

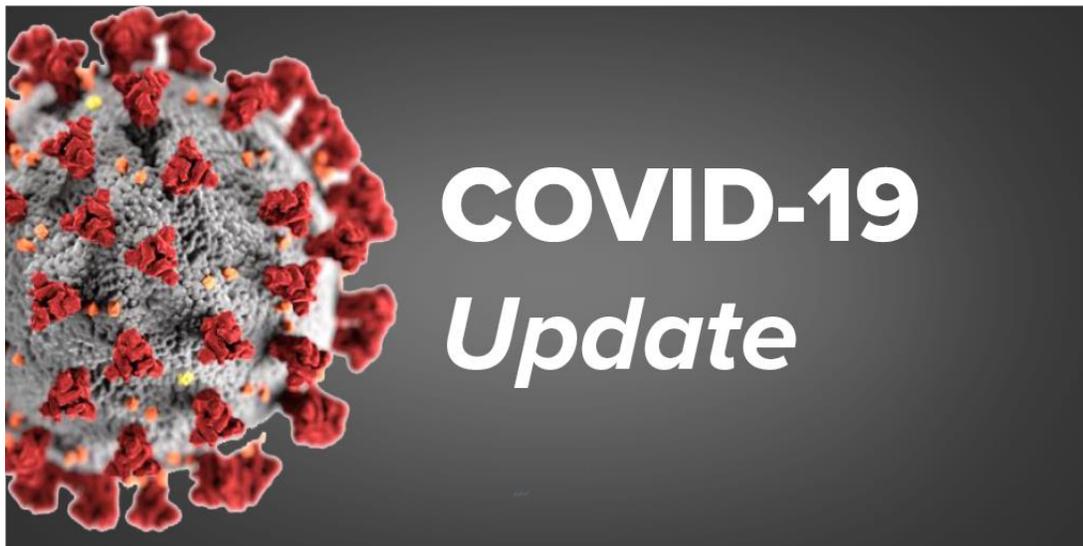
<http://www.austintexas.gov>



CITY OF AUSTIN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RELEASE DATE: MAR. 17, 2020



**Community gatherings of 10 people or more are prohibited due to “the substantial risks to the public”*

Austin-Travis County is closing bars and suspending dine-in service at restaurants for six weeks under new Orders aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19.

Under the new Orders, food establishments are ordered to close common dining areas open to the public and encouraged to provide take-away, delivery or drive-thru, to limit exposure between individuals. Meanwhile, bars are ordered to close common bar spaces open to the public and are prohibited from allowing consumption on premises.

Community gatherings of 10 people or more in a single room or other confined indoor or outdoor space

are prohibited, due to “the substantial risks to the public”. However, a number of “critical facilities” are exempt from the Orders. They include but are not limited to government buildings providing essential services, schools or colleges, grocery stores and pharmacies, transit and transit facilities, the airport and airport operations, and hospitals and medical facilities. In these places “social distancing” and frequent cleaning is strongly encouraged.

At the same time, parts of the community’s “critical infrastructure” are ordered to continue operating. They include Austin Bergstrom International Airport and CapMetro operations, communications, emergency services, energy, and water and wastewater systems. These services are also encouraged to implement screening precautions to protect employees.

The new Orders, which will run from 12:00 p.m. Tuesday, March 17, until May 1, 2020 unless changed, were adopted by Austin Mayor Steve Adler and Travis County Judge Sarah Eckhardt as the reported number of local cases of COVID-19 rose to 10. Austin Public Health (APH) epidemiologists and nurses are currently conducting contact tracing on hundreds of people believed to have come into contact with the people tested positive in the local area. All of the cases so far are related to travel outside Austin-Travis County.

Read the City of Austin's Order Below

“Our acts, individually and collectively, will determine how fast and how hard the virus hits our city,” said Mayor Steve Adler. “We know today’s Order will create huge hardships for many and we resolve to do all we can to address the economic impact this virus is having. But public health must remain our first priority and the experts tell us these are steps we must take. As we have done before, we’ll do this together and help each other.”

“We must be proactive and unified in meeting this challenge,” said Travis County Judge Sarah Eckhardt. “COVID-19 uses us as its vehicle to circulate through our community. So, we are ordering our community to stop circulating. In this time when we can’t hold hands, we are finding other ways to stay connected and support one another.”

“Our City and County are at a critical point in time where we can take certain steps to prevent a community spread,” said Dr. Mark Escott, Interim Health Authority for Austin-Travis County. “As we look at other cities and states that are experiencing the spread of the virus at a faster pace, it is evident that we need to increase our measures to keep our residents safe and healthy. In the medical field, we know from decades of past outbreaks that social distancing is one of the most effective ways to prevent spread is to limit exposure between people. But we are also advocating for solidarity. Over the coming weeks our personal hygiene choices will be the main factor to keeping our community safe.”

The new Austin-Travis County Orders are consistent with CDC recommendations to follow a community-wide approach using social distancing to reduce illness and death. They will be enforced by peace officers, City of Austin Code Department inspectors, and the Office of the Austin Fire Marshall. A violation is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 or jail of up to 180 days.

The COVID-19 virus, which has already killed more than 7,000 people globally, spreads through person-to-person contact, especially in group settings. In recent days the numbers of people testing positive across the U.S. has continued to rise and on March 15 the Centers on Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC) recommended that organizers cancel or postpone events of 50 people or more to limit people's interactions. On March 16 the White House issued strict new guidelines, entitled "[15 Days to Slow the Spread](#)," which urged people to "avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10 people" and to "avoid eating or drinking at bars, restaurants and food courts".

Austin-Travis County Health Authority has produced a series of recommendations for vulnerable populations, workplaces and businesses, schools, and grocery stores and pharmacies.

There is no need for our community to hoard groceries or supplies as shelves have been and will continue to be restocked. The community is urged to buy what you need and leave some for your neighbors. Grocery stores and pharmacies are urged to:

- Increase the use and capability of drive-thru, curbside, or delivery services.
- Limit or restrict the number of customers permitted in a store at one time.
- Minimize the number of employees working within arm's length of one another.
- Provide hand washing capabilities, hand sanitizers, and tissues.
- Frequently clean high-touch surface areas like countertops, doorknobs, and handrails.
- Ensure appropriate social distancing of lines.

As the new Orders are implemented, City of Austin departments will be communicating about the range of services they provide to help people in the service, events, music and other industries who are likely to be impacted most by the new restrictions.

ORDER

BY

THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN

OCC RECEIVED AT
MAR 17 '20 AM 6:27

Whereas, on March 6, 2020, a Declaration of Local Disaster was issued to allow the City of Austin to take measures to reduce the possibility of exposure to COVID-19 and promote the health and safety of Austin residents; and

Whereas, on March 13, 2020, a Declaration of State of Disaster was issued by Governor Abbott to take additional steps to prepare for, respond to, and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 to protect the health and welfare of Texans; and

Whereas, the COVID-19 virus is contagious and spreads through person-to-person contact, especially in group settings; and

Whereas, on March 15, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) recommended that organizers (whether groups or individuals) cancel or postpone in-person events that consist of 50 people or more throughout the United States; and

Whereas, on March 16, 2020, President Trump acknowledged the gravity of the COVID-19 pandemic, releasing strict new guidelines to limit people’s interactions, including that Americans should avoid groups of more than 10 people; and

Whereas, due to the substantial risks to the public, this Order *prohibits* Community Gatherings of 10 persons or more anywhere in the City of Austin beginning at 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Tuesday, March 17, 2020, and continuing until May 1, 2020, unless terminated or modified by an earlier Order.

NOW THEREFORE, I, MAYOR OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN, PURSUANT TO THE AUTHORITY VESTED BY TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE CHAPTER 418, HEREBY FIND AND ORDER:

SECTION 1. That the findings and recitations set out in the preamble to this ORDER are found to be true and correct and they are hereby adopted by the Mayor and made a part hereof for all purposes. That this Order rescinds and replaces the prior Order issued on March 14, 2020.

SECTION 2. Effective as of 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Tuesday, March 17, 2020, and continuing until May 1, 2020, unless terminated or modified by an earlier Order, the Mayor of the City of Austin, Texas, deems it in the public interest to **PROHIBIT any public or private Community Gatherings (as defined in Section 3, below) anywhere in the City of Austin.**

SECTION 3. Definitions:

- a. For purposes of this Order, a “Community Gathering” is any indoor or outdoor event or convening, subject to the exceptions and clarifications below, that brings together or is likely to bring together ten (10) or more persons at the same time in a single room or space. For clarity, this includes,

but is not limited to, weddings, religious services, parties, funerals, sporting events, social events, conferences, and other gatherings.

- b. This Order does not prohibit gatherings of people in multiple, separate enclosed spaces (including separate cubicles) in a single building such as school classrooms or different floors of a multi-level office, residential building, or hotel, so long as 10 people are not present in any single space at the same time. This Order also does not prohibit the use of enclosed spaces where 10 or more people may be present at different times during the day, so long as 10 or more people are not present in the space at the same time. For any gathering covered by this subsection, the Mayor of the City of Austin and the Austin/Travis County Health Authority strongly encourage compliance with the attached Recommendations, which include social distancing, providing hand sanitizer and tissues, and increasing cleaning of commonly and frequently touched surfaces.
- c. This Order does not apply to the following:
 - (i) critical infrastructure, including airport facilities and operations, transit, and transit facilities;
 - (ii) government buildings providing essential services;
 - (iii) schools or institutes of higher learning;
 - (iv) grocery stores and pharmacies; and
 - (v) hospitals and medical offices and facilities.

For purposes of this Order, “grocery stores” includes warehouse stores, big-box stores, bodegas, gas stations, farmers’ markets, or food pantries that provide or sell food products or household staples.

In these settings, the Mayor of the City of Austin and the Austin/Travis County Health Authority strongly encourage compliance with the attached Recommendations, which include social distancing, providing hand sanitizer and tissues, and increasing cleaning of commonly and frequently touched surfaces.

SECTION 4: Our community’s critical infrastructure, which includes communications, emergency services, energy, transportation systems, and water and wastewater systems, are **ORDERED** to continue operating and encouraged to implement screening precautions to protect employees.

SECTION 5: Food establishments are **ORDERED** to close common dining areas open to the public until May 1, 2020, and encouraged to provide take-away or no-contact delivery food service designed to limit exposure between individuals.

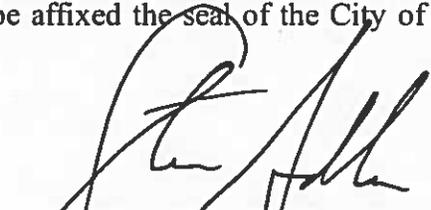
SECTION 6: The holder of a wine and beer retailer’s permit or mixed beverage permit (collectively “bar”) is **ORDERED** to close common bar spaces open to the public and is **PROHIBITED** from allowing consumption on the bar premises until May 1, 2020.

SECTION 7: The City of Austin **SUSPENDS** all deadlines imposed by City Code, ordinance, rule, or other regulation until May 1, 2020.

SECTION 8: That peace officers, City of Austin Code Department inspectors, and the Office of the Austin Fire Marshal, are hereby authorized to enforce this order. Persons who violate this Order violate Austin City Code section 2-6-24. A violation is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine not to exceed \$1,000 or confinement in jail for a term not to exceed 180 days.

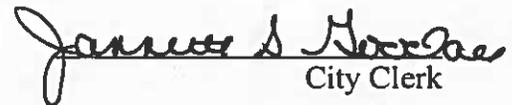
SECTION 9: The Austin Public Health Department will post this Order on its website. In addition, the owner, manager, or operator of any facility that is likely to be impacted by this Order is strongly encouraged to post a copy of this Order onsite and to provide a copy to any member of the public asking for a copy. If any subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, or word of this Order or any application of it to any person, structure, gathering, or circumstance is held to be invalid or unconstitutional by a decision of a court of competent jurisdiction, then such decision will not affect the validity of the remainder of this Order and its application.

ORDERED this the 17th day of March, 2020, in the City of Austin, Travis County, Texas, in witness whereof I subscribe my name and cause to be affixed the seal of the City of Austin.



Mayor, City of Austin

Filed with me, the City Clerk of the City of Austin, this 17th day of March, 2020, by Mayor Steve Adler, whose signature I hereby attest under my hand and the seal of the City of Austin.



City Clerk

Austin/Travis County Health Authority Recommendations

1) Vulnerable Populations: Limit Outings

- Vulnerable populations include people who:
 - Are 60 years old and older; or
 - Have certain health conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, kidney disease, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), and weakened immune systems.
- For vulnerable populations, don't go to gatherings (of 10 people or more) unless it is essential. If you can telecommute, you should. Avoid people who are sick.

2) Workplace and Businesses: Minimize Exposure

- Suspend nonessential employee travel.
- Minimize the number of employees working within arm's length of one another, including minimizing or canceling large in-person meetings and conferences.
- Urge employees to stay home when they are sick and maximize flexibility in sick leave benefits.
- Permit sick employees to stay home without providing a doctor's note.
- Consider use of telecommuting options.

3) Allowable Events

- Cancel or postpone all gatherings.
- Do not attend any events or gatherings if sick.
- For events that aren't cancelled, we recommend:
 - Having hand washing capabilities, hand sanitizers, and tissues available;
 - Frequently cleaning high-touch surface areas like countertops, doorknobs, and handrails; and
 - Finding ways to create physical space to minimize close contact as much as possible.

4) Critical Infrastructure Facilities

- Employees who work in and around critical infrastructure should refrain from reporting to work when falling within any of the following criteria:
 - Are sick;
 - Have a fever greater than 99.6°F;
 - Have had contact with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19; or
 - Have traveled internationally to countries with travel warnings since February 1, 2020.
- If an employee that meets any of the above criteria reports to work, the employer should bar the employee from entering the workplace. An employee that has come in contact with persons exhibiting symptoms associated with COVID-19 or has traveled to an area the World Health Organization or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers a "Hotspot," is expected to follow the initial self-quarantine recommendations.
- Employers should require employees (either those exhibiting symptoms or all employees) undergo non-invasive temperature readings prior to entering a critical infrastructure facility. Employees refusing to submit to a temperature reading and

those with a temperature greater than 99.6° F should be turned away and barred entry into the critical infrastructure facility.

- Supervisors at critical infrastructure facilities should be authorized to direct employees to return home if the employee is exhibiting symptoms and presenting a threat of infecting other employees at the critical infrastructure facility. Human Resources departments at critical infrastructure facilities are encouraged to create alternate work plans to help employees remain productive while keeping the workforce safe and healthy.

5) Government Buildings Providing Essential Services

- All nonessential employees should use telecommuting options.
- Minimize the number of employees working within arm's length of one another.
- Provide hand washing capabilities, hand sanitizers, and tissues.
- Frequently clean high-touch surface areas like countertops, doorknobs, and handrails.

6) Schools: Safety First

- Do not have your child attend school if sick.
- If you have a child with chronic health conditions, consult the child's doctor about school attendance.
- Frequent re-education of students and staff regarding personal hygiene measures (handwashing, etc.) and ensuring that appropriate signs are posted.
- Schools should equip all classrooms with hand sanitizers and tissues.
- Recommend rescheduling or cancelling medium to large events that are not essential, even if the events would otherwise comply with the Order.
- Explore remote teaching and online options to continue learning.
- Schools should develop a plan for citywide school closures and families should prepare accordingly.

7) Grocery Stores and Pharmacies

- Increase the use and capability of drive-thru, curbside, or delivery services.
- Limit or restrict the number of customers permitted in a store at one time.
- Minimize the number of employees working within arm's length of one another.
- Provide hand washing capabilities, hand sanitizers, and tissues.
- Frequently clean high-touch surface areas like countertops, doorknobs, and handrails.