

**For Immediate Release:**

March 16, 2020

## **LA County Public Health Issues Order to Prohibit Group Events and Gatherings, Require Social Distancing Measures and the Closure of Certain Businesses**

LOS ANGELES – Today the Los Angeles County Health Officer (Health Officer) issued an order to prohibit all indoor and outdoor, public and private events and gatherings within a confined space, where 50 or more members of the public are expected to attend at the same time, to require social distancing measures and temporary closure of certain businesses. The decision for the Order is based on evidence of increasing community transmission requiring the immediate implementation of additional community mitigation efforts for organizations to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 within the county. This Order will remain in effect at least through March 31, 2020.

To further protect against the spread of COVID-19, the Health Officer's Order also requires persons in charge of events and gatherings attended by 10-49 persons to ensure that attendees follow specific social distancing measures, as well as, follow infection control guidelines for the duration of the event and prohibits dining in at restaurants. Restaurants may continue to serve food to customer via delivery, take-out or drive-thru. Furthermore, the Order requires the closing of businesses where it is common for patrons to be in close contact with each other for extended periods of time, such as, movie theaters, gyms and fitness centers, arcades, bowling alleys and bars and nightclubs that do not serve food.

"Chairwoman Kathryn Barger continues to take swift action to protect the more than 10 million individuals in Los Angeles County. I would like to thank all the local leaders who are working tirelessly to address what is a quickly changing situation here in Los Angeles County. Our goal is to slow the transmission of COVID-19, but we can't do it alone," said Barbara Ferrer, PhD, MPH, MEd, Director of Public Health. "Each and every one of us, both businesses and residents, must do our part by practicing social distancing and taking common sense infection control precautions. We urgently need to flatten the curve of COVID-19 in order to keep our hospitals and emergency rooms from becoming overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients. Flattening the curve requires conscientious social distancing efforts by all our LA County residents during this time of crisis. Our collective efforts during this pandemic can literally save the lives of our loved ones and most vulnerable residents."

"This Order is designed to implement both the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) Interim Guidance for Large Events and Mass Gatherings and the California Department of Public Health's Gathering Guidance to limit the spread of COVID-19," said County Health Officer, Muntu Davis, MD, MPH. "I know that it will significantly impact the lives of our residents and businesses. But, without a specific vaccine or treatment, these community mitigation strategies are the only and most readily available tools we have to slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health and well-being of our communities in LA County."

Community mitigation efforts include social distancing and temporary closures. Social distancing strategies increase distance between people in specific settings where people commonly come into close contact with one another. Closures refer to the temporary closures of specific settings where people gather, and act to enhance efforts to implement social distancing.

The Health Officer's Order specifically requires that:

- Events and gatherings of 50 members or more are prohibited at least until April 1, 2020.
  - This order applies to conferences, arenas, stadiums, convention centers, and meeting spaces. These are places where persons, often strangers, sit and remain in close proximity of one another for extended periods of time.
- For all public and private events and gatherings of 10-49 persons, the Health Officer requires that event organizers and venue operators to do the following:
  - Enforce social distancing measures by requiring attendees or groups of attendees, such as a group of family members or household contacts, who remain at the event to be separated by a distance of at least six feet during the entirety of the event or gathering.
  - Provide access to hand washing facilities with soap and water or hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.
  - Post a conspicuous sign at the entry of the event or gathering that instructs persons that have symptoms of respiratory illness to not attend.
  - Adhere to cleaning and infection control guidance provided by Public Health.
- The Order specifically requires the closure of bars and nightclubs that do not serve food, gyms, fitness centers, movie and performance theaters, bowling alleys and arcades.
- This Order does not supersede any stricter limitation imposed by a local public entity within the Los Angeles County.

Certain activities are essential to the functioning of the County and the well-being of our residents and must continue. This Order does not apply to sites and situations where people obtain essential services and essential goods to meet their basic needs, such as:

- Regular school classes, work, or essential services locations.
- Grocery stores or retail stores.
- Pharmacies.
- Places of transit, like airports, metro stations, or bus stations.
- Hospitals or health care facilities.
- Schools and universities/colleges.
- Congregate living situations, including dormitories.

Both the State and County Public Health have provided infection control guidance to facilities and businesses not covered by this order.

Public Health has issued the following guidance during this time of increased spread:

- Avoid non-essential travel, public gatherings, and places where large groups of people congregate.
- Event organizers postpone or cancel non-essential gatherings of 50 or more until at least the end of March.
- Limit gatherings of individuals who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 (people older than 65, pregnant women, and those with chronic illness) to no more than 10 people.
- This guidance does not apply to activities such as attendance at regular school classes, work, or essential services, including public transportation, airport travel or shopping.

- If you are mildly sick with a fever, stay home and call your doctor if you are concerned and/or your symptoms worsen. Individuals who are elderly, have underlying health conditions or pregnant should consider contacting their providers earlier when they are sick.
- Exclude employees and visitors with any fever and/or respiratory infection symptoms and visitors with recent travel to any country or region with significant community transmission (including communities in the US) from all schools, businesses, and gatherings of any size.
- Follow all social distancing recommendations issued by Public Health.

A copy of the order and additional things you can do to protect yourself, your family and your community can be found on the Public Health website, at: [www.publichealth.lacounty.gov](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov)

Always check with trusted sources for the latest accurate information about novel coronavirus:

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH, County) <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH, State) <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, National) <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/novel-coronavirus-2019.html>
- World Health Organization (WHO, International) <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>
- LA County residents can also call 2-1-1

The Department of Public Health is committed to promoting health equity and ensuring optimal health and well-being for all 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health comprises nearly 4,500 employees and has an annual budget of \$1.2 billion. To learn more about the LA County Department of Public Health and the work they do, visit: [PublicHealth.LACounty.gov](http://PublicHealth.LACounty.gov), and follow Public Health on social media at [twitter.com/LAPublicHealth](https://twitter.com/LAPublicHealth), [facebook.com/LAPublicHealth](https://facebook.com/LAPublicHealth), and [youtube.com/LAPublicHealth](https://youtube.com/LAPublicHealth).

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prevent disease, and promote health and well-being.*