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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gov. Beshear Reduces On-Site Staffing for State Employees to Reduce Spread of COVID-19

At least 3 new cases in Kentucky including in Montgomery, Jefferson counties

Visit the Governor's [Facebook](#) page to watch today's news conference

FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 13, 2020) – Today, Gov. Andy Beshear confirmed Kentucky has at least three new coronavirus (COVID-19) cases, with new cases in Montgomery and Jefferson counties, and said all 172 school districts in the state will close to stop the spread of the virus.

Gov. Beshear also said his administration issued [guidance](#) to state agencies to allow telecommuting where possible to decrease on-site staffing by up to 50 percent to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

“We want to stop the spread of the coronavirus, reduce the risk of exposure and protect all Kentuckians, including our hardworking state employees, while continuing to provide the necessary services to the people of Kentucky,” Gov. Beshear said. “Whether it is Kentuckians in our schools, nursing homes or state offices, we are working tirelessly to protect them and their families.”

Gov. Beshear and the Kentucky Department of Education confirmed on Friday, a day after the Governor recommended schools cease in-person classes beginning Monday, that all 172 school districts, the Kentucky School for the Blind and Kentucky School for the Deaf will close.

“This is the most effective if everybody does their part. We appreciate people taking this aggressive, but necessary step,” Gov. Beshear said.

Gov. Beshear said there are at least three new positive COVID-19 cases in Kentucky, with a new case in Montgomery County and at least one new positive case in Jefferson County, and as many as five new cases with some discrepancy because of reporting from one of the labs.

The state lab received back 29 cases on Friday with 27 negative, one inconclusive, and one positive, although the location and other details of the positive case were uncertain as of 5 p.m. Friday.

LabCorp, a private lab, confirmed a positive test from Montgomery County.

The lab at the University of Louisville received back eight cases with three of those positive, although it is uncertain whether any of those were previously reported. At least one is a new positive case.

The first confirmed case in the state, a patient from Harrison County, has had two negative tests and has been released from the University of Kentucky Chandler Medical Center. At one point, the patient was in serious condition.

Gov. Beshear is scheduled to update Kentuckians on the latest in the state's response at 4 p.m. Eastern time on Saturday and Sunday from the Capitol. People can watch [here](#). Gov. Beshear has continued to take decisive action since the first case was confirmed in Kentucky a week ago.

Staffing for state agencies

Friday, the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet issued a [memo](#) with guidance to constitutional officers, cabinet secretaries, agency heads and human resources administrators to reduce on-site staffing by up to 50% during the state of emergency for employees with duties that can be performed remotely. For job functions that cannot be performed remotely, the personnel department encouraged agency leaders to equip unused office space to ensure the spacing needed to achieve social distancing.

Gov. Beshear said the state will be aggressive in pursuing telecommuting to thin out the number of people in buildings and allow for social distancing.

The memo from Personnel Secretary Gerina D. Whethers directed agencies to maintain essential services, whether it is on-site or through telecommuting, and dictated work assignments be fair and equitable while allowing those who fall within higher risk groups, those over 60 and who have chronic medical conditions, be considered for longer periods of telecommuting *if requested*.

Whethers directed staff to “continue to take appropriate steps to routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, copiers, elevator buttons, countertops, and doorknobs.” State personnel have worked tirelessly to clean and disinfect the Capitol and other buildings.

State agencies are to begin reducing staff on Monday, March 16, but no later than Friday, March 20.

Earlier Friday, Gov. Beshear:

- Recommended the temporary closure of senior centers to help halt the spread of the virus for those most vulnerable.
- 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.

- [Announced new guidance](#) that state boards and commissions cancel any scheduled in-person meetings, and instead use video teleconference technology. The new guidance, supported by attorney Jon Fleischaker, an expert on Open Records and Open Meetings laws, provides that boards and commissions should provide the public with a link to access the meeting remotely.

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. On Wednesday, Gov. Beshear also closed all state [prisons](#) to visitors, suspended out-of-state travel for state employees, and as he has throughout the week, continued to urge every Kentuckian to practice good hygiene and avoid large gatherings.

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 new regarding COVID-19 visit governor.ky.gov.

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