

State Health Officer issues amended health order suspending public gatherings

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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As the number of COVID-19 cases identified in Alabama increases, State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris has provided additional guidance suspending public gatherings of Alabamians, in an amended health order issued today and applicable statewide. Under the order:

- All non-work-related gatherings of 25 or more persons, or non-work-related gatherings of any size that cannot maintain a consistent six-foot distance between persons, are prohibited. Employers are to take all reasonable steps to meet these standards for employees and customers.
- Regular programs at senior citizen centers are to be ended, except that the Centers and their partners are urged to assure that their clients continue to receive needed meals via curbside pickup or delivery.
- Facilities providing child day care, including any child day care facility described in Ala. Code Section 38-7-2, may remain open so long as 12 or more children are not allowed in a room or other enclosed or separated space at the same time. Facilities are encouraged to use enhanced sanitation and social-distancing practices consistent with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH).
- In-person instruction and classes at all schools and colleges are prohibited.
- Local boards of education may provide daytime special activities programs for some children ages 6 through 12. These programs may be held for children of essential employees of these employers: State and local governments, first responders (including EMS and fire services), law enforcement, hospitals, nursing home/long term care facilities (including assisted living and specialty care assisted living facilities), end-stage renal disease treatment centers, pharmacies and grocery stores.

Other recommendations are as follows:

Hair, Nail, Massage and Tattoo Businesses

The department recommends businesses follow the CDC's guidance for employers that can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>. The department recommends limiting the number of patrons and staff to less than 25, social distancing, no walk-ins, services by appointment only, spacing patrons in waiting areas, and posting signs not to enter and reschedule if ill.

Funerals, Weddings and Reunions (School and Family)

Limiting the size of gatherings at such events is burdensome, but because of the increased risk of disease spread, the health order includes all gatherings. A request may be submitted in writing to

the state health officer for a specific exception. These exceptions will be closely evaluated based on the ability to maintain social distancing and to limit the possibility of disease spread. It is suggested that families have private family services and hold larger services later.

Caregivers for Elderly and Disabled

Sitters for the elderly and disabled who assist with feeding, bathing and other essential life activities will be considered medically necessary. Frequent handwashing and disinfecting surfaces are strongly recommended. ADPH realizes that the 6 feet of social distancing cannot always be observed when bathing and changing patients. Please do not care for any of these fragile patients if you are experiencing any illness.

A determination of whether the order will be extended will be made prior to April 6, 2020.