

California Public Health Experts: Mass Gatherings Should be Postponed or Canceled Statewide to Slow the Spread of COVID-19

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SACRAMENTO – Governor Gavin Newsom announced that California public health officials this evening issued an updated policy on gatherings to protect public health and slow the spread of COVID-19. The state’s public health experts have determined that gatherings should be postponed or canceled across the state until at least the end of March. Non-essential gatherings must be limited to no more than 250 people, while smaller events can proceed only if the organizers can implement social distancing of 6 feet per person. Gatherings of individuals who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 should be limited to no more than 10 people, while also following social distancing guidelines.

“Changing our actions for a short period of time will save the life of one or more people you know,” said Governor Newsom. “That’s the choice before us. Each of us has extraordinary power to slow the spread of this disease. Not holding that concert or community event can have cascading effects — saving dozens of lives and preserving critical health care resources that your family may need a month from now. The people in our lives who are most at risk – seniors and those with underlying health conditions — are depending on all of us to make the right choice.”

The state’s updated policy defines a “gathering” as any event or convening that brings together people in a single room or single space at the same time, such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, cafeteria, or any other indoor or outdoor space.

This guidance applies to all non-essential professional, social and community gatherings regardless of their sponsor.

Essential gatherings should only be conducted if the essential activity could not be postponed or achieved without gathering, meaning that some other means of communication could not be used to conduct the essential function.

“These changes will cause real stress — especially for families and businesses least equipped financially to deal with them. The state of California is working closely with businesses who will feel the economic shock of these changes, and we are mobilizing every level of government to help families as they persevere through this global health crisis,” added Governor Newsom.

State Efforts to Assist California Workers

California will continue acting swiftly to help workers hurt by COVID-19. Affected workers can visit the Labor & Workforce Development Agency’s website to review what benefits are available to them. For instance,

If you’re unable to work because you are caring for an ill or quarantined family member with COVID-19 you may qualify for Paid Family Leave (PFL).

If you’re unable to work due to medical quarantine or illness, you may qualify for Disability Insurance. Those who have lost a job or have had their hours reduced for reasons related to COVID-19 may be able to partially recover their wages by filing an unemployment insurance claim.

If a worker or a family member is sick or for preventative care when civil authorities recommend quarantine, workers may use accrued paid sick leave in accordance with the law.

If workers are unable to do their usual job because they were exposed to and contracted COVID-19 during the regular course of their work, they may be eligible for workers' compensation benefits. All information and resources can be found at Labor.Ca.Gov/Coronavirus2019

All Community Guidance Released from CDPH:

The California Department of Public Health has consolidated state guidance on how to prepare and protect Californians from COVID-19 in a single location. This includes guidance for:

Health care facilities, including long-term care facilities

Community care facilities, including assisted living facilities and child care

Schools and institutions of higher education

First responders, including paramedics and EMTs

Employers, health care workers and workers in general industry

Health care plans

Home cleaning with COVID-19 positive individuals

Guidance for Using Disinfectants at Schools and Child Care

Laboratories

Health care facilities from Cal/OSHA

Homelessness Providers

What to Do if You Think You're Sick:

Call ahead: If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and may have had contact with a person with COVID-19, or recently traveled to countries with apparent community spread, call your health care provider or local public health department first before seeking medical care so that appropriate precautions can be taken.

California's Response to COVID-19:

We have been actively and extensively planning with our local public health and health care delivery systems. Here are some of the things we are already doing:

As in any public health event, the California Department of Public Health's Medical and Health Coordination Center has been activated and is coordinating public health response efforts across the state.

California continues to prepare and respond in coordination with federal and local partners, hospitals and physicians.

Governor Newsom declared a State of Emergency to make additional resources available, formalize emergency actions already underway across multiple state agencies and departments, and help the state prepare for broader spread of COVID-19.

Governor Gavin Newsom requested the Legislature make up to \$20 million available for state government to respond to the spread of COVID-19.

California activated the State Operations Center to its highest level to coordinate response efforts across the state.

24 million more Californians are now eligible for free medically necessary COVID-19 testing.

California made available some of its emergency planning reserves of 21 million N95 filtering face piece masks for use in certain health care settings to ease shortages of personal protective equipment.

The Public Health Department is providing information, guidance documents, and technical support to local health departments, health care facilities, providers, schools, universities, colleges, and childcare facilities across California

The California Employment Development Department (EDD) is encouraging individuals who are unable to work due to exposure to COVID-19 to file a Disability Insurance claim.

EDD is also encouraging employers who are experiencing a slowdown in their businesses or services as a result of the Coronavirus impact on the economy to apply for an Unemployment Insurance work sharing program.

California continues to work in partnership with the federal government to aid in the safe return of 962 Californians from the Grand Princess cruise ship. This mission is centered around protecting the health of the passengers, and ensuring that when the passengers disembark, the public health of the United States, the State of California, and partner communities is protected.

The Public Health Department is coordinating with federal authorities and local health departments that have implemented screening, monitoring and, in some cases quarantine of returning travelers.

In coordination with the CDC, state and local health departments, we are actively responding to cases of COVID-19.

The Public Health Department is supporting hospitals and local public health laboratories in the collection of specimens and testing for COVID-19.

The California Department of Public Health's state laboratory in Richmond and 18 other public health department laboratories now have tests for the virus that causes COVID-19. Eighteen of them are currently conducting tests, with the others coming online soon.

For more the most up to date information on COVID-19 and California's response, visit the CDPH website.