



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

In the Pursuit of Extraordinary Governance...

**NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
March 13, 2020

Lyndi Warner, Public Information Officer
pio@kalcountry.com
269-373-5271 or 269-373-5270

COVID-19 Update from Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department

KALAMAZOO, MI — As of March 13, 2020 at 3:30 p.m., the State of Michigan announced there are an additional four COVID-19 cases, bringing the total to 16. No cases have been confirmed in Kalamazoo County. Testing continues daily. In Kalamazoo County 11 individuals have been tested and are awaiting results, and 2 individuals are being monitored (meaning they have traveled to China or Iran). The Health Department and state authorities are making additional recommendations to prevent the spread of illness and slow any progression of a potential COVID-19 outbreak. These are proactive strategies.

The Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department (HCS) is recommending strong, preventive actions for everyone in Kalamazoo County to take. Governor Whitmer [announced community mitigation recommendations](#) for individuals, facilities, schools, workplaces, community organizations, and other mass events late yesterday. Governor Whitmer also issued Executive Order 2020-5 to cancel all events over 250 people and all assemblages in shared spaced over 250 people beginning on Friday, March 13 at 5:00 p.m. and ending on Sunday, April 5 at 5:00 p.m. Certain assemblages are exempt from this prohibition, such as those for the purpose of: industrial or manufacturing work, mass transit, or the purchase of groceries or consumer goods. HCS fully supports the Governor's recommendations and encourage local individuals and entities to implement them or take additional steps, as is feasible.

"We are prepared to respond immediately should a potential case come to Kalamazoo County," says James Rutherford, Health Officer of Kalamazoo County. The situation locally may change quickly. 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.

Response Actions

The HCS's Response Team is meeting regularly. HCS will activate a call center for over the weekend. Providers and residents may call with COVID-19 questions Saturday and Sunday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at 269-373-5267. This call center will remain in service until the public is notified otherwise.

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

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](#).]

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

311 E. Alcott St. | Kalamazoo, MI 49001
Phone: 269.373.5200 | www.kalcountry.com/hcs

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, visiting long-term care facilities, cruise travel and non-essential air travel as much as possible

HCS recognizes the justified concern regarding COVID-19 disease and the interruption occurring in our daily lives. At this time, we as a community need to prioritize protecting the most vulnerable in our community while preserving critical healthcare access and workforce. HCS also recognizes the need to increase timely and efficient access to testing for those who need it.

To help reduce the strain on our health systems:

- If you're mildly sick, stay home instead of going to the doctor
- Only go to the emergency department if you feel very sick
- The local health department does NOT perform COVID-19 testing
- If you think you might have COVID-19 disease (most often with cough, fever, shortness of breath), call ahead before showing up in clinic

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.
 - o CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
 - o 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.
 - o 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.

Patients with confirmed infection have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19, call your health care provider. If you do not have a health care provider, call the nearest hospital.

Additional Preparedness Actions

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.

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.

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>.

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
- ☑ Michigan updates: 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](#)

###

Kalamazoo County Government
Health & Community Services Department



[Like Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services](#)



Follow us [@KzooHealth](#)