



## Joint News Release

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For Immediate Release

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(Berrien County, Michigan) – Governor Gretchen Whitmer issued [Executive Order 2020-21](#) that temporarily requires all Michigan residents to “suspend activities that are not necessary to sustain or protect life” starting Tuesday, March 24<sup>th</sup> at 12:01am and continuing for the following three weeks until April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

Under this “stay at home” order, all Michiganders must stay in their homes unless they are a part of the area’s critical infrastructure workforce. With only a few exceptions, all public and private gatherings of any number of people occurring among persons not part of a single household are prohibited. When individuals do leave their homes, they must adhere to social distancing measures recommended by the CDC, including remaining at least six feet from people from outside the individual’s household to the extent feasible under the circumstances.

Businesses and operations that employ critical infrastructure workers may continue in-person operations, but must adhere to social distancing practices and mitigation strategies to protect workers and patrons, including the promotion of remote work to the fullest extent possible and preventing workers from entering the premises if they display respiratory symptoms. Included in the list of critical infrastructure workers are restaurant employees and childcare workers, as restaurants can continue to provide carry-out/delivery food service and daycares can continue to operate to serve the children or dependents of critical infrastructure workers. Gas stations and grocery stores are also able to remain open for people to use.

Individuals may leave their homes and travel as necessary, including for outdoor activity, to perform their jobs as critical infrastructure workers, and to conduct minimum basic operations, such as to perform tasks that are necessary to their health and safety, or to obtain necessary services or supplies for themselves or their loved ones. There is no need to rush to such places or to hoard supplies.

For more information about this “Stay Home, Stay Safe” order and to get answers to frequently asked questions, please visit [Michigan.gov/coronavirus](https://Michigan.gov/coronavirus).

The Berrien County Health Department is working around the clock to continue the critical public health response efforts to COVID-19, including conducting contact tracing for confirmed and suspect COVID-19 cases, educating and informing our public, and continuing the essential health services that we provide to the community wherever possible.

“We know that COVID-19 is present in our community, and the projections of the potential spread across the state are very concerning,” says Nicki Britten, health officer at the Berrien County Health

Department. “We all have to do our part to adhere to this ‘stay at home’ order from Governor Whitmer to continue flattening the epidemiological curve of this outbreak, protect our community’s most vulnerable populations, and ensure our hospital and health care resources are not overwhelmed by critically ill patients.”

Residents are encouraged to stay up-to-date with current COVID-19 case counts, personal protective recommendations, and get new information as it happens at [www.bchdmi.org/COVID19](http://www.bchdmi.org/COVID19), by calling 1-800-815-5485, or by following the Berrien County Health Department on social media.

Spectrum Health Lakeland continues to prepare for heightened Covid-19 activity. Patients who are experiencing acute upper respiratory symptoms or a fever over 100 should call the free COVID-19 screening hotline at 833.559.0659 and remain home for seven days after illness onset, or 72 hours after resolution of fever and improvement of respiratory symptoms, whichever is longer. Please be aware that a free virtual screening is not a COVID-19 test and is required before specimen collection may occur.

Spectrum Health Regional Laboratory (SHRL) is now processing COVID-19 specimens internally with a 24-hour or less turnaround time. Testing remains a limited resource nationwide and is only completed at the direction of a physician.

In an effort to limit potential exposure of COVID-19, Lakeland Medical Practices have consolidated some locations and begun conducting appointments via video visit or phone call. Many medical practice facilities remain open and providers are available to see patients with essential or acute needs in the clinics. All other necessary appointments will be conducted by a video visit or phone call.

Many community members and organizations have asked how they can offer their support to Spectrum Health Lakeland during this time. For those who want to help and have medical supplies to donate, email [covid19@lakelandhealth.org](mailto:covid19@lakelandhealth.org). This email is being monitored regularly and someone will respond to offers and questions.

Lakeland has successfully moved a number of key clinical areas including intensive care unit, radiology, and surgery into the new Lakeland Medical Center Pavilion in St. Joseph. This creates additional capacity as well as a dedicated isolation unit to ensure the system is well prepared to care for patients if a surge does occur.

Berrien County Law Enforcement Officials continue to provide public safety services and are urging the public to follow the Governor’s Executive Order that has been issued today. Prosecutor Mike Sepic has confirmed, “Local law enforcement can issue 93-Day misdemeanor citations for Executive Order violations and those cases may be prosecuted by the state’s Attorney General Office or the local prosecutor.” Local law enforcement has the authority to order one or more people to comply with activities prescribed by the Executive Orders and refusal to do so may be a 2 year felony for Resisting and Obstructing a law enforcement officer.” Sheriff Paul Bailey stated, “Law enforcement would prefer that individuals would voluntarily comply with all Executive Orders but enforcement actions may need to be taken to protect the health and safety of our community.”

There is currently NO evidence stating COVID-19 can be transmitted to or from our pets or companion animals. Animal Control Director Tiffany Peterson encourages individuals to visit the following link from the CDC that references their Frequently Asked Questions, or FAQ page, that is specific to COVID-19 for our furry friends at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#animals>. “We have received feedback about rumors related to pets. The CDC FAQ webpage has a lot of great factual information to help give pet owners peace of mind”, said Director Peterson. If you are in need of further information regarding sheltering your animals or other services currently being provided you are requested to call ahead to the Berrien County Animal Control at (269) 927-5648. Residents may visit Animal Control and other county department websites at [www.berriencounty.org](http://www.berriencounty.org).

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