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Governor Abbott Issues Executive Orders In Accordance With Federal Guidelines To Mitigate Spread Of COVID-19 In Texas

AUSTIN - Governor Greg Abbott today announced a series of Executive Orders relating to COVID-19 preparedness and mitigation. The four orders serve to limit public gatherings and help reduce exposure for people across the state. These orders are in accordance with federal guidelines issued by the President and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and will aid in the state's efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Governor Abbott was joined for the announcement by Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Commissioner John Hellerstedt, MD, Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) Chief Nim Kidd, Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, and Speaker Dennis Bonnen.

Commissioner Hellerstedt also announced that he has declared a Public Health Disaster which will give state and local officials additional tools to respond to COVID-19. The Governor's Executive Orders, combined with the Public Health Disaster, provide Texas with enhanced tools and protocols to help state and local partners in their ongoing efforts to respond to, track the progress of, and limit the spread of COVID-19 in Texas.

"The State of Texas is at a pivotal moment in our response to COVID-19, and it is imperative that we act now on preemptive measures to slow the spread of this virus," said Governor Abbott. "One of the most effective ways we can do this is by promoting more social distancing and ensuring Texans avoid large group settings such as bars, restaurants, gyms, and schools where the risk of spreading COVID-19 is high. We must also continue to protect our most vulnerable populations, which is why the State of Texas is barring all visitations at nursing homes and retirement or long-term care facilities except in the case of critical assistance. Today's executive orders are precautionary measures that are in line with guidelines from the CDC and they will strengthen Texas' ability to safeguard our communities and respond to COVID-19. As Texans, we must continue to work collaboratively to slow the spread of this virus and protect public health."

The following orders have been issued by Governor Abbott:

- **Order No. 1:** In accordance with the Guidelines from the President and the CDC, every person in Texas shall avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10 people.
- **Order No. 2:** In accordance with the Guidelines from the President and the CDC, people shall avoid eating or drinking at bars, restaurants, and food courts, or visiting gyms or massage parlors; provided, however, that the use of drive-thru, pickup, or delivery options is allowed and highly encouraged throughout the limited duration of this executive order.
- **Order No. 3:** In accordance with the Guidelines from the President and the CDC, people shall not visit nursing homes or retirement or long-term care facilities unless to provide critical assistance.
- **Order No. 4:** In accordance with the Guidelines from the President and the CDC, schools shall temporarily close.

These orders will be effective on a statewide basis starting at 11:59 PM on March 20, 2020 and will end at 11:59 PM on April 3, 2020, subject to extension thereafter based on the status of COVID-19 in Texas and the recommendations of the CDC.

This executive order does not prohibit people from visiting a variety of places, including grocery stores, gas stations, parks, and banks, so long as the necessary precautions are maintained to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. This executive order does not mandate sheltering in place. All critical infrastructure will remain operational, domestic travel will remain unrestricted, and government entities and businesses will continue providing essential services.

For offices and workplaces that remain open, employees should practice good hygiene and, where feasible, work from home in order to achieve optimum isolation from COVID-19. The more that people reduce their public contact, the sooner COVID-19 will be contained and the sooner this executive order will expire.

Under Chapter 81 of the Health and Safety Code, Commissioner Hellerstedt's Public Health Disaster Declaration triggers a number of important tools for state and local officials to respond to COVID-19:

- Texas and local health authorities can more easily require property owners to disinfect, decontaminate, and seal off property that might be contaminated.
- It authorizes health authorities to take additional control measures that they see fit to control and eradicate the threat to public health.
- It streamlines the process for state and local health authorities to invoke the courts to enforce quarantines of individuals.
- Activates enhanced tools for DSHS to collect disease and health information and to share that information with law enforcement personnel and first responders as appropriate.

[View the Governor's Executive Order.](#)

[View the Public Health Disaster Declaration.](#)