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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gov. Beshear Taking Aggressive Action in Response to COVID-19

Senior centers to close; Wage replacement benefits provided to first responders, medical personnel; key state meetings to use teleconferencing
Visit the Governor's [YouTube](#) channel to watch today's news conference

FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 13, 2020) – Today, Gov. Andy Beshear announced the state was taking aggressive action to protect seniors, to ensure wages are protected for first responders and medical personnel and by canceling in-person meetings for state boards and commissions while providing guidance on the proper use of teleconferencing.

“We are all in this together. We are going to get through this together. We are all on one team – Team Kentucky,” said Gov. Beshear. “This is a big test for Team Kentucky. This is us against the coronavirus and all we need from people is to be really good teammates and understand we all have to follow these guidelines and we all have to go through this disruption over the coming weeks.”

Senior centers to close

Gov. Beshear recommended the temporary closure of senior centers to help halt the spread of the virus for those most vulnerable.

“Area agencies have submitted plans already to modify their delivery of meals. We are going to do everything we can to deliver meals to these seniors at home or through drive-through stations at senior centers,” said Gov. Beshear. “Staff at the centers are prepared to deliver the meals or set up ways to provide them. The Department of Aging and Independent Living is able to transfer 19% of meal funds to a home delivery setting and I am going to use the state of emergency to fund whatever else we need to provide every meal. But, we also need everyone to try to help and check on a homebound senior.”

Wage replacement for first responders and medical personnel

Gov. Beshear announced effective immediately that [Kentucky Employers' Mutual Insurance \(KEMI\)](#) will provide wage replacement benefits for first responders and medical personnel who have been quarantined for COVID-19 as a result of their increased risk of exposure in the course of their work.

According to KRS 342.0011(1), workers' compensation insurance benefits already included coverage for employees who contract a communicable disease due to the increased-risk nature of their employment, however KEMI's action expands coverage benefits to include the quarantine period for first responders and medical personnel.

"While our first responders work hard to protect and care for our communities, KEMI will work hard to protect and care for first responders," said Jon Stewart, KEMI president & CEO. "KEMI was created to meet the workers' compensation insurance needs for Kentucky employers, and we are prepared to meet those needs."

Teleconferencing for key state meetings

Gov. Beshear also [announced new guidance](#) that state boards and commissions cancel any scheduled in-person meetings, and instead use video teleconference technology. The new guidance provides that boards and commissions should provide the public with a link to access the meeting remotely.

The new guidance implements a 2018 change to the Open Meetings Act that allows public agencies to comply with the act using video teleconferencing technology.

"The boards and commissions protocol appears to meet the letter and spirit of the Open Meetings Act," said attorney Jon Fleischaker, an expert on Open Records and Open Meetings laws. "By implementing these procedures, boards and commissions can continue to serve and inform the public without risking the spread of disease."

Week recap

Yesterday, Gov. Beshear recommended that all school superintendents consider ceasing in-person classes for an extended period of time beginning Monday, March 16, to help control the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in communities across Kentucky.

Interim Education Commissioner Kevin C. Brown said he strongly supports Gov. Beshear's recommendation that all schools close beginning Monday, in order to prevent community spread of COVID-19.

"I want to thank the Governor and Commissioner for the Kentucky Department for Public Health Dr. Steven Stack and others in the administration that have been working tirelessly over the past few days to ensure that we take a proactive approach to this issue based on science and research," Brown said.

School districts may choose to utilize the Kentucky Department of Education's Non-Traditional Instruction (NTI) Program for these days if they have been approved to do so by KDE. NTI instruction is an option and is not required. However, those using NTI will not have that day

count as a day that must be made-up at the end of the year. Non-NTI districts may also choose to provide online or hard copy enrichment activities even if not providing NTI instruction.

“I am asking the Kentucky Board of Education to consider a blanket statewide waiver for all districts to utilize NTI instruction even if those districts were not approved prior to this school year,” Brown said. “So far this week, dozens of districts have submitted applications and requests for a waiver to utilize NTI instruction if closed as a result of COVID-19.”

Kentucky has approximately 650,000 public school students who attend classes in 1,466 schools (172 school districts).

Thursday, Dr. Stack showed [infection data](#)¹ from the counties around Seattle to explain why Kentucky is taking aggressive steps.

“If we reduce our social contact with each other by about 25% the infection line drops dramatically,” Dr. Stack said. “And if we do not contact each other at all you don’t have an epidemic.”

Yesterday, the Governor also announced that the state now has three labs that can test for coronavirus: the state lab, UofL and LabCorp.

Other actions taken since Kentucky’s first confirmed case

Beginning weeks before the virus was found in the Commonwealth, state and local officials collaborated to prepare for COVID-19 and are now working together to respond.

Gov. Beshear has taken decisive action to prepare and respond to COVID-19. Friday, March 6, immediately after confirmation of the first case, Gov. Beshear declared a [state of emergency](#) to ensure the state has every resource available to respond. Saturday, he issued an [executive order to prohibit price gouging](#). Monday, the Governor [issued an executive order](#) to waive copays, deductibles, cost-sharing and diagnostic testing fees for private insurance and state employees. The Governor is also telling providers to expand their networks to patients that may go outside their normal providers.

Tuesday, Gov. Beshear announced strong actions to [protect the state’s most vulnerable populations](#) by limiting visitation to senior care and long-term care facilities. Gov. Beshear also signed an [executive order](#) allowing pharmacies to refill prescriptions for up to 30 days to ensure those vulnerable communities or those who need to self-isolate will have their needed prescriptions. His action will also allow, if necessary, pharmacies to operate at locations other than those designated on their permits to make sure people have access to necessary medication.

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

More information

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention encourages people to follow these [steps to prevent illness](#).

Kentuckians can find regular updates and resources including more information about when to seek medical attention and courses of action for those in counties with positive cases at kycovid19.ky.gov. They are also urged to visit cdc.gov/coronavirus for up-to-date information. Kentuckians who want advice can call the state hotline at 1.800.722.5725 or call their local health care provider.

To read Gov. Beshear's news releases and watch other news regarding COVID-19 visit governor.ky.gov.

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1. [Working paper – model-based estimates of COVID-19 burden in King and Snohomish counties through April 7, 2020](#)