



## OFFICE OF GOVERNOR ANDY BESHEAR

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Crystal Staley

502-564-2611

502-545-3714

Sebastian Kitchen

502-564-2611

502-330-0799

### **Gov. Beshear, Officials Issue Guidance in Response to Coronavirus Disease 2019**

***Hotline 1.800.722.5725 ready; Guidance issued to help protect  
Kentuckians; No new confirmed cases today***

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 7, 2020)** – Today at the Capitol, Governor Andy Beshear, joined by local leaders and public health officials from the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH), within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), issued new guidance in response to the state’s first confirmed case of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

While the state had one confirmed case and more are expected, as of **3 p.m. Eastern time, Saturday, March 7, no new cases have been confirmed. The four samples received and tested today are negative.**

Gov. Beshear said it is not a time to panic, as Kentuckians' risk of getting the virus is still low. Kentuckians should take extra steps to prevent the spread of the virus, and extra precautions were recommended for Harrison County residents.

"We are prepared for this. Harrison County is prepared for this. We are going to get through this. We are going to get through this together," Gov. Beshear said. "The threat to Kentuckians is still low. I declared a state of emergency yesterday to ensure we have every tool necessary to respond to this."

### **Guidance for those at high risk**

The state's first confirmed individual with the COVID-19 virus is from Harrison County. The patient is now being treated and improving at the University of Kentucky Chandler Medical Center. They were first treated at Harrison Memorial Hospital. This is the only information provided about the patient at this time.

### Social Distancing

Gov. Beshear and state and local health officials recommended the practice of social distancing for residents of Harrison County. [For a complete list of guidance on social distancing, click here.](#) The guidance includes information for those who might be at increased risk for COVID-19 to take actions to reduce risk of exposure, including:

- Staying at home as much as possible.
- Ensuring adequate supplies of medication, food, and other needs if staying home for prolonged periods of time.
- When going out in public, keeping away from others who are sick, limiting close contact (6 feet away) and washing hands often.
- Avoiding crowds.

### Public spaces and buildings

Until more is known from the state's current epidemiological investigations, closing schools and public gatherings is not recommended with one positive case. However, individual school systems such as Harrison County can make their own decisions about school closures. At this time, it is believed that Harrison County schools have decided to close schools for at least part of the week.

Gov. Beshear also urged those who are sick not to visit nursing homes and not to work, and encouraged Harrison County nursing homes to no longer accept visitors. Gov. Beshear did not suggest local business needed to close.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has also issued [new guidance](#) for people with higher risk for the virus, which includes older adults and people who have severe chronic medical conditions like heart, lung or kidney disease.

### **What to do if you feel sick**

While Kentuckians' risk of getting the virus is still low, a new state hotline **1.800.722.5725** was announced today to help Kentuckians who have questions or need help.

If Kentuckians have a fever or cough, or need guidance, they should call the hotline. If Kentuckians are having a medical emergency, they should seek help immediately and go to the emergency room. Dr. Crystal Miller, director of the WEDCO District Health Department, located in Cynthiana, said the county's hospital is prepared and ready to respond.

### **Response efforts**

State and local officials are working together to ensure every resource and opportunity is available to help the state respond.

On Friday, March 6, Gov. Beshear [declared a state of emergency](#) to help the state respond. The information outlines actions that the Governor can take to activate the Kentucky Division of Emergency Management within the Department of Military Affairs, the Kentucky Department of Public Health and the Kentucky National Guard.

Currently, the State Health Operations Center is activated at level one – fully activated. The State Emergency Operations Center is also activated.

State and local officials in Frankfort today talked about how they are ready and working together.

“We've been preparing for over a month in case coronavirus came to Harrison County,” said Harrison County Judge-Executive Alex Barnett. He urged people not to panic.

Cynthiana Mayor James Smith said they are prepared and appreciate the state extending resources. He said they would not be motivated by fear, but by facts. “We come together when there is a crisis and we will come together for this,” Mayor Smith said.

Dr. Miller, said they are working around the clock to respond and determine next steps. She urged employers to be flexible. “It’s a time for us to enhance social distancing,” Dr. Miller said.

“The people of Harrison County ought to know their governor and state government are right there with them. We’re not going anywhere,” Gov. Beshear said.

Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton said she declared a state of emergency on Friday to enable the city to access any necessary resources.

“We’ve been working for quite some time with stakeholders in Fayette County,” Mayor Gorton said. “We have a network in place of these stakeholders who are sharing information daily.”

Dr. Mark Newman, executive vice president for health affairs at the University of Kentucky, said they were prepared and conditions are safe for patients and for staff. He said their facilities could take care of any patients, although most people will be treated in their local community or even recover at home.

“We are going to come through this in good shape,” Dr. Newman said.

The local and state officials emphasized the coordinated preparedness and response at all levels.

Today, Gov. Beshear also issued an [executive order to prohibit price gouging](#). He is asking Attorney General Daniel Cameron to enforce the price-gouging laws. If anyone has information regarding possible price gouging, they should contact the Office of the Attorney General Consumer Protection hotline at 888-432-9257.

### **Testing**

Gov. Beshear and Dr. Stack, state public health commissioner, said the state would have all of the tests needed and that Harrison County residents will go to the front of the line when it comes to testing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has also made all of the kits Kentucky needs available and commercial labs have started testing.

The state lab in Frankfort has been conducting COVID-19 testing since Monday, March 2. The Department for Public Health has the ability to process results in a timely manner. Specimens received at the lab by noon each day will be resultd on the same day. Specimens received after noon will be resultd the following day. Currently, Kentuckians can seek testing by consulting with their health care provider.

### **Sick leave**

Gov. Beshear said state government is adjusting its sick leave policy to ensure state employees who are sick can stay home – even for new employees who have not accrued leave time. He said the state would make sure those who are sick can stay home and will be covered. The governor has encouraged businesses to implement similar policies so sick employees, because of financial concerns, do not come to work and expose others.

### **Prevention**

Gov. Beshear said as with any virus, especially during the flu season, there are a number of steps Kentuckians should take to protect their health, including:

- Get a flu shot from your Local Health Department or your family provider.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. [Click here](#) to watch videos on proper handwashing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and then properly dispose of it.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

### **More information**

Kentuckians can visit [kycovid19.ky.gov](https://kycovid19.ky.gov) and [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus) for up-to-date information.

###