



# KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

In the Pursuit of Extraordinary Governance...

**TO:** Kalamazoo County Community Partners  
**FROM:** Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department  
**DATE:** March 11, 2020

**RE: 03.11.2020 Information on COVID-19 for Kalamazoo County**

As of March 10 at 12:00pm, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported 647 cases of COVID-19 from 36 states (includes District of Columbia), with a total of 25 deaths. Eighty-three of these cases are travel-related; 36 are believed to be person-to-person spread; and for the remaining 528 the source of exposure is still under investigation.

To date, there are two presumed positive cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the State of Michigan. There are no cases in Kalamazoo County. The criteria for testing has expanded, and testing can now be completed at the state level and through commercial laboratories. Testing is currently available at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) lab and other commercial labs. Testing requires a health care provider's approval. Health care providers should contact the Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department if ordering a COVID-19 test.

While the risk of COVID-19 remains low locally, we are prepared to respond immediately should a potential case come to Kalamazoo County. The situation locally may change quickly. The Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department (HCS) and your local Kalamazoo County Officials are relying on our community to continue practicing good, basic prevention strategies, like handwashing, and referring to official reliable sources of information for updates and guidance.

"The Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department is taking action to ensure we are fully prepared. Our staff is diligently working internally with our preparation efforts as well as with our community partners. I am thankful for the high level of expertise and collaboration happening in Kalamazoo County," says James Rutherford, Kalamazoo County Health Officer. "Public health is our number one priority. We stand ready to work together to minimize the spread of illness should local cases be confirmed."

## **Response Actions**

HCS is in close contact with health care providers to evaluate or test individuals as needed. HCS is also coordinating with federal state, and local officials, as well as institutions, schools, and community organizations to be ready for additional actions and communications should we have local cases.

Individuals with concerns or flu-like symptoms should call their health care provider first with questions. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, or difficulty breathing. Good handwashing, staying away from others if sick, and covering your cough are always recommended to reduce the spread of illness.

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**HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

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Travelers returning from countries with sustained community spread (China, Iran, Italy and South Korea), should read and follow the CDC's guidance on self-quarantine in order to minimize risk for others. These instruction can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>.

### **Additional Preparedness**

The State of Michigan has been working with federal and local partners to monitor the situation, develop and expand laboratory testing, educate and raise awareness, and prepare for COVID-19 in Michigan.

- On February 3, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) activated the Community Health Emergency Coordination Center (CHECC) to support state and local response.
- On February 28, Governor Whitmer activated the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) to coordinate state-government resources.
- On March 3, Governor Whitmer announced the creation of four task forces to combat the spread of coronavirus and assess the impact it may have on Michiganders' day-to-day lives.
- On March 10, Governor Whitmer along with Chief Medical Executive Dr. Joneigh S. Khaldun announced two people in Michigan have tested positive for COVID-19.

The HCS's Response Team is meeting regularly. Our health officer and medical director have met with local officials, including emergency managers and law enforcement, to ensure that we are prepared to coordinate any disease control efforts that may need to be taken in our community. If required, the Kalamazoo County Health Officer, Jim Rutherford, has the authority to make recommendations, issue orders, or declare a local public health emergency. None are recommended at this time.

We know this possibility of local cases may cause concern, and we are working to share timely, accurate information without causing unnecessary alarm.

"This is an emerging public health issue that Kalamazoo County Government is actively monitoring. I want our community to be assured that we are in full coordination and cooperation of preparedness efforts throughout the county. There are plans and systems in place to respond to this type of emergency should a case or multiple cases of COVID-19 come here. While this is a complex virus and there are many unknown factors, we value the expertise of our health officials, emergency planners, health providers and other first responders," confirms Tracie Moored, Kalamazoo County Administrator.

### **Prevention**

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. [[English](#). [Chinese](#). [Spanish](#).]

Older adults over the age of 60 and people with chronic medical conditions have an increased risk for serious illness from COVID-19. If you are at a higher risk of getting sick from COVID-19, you should take everyday precautions to keep space between yourself and others. When you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact and wash your hands often. The CDC is recommending for higher risk individuals to avoid crowds as much as possible and to avoid cruise travel and non-essential air travel.

All individuals should take the following necessary precautions:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

- Follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) recommendations for using a facemask.
  - CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
  - Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
  - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

REMEMBER: Discrimination harms public health. People of Asian descent, including Chinese Americans, are not more likely to get coronavirus than anyone else. Always share accurate information about a virus and how it spreads. It is important to remember that stigma and discrimination occur when people associate an infectious disease, such as COVID-19, with a population or nationality. COVID-19 does not target people from specific populations, ethnicities or racial background. Suspected discrimination can be reported to the Michigan Department of Civil Rights.

### Updates

This situation may change quickly. Refer to these sites for current information:

- ☑ Kalamazoo County updates: [www.kalcounty.com/hcs/covid19.php](http://www.kalcounty.com/hcs/covid19.php)
- ☑ Michigan updates: [www.michigan.gov/coronavirus](http://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus)
- ☑ National updates: <http://www.cdc.gov/COVID19>


### Information in Multiple Languages

- COVID-19 Fact Sheet in English, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, and Arabic from MDHHS
- Print Resources (handouts and posters) in English, Spanish, and Simplified Chinese from CDC

### CDC Guidance Information for

- At Home
- Businesses and Employers
- Community and Faith-based Organizations
- First Responders and MDHHS’s EMS Resources and Communications
- Healthcare Facilities
- Homeless Shelters
- Higher Education Institutions and Guidance for Student Travel
- K-12 Schools and Childcare Programs
- Long-Term Care Facilities
- Mass Gatherings or Large Community Events
- Pregnant women, breastfeeding and children
- Travelers

Sincerely,



**James A. Rutherford, MPA**  
Health Officer/Director



**Tracie L. Moored**  
County Administrator/Controller