

## 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. Organizations like yours, which serve vulnerable populations, will play an important role in this effort. You can help by sharing the information below in a way that is culturally and linguistically appropriate with your clients and staff:

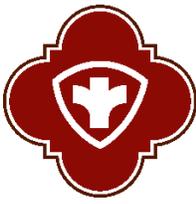
**Maintain perspective.** The United States has seen 16,000 deaths from influenza so far this flu season, compared to 1 from COVID-19 as of this writing. San Antonio has no identified cases of community transmission to date.

**Take simple actions to slow the spread of respiratory infections and protect our community members who are at higher risk. While only 20% of people infected with COVID-19 become seriously ill, the elderly and those with underlying health conditions are the most seriously affected.** 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 organizations that serve vulnerable communities:

- 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>
- Consider temporarily adapting customs to minimize close personal contact, for example, by finding a substitute for handshakes. Encourage people to keep a personal distance of 3 feet from each other. Promote telecommuting and teleconferencing over face-to-face meetings.
- If someone is coughing, others should keep a distance of 6 feet. In general, people who are sick are advised to stay at home and call their healthcare provider, rather than attend public activities.
- Explore using telephone, teleconferencing and other technologies to support clients who have an acute respiratory infection, or who are in [quarantine or isolation](#). Quarantine for COVID-19 typically lasts 14 days, and can create significant emotional and financial stress.
- Encourage those you serve to seek out a specific person who will check on and help care for them if they get sick. We recommend having on hand a 2-week supply of essential items, including prescription medications. Encourage people with special needs to call 2-1-1 and enroll in the [State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry](#).
- 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 eligible for COVID-19 testing at this time.



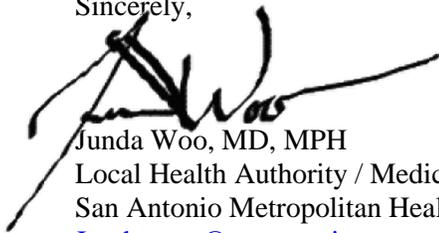
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- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home. Employees who become sick at work should be sent home as soon as possible, and other employees should keep a 6-foot distance from them. We encourage employers to offer paid sick leave, and not to require 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.
- 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 children during school closures, or because a staffer was in close contact with a sick person. We encourage organizations to cross-train staff in preparation for absenteeism. Your plan also could include alternate workflows, telecommuting, and/or suspending some services.
- Disseminate 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.
- 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](http://sanantonio.gov/Health/News/Alerts/CoronaVirus) and [dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/](http://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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