



Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update:

March 13, 2020 at 4:00PM: No cases of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) have been confirmed in Berrien County at this time. There are now sixteen (16) cases of COVID-19 in Michigan. Testing is ongoing: 120 people in Michigan have tested negative for COVID-19 as of today.

On March 12th at 11:00PM, Governor Whitmer [announced that she is ordering the closure](#) of all K-12 school buildings, public, private, and boarding, to students starting Monday, March 16 until Sunday, April 5. School buildings are scheduled to reopen on Monday, April 6. Child care facilities, pre-schools, and Head Start programs will remain open during this time, whether they are attached to schools or free standing, however, these entities are able to make individualized decisions about closures if the need arises.

Furthermore, on March 13th, the Governor signed [Executive Order 2020-5](#) to cancel all events over 250 people and all assemblages in shared spaces over 250 people beginning on Friday, March 13 at 5:00pm and ending on Sunday, April 5 at 5:00pm. Under this executive order, all events and shared-space assemblages of more than 250 people are temporarily prohibited in the state. 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. According to the [Executive Order](#), a single shared space "includes but is not limited to a room, hall, cafeteria, auditorium, theater, or gallery. This prohibition does not abridge protections guaranteed by the state or federal constitution under these emergency circumstances."

Recommendations are still in effect for [community mitigation strategies](#) which include the following:

- Cancel or postpone events with more than 100 people in a shared space, such as a large meeting room, auditorium, gymnasium, etc.
- For organizations that serve high-risk populations (those over 60 years and with chronic health conditions), cancel gatherings of more than 10 people whenever possible.
- Individuals at risk of severe illness should stay at home as much as possible and keep away from others who are sick.
- Workplaces should encourage staff to tele-work when feasible, particularly individuals at risk of severe illness. Employers should also limit large work-related gatherings and limit non-essential work travel.
- Implement social distancing measures as feasible, including limiting in-person meetings.



The Berrien County Health Department recommends taking a variety of factors into consideration when planning for canceling or postponing events. Factors to think through include the event/gathering audience (age, health conditions, etc.) and potential for transmission of illness (close contact with people and duration of the event). While we do not have evidence of cases or possible spread locally at this time, we want to reiterate the Governor's recommendations and encourage local individuals and entities to implement them or take additional steps, as is feasible. We also urge that you consult with us as you consider your events and gatherings in the coming weeks.

The situation locally may change quickly. It is important for the community to work together to slow the potential spread of illness and refer to official sources of reliable information.

CDC has published additional [guiding principles and mitigation strategies](#) for communities to follow. Guidance is geared towards individuals, schools/childcare, assisted living facilities, workplaces, community/faith-based organizations, and healthcare settings/long-term care facilities. BCHD's community mitigation approach is focused to slow the transmission of COVID-19, reduce illness and death, while minimizing social and economic impacts.

Response Actions

The Berrien County Health Department has been working quickly to digest and synthesize the implications of the announcements over the past several days and how that will impact our community partners and our community at large.

BCHD continues to coordinate with federal, state, and local officials, as well as institutions, businesses, schools, and community organizations to be ready for additional actions should we have local cases and community transmission.

BCHD has expanded its phone lines to provide an additional resource to those seeking information on COVID-19. Callers may dial **1-800-815-5485** to hear a daily recorded update and to have the option to speak to a staff member or leave a message. Current hours for this hotline are weekdays 8:30 am-5:00 pm. Callers can leave a message over the weekend as well, and urgent messages will be returned as soon as possible. Updates are available at www.bchdmi.org. Community partners can also access us via email at publichealth@bchdmi.org.

BCHD staff are working day and night to monitor this evolving situation and will continue to provide new information to the community as things change. With the large number of community partners we have, we will be exploring hosting multiple calls starting next week. Look for further information regarding upcoming partner calls via email in the near future.



COVID-19 Testing

The Berrien County Health Department is working with health care providers to test individuals as needed. Individuals with concerns or symptoms should call their health care provider first with questions. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, or difficulty breathing. Remember that these symptoms may also be caused by other viruses, such as flu. Additionally, an individual without symptoms is very unlikely to test positive, even with possible exposure.

It is anticipated that testing will increase in our area, as well as in the rest of the country, which will result in further confirmed cases being announced.

As a service to the community, Spectrum Health is offering free COVID-19 virtual screenings 24/7 to people in the state of Michigan who are experiencing symptoms at 616.391.2380. Callers will be scheduled for a free virtual screening and Spectrum Health doctors will determine if further testing or evaluation is needed.

Prevention

There is currently no vaccine available to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. Information about prevention from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is available in English, Chinese, and Spanish.

- **Clean your hands often.**
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for **at least 20 seconds** especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol**. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.**
- **Stay home when you are sick**, except to get medical care. Call ahead before going to your healthcare provider. Learn [what to do if you are sick](#).
- **Cover your cough or sneeze** with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. Immediately wash your hands.
- **Clean and disinfect.**



- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- If surfaces are dirty, clean them. Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- A list of disinfectants for use against SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes the COVID-19 disease) is available [from the Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#). This list includes many commonly used products.
- **Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.**
 - If you are NOT sick: You **should not** wear a facemask unless you are caring for someone who is sick (and they are not able to wear a facemask). Facemasks are in short supply and they should be saved for caregivers and healthcare providers.
 - If you are sick, you should wear a facemask when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then you should do your best to cover your coughs and sneezes, and people who are caring for you should wear a facemask if they enter your room.

Older adults and people who have severe underlying chronic medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness. [View additional prevention steps from CDC](#) for people at higher risk. Consult with your health care provider for more steps you may be able to take to protect yourself.

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

- Berrien updates: <http://www.bchdmi.org>
- Michigan updates: www.michigan.gov/coronavirus
- National updates: <http://www.cdc.gov/COVID19>

Fact Sheets from Berrien County Health Department:

- [How to Be Prepared for Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Information for High-Risk Groups \(Seniors & Chronic Conditions\)](#)
- [Information for Long-Term Care Facilities](#)
- [Flattening the Curve: Community Mitigation of COVID-19](#)



Information in Multiple Languages:

- [COVID-19 Fact Sheet from Michigan Department of Health and Human Services \(MDHHS\)](#) - English, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, Arabic

CDC Guidance Information For:

- [Health Care Providers](#)
- [Travelers](#)
- [Schools & Childcare](#)
- [Colleges & Universities](#)
- [Businesses](#)
- [Community & Faith-Based Organizations](#)

Information current as of March 13th, 2020.