

CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

March 2, 2020

Metro Health is taking steps to prevent the introduction and spread of [novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) in our community. Our local businesses and employers play an important role in this effort. You can help by sharing the information below with your staff and clients:

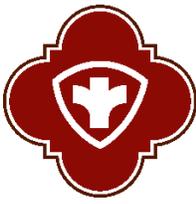
Maintain perspective. The United States has seen 16,000 deaths from influenza so far this flu season, compared to 1 from COVID-19 as of this writing. San Antonio has no identified cases of community transmission to date. Among people infected with COVID-19, only 20% become seriously ill.

Take simple actions to slow the spread of respiratory infections and protect our community members who are at higher risk, such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions. Stay home when sick, wash your hands often, avoid touching your face, cover your cough with your arm or a tissue, and disinfect surfaces.

Fight misinformation. Avoid spreading the stigma that this is a disease limited to one type of people. Know that people released from quarantine or isolation do not pose a risk of infection to other people.

Additional information and guidance for businesses and employers:

- Be prepared: Review and update your Emergency Operations Plan. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) recently posted guidance and resources for businesses: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html>
Assess your supply chain for essential resources.
- Know the symptoms of novel coronavirus infection: fever (100.4F or more) and a dry cough; not a runny nose, typically. Over time, shortness of breath. Only people who are seriously ill are candidates for COVID-19 testing at this time.
- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home. Employees who become sick at work should be sent home as soon as possible, and other employees should keep a 6-foot distance from them. We encourage employers to offer paid sick leave, and not to require a return-to-work note from a healthcare provider for acute respiratory illness. (Medical facilities may be extremely busy.) Promote telemedicine urgent care, if that is an option for your employees. Emergency-use human resources policies may be needed to permit ill workers to stay home until they have recovered. Educate staff on leave policies.
- When practical, encourage people to keep a 3-foot distance from each other and avoid handshakes. Support telecommuting and teleconferencing. Consider limiting or canceling travel. Ensure adequate access to hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies.
- Monitor and plan for absenteeism. Absenteeism may arise because of sick employees, because healthy employees are caretakers for sick family members, because parents stay home with their



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children during school closures, or because a staffer was in close contact with a sick person. We encourage businesses to cross-train staff in preparation for absenteeism and educate them about leave policies. Your plan also could include alternate workflows, shorter hours, telecommuting, and/or suspending some services.

- Disseminate culturally and linguistically appropriate information to employees about your preparedness and response plan.
- Employees planning to travel should review [CDC: Travel Health Notices](#) and keep an eye on the news for updates. Employees who recently arrived from places other than the identified affected areas do not have any special restrictions or need to seek health care unless they are sick.
- We are in cold and flu season. COVID-19 symptoms are similar to these more common infections—it is far more likely that anyone with respiratory symptoms is suffering from a cold or flu. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin.
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, be sure to maintain their confidentiality as required under the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- We know there may be specific situations that arise where you have questions. We will have a hotline in a few days, **210-207-5779**—please call us so we can work together to determine the best course of action.

At this time, we are not making a recommendation to cancel large gatherings or social events. This is a rapidly evolving situation. For ongoing updates and for additional COVID-19 resources, including posters and fact sheets in multiple languages, please visit: sanantonio.gov/Health/News/Alerts/CoronaVirus and dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/.

Thank you for serving our community, and for partnering with us for a healthy San Antonio.

Sincerely,

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