likely to spread from person to person*

LANSING, MICH. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) issued a new emergency order today that enacts a three-week pause targeting indoor social gatherings and other group activities in an effort to curb rapidly rising COVID-19 infection rates.

Under this order, indoor residential gatherings are limited to two households at any one time. However, MDHHS strongly urges families to pick a single other household to interact with over the next three weeks, [consistent with new guidance released by the department](#). The order is aimed at limiting residential and non-residential gatherings where COVID-19 spreads rapidly. Bars and restaurants will be open for outdoor dining, carry-out and delivery only. Gyms will remain open for individual exercise with strict safety measures in place. Casinos, movie theaters and group exercise classes will be closed. Professional and college sports meeting extraordinary standards for risk mitigation may continue without spectators, however all other organized sports must stop. Colleges and high schools may proceed with remote learning, but must end in-person classes.

“In the spring, we listened to public health experts, stomped the curve, and saved thousands of lives together. Now, we must channel that same energy and join forces again to protect our families, frontline workers and small businesses,” said Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. “Right now, there are thousands of cases a day and hundreds of deaths a week in Michigan, and the number is growing. If we don’t act now, thousands more will die, and our hospitals will continue to be overwhelmed. We can get through this together by listening to health experts once again and taking action right now to slow the spread of this deadly virus.”

“Indoor gatherings are the greatest source of spread, and sharply limiting them is our focus,” said MDHHS Director Robert Gordon. “The order is targeted and temporary, but a terrible loss of life will be forever unless we act. By coming together today, we can save thousands of lives.”

Today’s order, which takes effect Wednesday, Nov. 18, is not a blanket stay-home action like in the spring. The order leaves open work that is cannot be performed from home, including for manufacturing, construction and health occupations. Outdoor gatherings, outdoor dining and parks remain open. Individualized activities with distancing and face masks are still allowed: retail shopping; public transit; restaurant takeout; personal-care services such as haircuts, by appointment; and individualized exercise at a gym, with extra spacing between machines.

Michigan has seen fewer outbreaks associated with elementary and middle schools, and younger children are most in need of in-person instruction. In-person K-8 schooling may continue if it can be done with strong mitigation, including mask requirements, based on discussion between local health and school officials. Childcare also remains open to support working parents. Throughout this crisis, Michigan's teachers and childcare workers have served on the front lines ensuring support for working parents and educating our children. Governor Whitmer's administration has worked around the clock to protect Michigan's teachers and childcare workers and the other heroes serving on the front lines of the pandemic.

COVID-19
PAUSE TO SAVE LIVES

Open

- Two-household gathering (high precautions)*
- Small outdoor gatherings (25 people)
- Retail
- Preschool through 8th grade (local district choice)
- Childcare
- Manufacturing, construction, other work that is impossible to do remotely
- Public transit
- Hair salons, barber shops, other personal services
- Gyms and pools (for individual exercise)
- Restaurants and bars (outdoor dining, takeout, and delivery)
- Professional sports** (without spectators)
- Parks and outdoor recreation
- Funerals (25 people)
- Health care

Not open

- High schools (in-person learning)
- Theaters, movie theaters, stadiums, arenas
- Colleges and universities (in-person learning)
- Bowling centers, ice skating rinks, indoor water parks
- Workplaces, when work can be done from home
- Bingo halls, casinos, arcades
- Restaurants and bars (indoor dining)
- Group fitness classes
- Organized sports, except professional sports

*See Social Gathering Guidance.
**Includes a limited number of NCAA sports.

For more information about the order, visit Michigan.gov/Coronavirus.
Questions or concerns can be emailed to COVID19@michigan.gov.

"The data we are seeing is alarming. COVID-19 is impacting every area of our state. Our healthcare systems are becoming overwhelmed, and our contact tracers cannot keep up," said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, chief medical executive and chief deputy for health at MDHHS. "If we do not act now, we risk thousands more deaths, and even more people having long-term health consequences. The actions we are taking today are the best opportunity we have to get this virus under control."

"We know these restrictions are difficult, but we support them as a necessary step to mitigate the spread of this virus. We have seen firsthand the devastating effects of COVID-19," said Wright L. Lassiter III, president and CEO of Henry Ford Health System. "The dramatic rise in admissions at hospitals across Michigan is not sustainable. We strongly urge everyone to honor these restrictions and continue safety measures like wearing masks, avoiding gatherings, and practicing social distancing and hand hygiene. Preventing the spread is our collective responsibility and we must be willing to make these sacrifices to save lives of those we love."

“Restaurants and bars have been hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic but we understand these new restrictions while painful are necessary to try to flatten the curve and save lives,” said Paola R. Mendivil, owner of El Granjero Mexican Grill, a family-owned restaurant in Grand Rapids. “We in the restaurant industry understand we have to listen to medical experts and work together to beat COVID-19 and we applaud the Governor for her continued support for additional federal stimulus dollars so we keep struggling restaurants and bars afloat during these difficult times and support the tens of thousands of restaurant workers who put themselves at risk each and every day.”

“We stand united with Governor Whitmer’s decision to impose additional restrictions to protect Michiganders against the spread of COVID-19,” said Tommey Walker, creator of Detroit vs Everybody. “We are currently making plans to be innovative and pivot as we enter the holiday season. We beat this last time by listening to the public health experts, and we can beat it again. These steps are what the public health experts say we need to take to avoid overwhelmed hospitals and death counts like we saw in the spring. Together we can make a difference. Everybody vs. COVID-19.”

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at Michigan.gov/Coronavirus and CDC.gov/Coronavirus.

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[Social Gatherings Guidance](#)
[Pause to Save Lives Infographic](#)
[Safe Social Pods Guidance](#)