



## JOINT NEWS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Berrien County declares local state of emergency in response to Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic**

St Joseph, Michigan – In support of the recommendation by the Berrien County Emergency Management Coordinator and the Berrien County Public Health Officer, the Chair of the Board of Commissioners today declared a local State Of Emergency in response to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

"Just as we did in the 2018 Flood, we are looking for all available resources to address the growing community needs in Berrien County to help combat this health crisis," said Board of Commissioner Chair, Mac Elliott.

"We are working diligently to slow the spread of COVID-19 in Berrien County and this declaration will provide additional support to help ensure we can meet the needs of our community," said Nicki Britten, health officer, Berrien County Health Department.

"We recommended this declaration so we can build a support organization behind us to keep up with ordering and receiving deliveries of scarce equipment, be able to bring volunteers on board when we need them, and begin to build a team that is focused on economic and community recovery," said Captain Rockey Adams, the Emergency Management Coordinator.

With this declaration, the Berrien County Emergency Operations Center will continue to operate and support the efforts of the Berrien County Health Department and Spectrum Health Lakeland and add to the response resources already committed to dealing with this pandemic response.

At this time, Berrien County currently has 11 positive cases of COVID-19 and is seeing an increase in community spread throughout the county. Berrien County will continue to build on the work already underway and make available all county and local resources to deal with this ongoing health crisis.

All residents are urged to practice social distancing and heed the Executive Orders in place, including the most recent "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order issued by Governor Gretchen Whitmer earlier this week. The collective goal of all county partners remains to slow the spread of the virus as much as possible in an effort to reduce excessive strain on our healthcare system and protect our community's most vulnerable populations.

Residents who are feeling sick should stay home and contact their healthcare provider by phone for guidance. Residents with symptoms of COVID-19, including fever, cough, or shortness of breath are encouraged to call the free Spectrum Health virtual screening phone line that is available to all Michigan residents at (616) 391-2380 to see if testing is necessary.

Everyone is encouraged to keep following these basic prevention steps to prevent the spread of the virus:

- wash your hands often with soap and water;
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands;
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing;
- avoid shaking hands;
- keep at least six feet apart from others when in public;
- avoid contact with people who are sick; and
- stay home when you are sick.

The Berrien County Health Department and Spectrum Health Lakeland continue to work closely to slow the spread of illness and provide reliable and accurate information to the public. Stay up-to-date with COVID-19 in Berrien County by visiting [www.bchdmi.org](http://www.bchdmi.org) or [www.spectrumhealthlakeland.org](http://www.spectrumhealthlakeland.org).

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