

COVID-19 BACKGROUND (current as of March 19, 2020)

NOTE: The information herein is current as of 8:00 p.m. on March 19, 2020, but please know that as this is a rapidly evolving situation; there will continue to be updates and changes. This document includes all of the information the governor's office provided on March 17, 2020 in addition to updates occurring since then. New information is highlighted.

OVERVIEW

COVID-19 is a virus that has not previously infected humans and information about its rate of spread and its effects is still largely unknown, which makes it incredibly important to be highly cautious in dealing with the current situation. On March 11th, the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic. Here's an update on the work done so far, the current status of COVID-19 in Wisconsin, and the steps being taken to keep families and communities safe.

Please continue to find the most current information on the [DHS website](#), which has guidance that is updated regularly for travel, self-quarantine, and school districts, among other important information. We have also created a new site that houses resources to help direct folks to resources at our state agencies. Please share this website widely as well: wisconsin.gov/covid19.

As of today, March 19th, there have been 155 people who tested positive for COVID-19 in Wisconsin. On March 19th, Gov. Evers and the DHS confirmed two deaths in Wisconsin due to COVID-19. Gov. Evers, the Department of Health Services (DHS), and the State agencies are taking this issue very seriously and precautions are being taken across Wisconsin. Gov. Evers, his administration, and staff have also been working with partners at the local and federal levels to provide the most accurate, up-to-date information possible.

We are seeing community spread of COVID-19 in Wisconsin. This means that there are people who have tested positive who have no exposures to a known case nor did they travel to a location where there is known community spread. We have cases in Milwaukee, Dane, and Kenosha counties indicating that there is community spread happening in Wisconsin. Social distancing will help keep you, your family, and our community from increased risk of exposure.

UPDATE ON ACTIONS THUS FAR

Earlier this month, Gov. Evers directed the DHS to provide the public and legislators from across the state an informational briefing and to give an update on the status of COVID-19. On March 13th, the governor again directed the DHS to provide an updated informational briefing (via webinar) for legislators to occur on March 18th. Over the past few weeks, the DHS has also hosted regular informational calls to provide updates to members of the media so we can ensure folks across our state are receiving the most current information we have available. Gov. Evers joined the DHS informational briefing on both [March 16th](#) and [March 17th](#) to take questions from members of the press about recent announcements. In addition to the FAQ sections below, please feel free to consult the question and answer section of these briefings during which Gov. Evers and Sec.-designee Palm, among others, answer questions from members of the press.

Gov. Evers has also participated in discussions with Vice President Mike Pence and senior administration officials to receive updates on the White House Coronavirus Task Force and to share how Wisconsin and other states are responding to COVID-19. Addressing public health issues like COVID-19 requires collaboration and communication to ensure efforts are efficient and effective. Members of Gov. Evers' administration have been in regular contact with other elected officials and partners at the local, state, and federal levels, and are continuing to work together on preventing and responding to COVID-19. On March 14th, Gov. Evers sent a letter to U.S. Sens. Ron Johnson and Tammy Baldwin requesting their

support for the bipartisan legislation moving through Congress that will provide free coronavirus testing, paid emergency leave, bolsters food security programs, and enhances unemployment insurance, among other important initiatives to help support our state's efforts to respond to COVID-19.

Making sure that folks have access to the healthcare resources, care, and treatment they need is critically important in working to manage the spread of COVID-19 in Wisconsin. On March 6th, Gov. Evers and Insurance Commissioner Mark Afable asked health plan issuers to help Wisconsinites access testing and treatment for COVID-19 and to ensure that healthcare is as accessible as possible as we continue to monitor this situation.

Gov. Evers and Commissioner Afable requested that health plan issuers waive cost-sharing for COVID-19-related laboratory testing and radiology services, prepare for increased demand for telehealth services, review readiness and responsiveness plans to new COVID-19 cases, and that health plan issuers cover the immunization for COVID-19—in the event that an immunization becomes available—at no cost-sharing for covered members. They also asked that health plan issuers be flexible on prescription drug supply limitations and early refill limitations so folks can get their medication as quickly as possible and without worrying about increased exposure or risk.

The governor and our office have also been working with U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin to help secure federal funding to support our efforts in responding to COVID-19 in Wisconsin. On March 11th, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that Wisconsin would be receiving more than \$10.2 million to support our response and prevention efforts for COVID-19. Gov. Evers and his administration are working quickly to determine how to best allocate these resources toward prevention and response across our state.

On March 11th, state agency employees also received an update on COVID-19 in Wisconsin and its effects on our workforce. On March 12th, Gov. Evers signed [Executive Order #72](#) declaring a public health emergency in Wisconsin and hosted a press conference giving an update to the people of Wisconsin about COVID-19. Executive Order #72 directs the DHS to take all necessary and appropriate measures to prevent and respond to incidents of COVID-19 in Wisconsin, and suspends any administrative rules that the DHS finds would increase the health threat or prevent, hinder, or delay our response to the COVID-19 emergency. It also directs the Adjutant General of the Wisconsin National Guard to assist in our response to the public health emergency. Additionally, the DHS also issued new guidance regarding mass gatherings, travel, and long-term care and assisted living facilities. Please see the [DHS website](#) for these updates.

Ensuring the people of Wisconsin have continued utility access is critically important to ensure folks have access to basic necessities as the state continues plans to prevent further spread of COVID-19 through promoting social distancing, mandating school closures, etc. Thus, following the governor's public health emergency declaration, the Wisconsin Public Service Commission [directed](#) water, electric, and natural gas utilities to cease disconnecting residential service for nonpayment and also directed utilities reconnect services to dwellings that had been disconnected until the state public health emergency is lifted.

Working to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is a top priority, especially as it relates to limiting potential exposure at correctional facilities and putting other inmates at risk. Thus, on March 13th, the Department of Corrections (DOC) announced it is taking extra precautions by temporarily suspending visits at all DOC institutions in an effort to protect correctional workers and staff and the individuals who are in the DOC's care. A copy of DOC's announcement can be found [here](#). The DOC also announced they are temporarily waiving \$7 co-pay for individuals experiencing fever, cough, or shortness of breath to receive medical treatment.

Gov. Evers also directed the DHS to close all Wisconsin K-12 schools—both public and private—as part of the state’s ongoing efforts to respond to and contain the spread of COVID-19 in Wisconsin. The mandated closure was effective at the end of the school day on March 18th. Gov. Evers announced on March 17th that schools will be closed for the duration of the public health emergency, indefinitely extending the previously announced April 6th resumption date. A copy of the DHS’ order can be found [here](#). The governor’s office has received several inquiries from educators, parents, education stakeholders, and legislators about the order and its implications. To help provide answers, the governor’s office has prepared a list of frequently asked questions and answers below. You can also find additional information on the Department of Public Instruction’s [website](#).

K-12 SCHOOL CLOSURE FAQs
<p>Can schools close before Wednesday?</p> <p>Schools districts, particularly those in counties with reported cases of COVID-19, may choose to close earlier than Wednesday, March 18th. The CDC has issued guidance for schools to consider when making this decision: Considerations for School Closure.</p>
<p>Where can I find out if schools will stay closed after April 6?</p> <p>Governor Evers and the Department of Health Services (DHS) will continue to put out the latest information on social media, as well as issuing media releases to ensure the public is aware of the latest decisions and guidance. Additionally, the DPI will continue to share information with schools around the state. Families should also look for information from their local schools, who may also make decisions related to additional closures.</p>
<p>Can schools do virtual learning?</p> <p>Yes. The order does not prevent a school from providing virtual instruction to pupils. The DPI provided information and resources to school districts who plan to use virtual learning time as allowed under the state administrative code provisions.</p>
<p>Will the required instruction hours be modified?</p> <p>Districts have the ability to request a waiver from the DPI regarding hours of instruction. Whether school closures are mandated by the state or locally determined due to COVID-19, the DPI will address the issue of waivers based on the severity and length of the situation. The DPI has stated they will be empathetic to the ability of a district to reasonably meet the hours requirement. The DPI does not yet know the impact of closures or their length. The DPI will do whatever they can to expedite the process surrounding waivers and meet the needs of school districts.</p>
<p>How will students who qualify for free or reduced lunch be supported during the closure?</p> <p>State and federal leaders are working to identify ways to support serving children meals during periods of school closures due to COVID-19. As a resource, the DPI has developed a webpage for options for serving children meals in a non-congregate setting in the event of a school closure due to COVID-19.</p> <p>The DPI submitted a Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) waiver to USDA. This request is to waive the congregate feeding requirement for SFSP meals during unanticipated school closures at school and non-school sites during a public health emergency, such as COVID-19. The waiver is for all SFSP sponsors in good standing in the state. The public notice informing the public about the proposed waiver is posted at https://dpi.wi.gov/community-nutrition/sfsp.</p>
<p>What supports are available for students with an IEP?</p> <p>The federal Department of Education (ED) issued new resources around protecting student privacy and addressing questions regarding serving students with disabilities during the COVID-19 outbreak. If a school is closed for an extended period of time (generally, more than 10 consecutive school days) and educational services are not provided to other students, then services are not required for students with disabilities during the closure. Once school resumes, local educational agencies must make every effort to implement individualized education plans, and should consider, on an individualized basis, whether and to what extent compensatory services are required due to the closure. If a school provides services through virtual learning, the school must ensure students with disabilities have equal access to the same opportunities, and that to the greatest extent possible, special education and related services are provided. Once school resumes, local educational agencies must make every effort to implement individualized education plans, and should consider, on an individualized basis, whether and to what extent compensatory services are required due to the closure.</p>
<p>Will school playgrounds be open?</p>

<p>Individual districts or schools will make determinations about access to school grounds. In doing so, they should follow recommendations and guidance from the CDC, Department of Health Services, and local public health officials. However, school grounds and facilities cannot be used for instructional purposes or for extracurricular activities. This includes athletics practices or other extracurriculars that regularly occur on school grounds.</p>
<p>What are the implications for state testing/assessments? U.S. Department of Education (ED) indicates their goal is for all states to meet the assessment requirements under section 1111(b)(2) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The DPI asked each of its assessment vendors to determine whether the assessment windows can be extended. The DPI is working with these vendors to identify the feasibility of this option and will relay information to districts as soon as it becomes available. Please know the DPI is actively exploring all options, including a waiver, from ED if closures prevent statewide testing.</p>
<p>What are the implications for childcare/extended day programs? The order only applies to pupil instruction and extracurricular activities, not to childcare functions. For programs run in school buildings, school leaders will make determinations regarding childcare or extended day programs, and families should look to their local provider for the latest information. Early Care and Education providers participating in 3K and 4K programs offsite may continue to serve those children in their child care setting at their discretion.</p>
<p>Are all athletics and club sports canceled? The order requires all K-12 school buildings to be closed to extracurricular activities. If your child is involved in athletics or extra-curriculars that regularly take place in a non-school building, you should contact the provider organization regarding cancellations and follow DHS guidance regarding social distancing.</p>
<p>Will student graduations be affected? This closure order currently only extends through April 6; however, the current public health emergency is a rapidly evolving situation, and we will be reassessing our recommendations and requirements for schools on an ongoing basis in order to protect the health of students, educators, staff, and the public. Districts may also make independent determinations about their planned events. Please look for updates from both the DHS and local schools and districts.</p>
<p>What conversations should parents have with their children at home? The DPI recommends the following resource: Talking to Children about COVID-19 (Coronavirus) - A Parent Resource.</p>
<p>Does the order prohibit school staff from reporting to work? No. The order only applies to pupil instruction and extracurricular activities, not to other functions. School leaders will make determinations on a case-by-case basis regarding access for other purposes, such as virtual learning, cleaning, food service, payroll and clerical functions. If school facilities are used for other purposes, districts should follow guidance from public health officials to ensure that appropriate health and safety measures are in place.</p>
<p>Will hourly staff be paid? Gov. Evers recognizes that the closure presents challenges to students, families, educators, staff and districts, including financial impact. Local districts will need to determine how to best address the impacts of closures on hourly staff. Gov. Evers encourage districts and all employers to take whatever steps they can to minimize the economic impact to workers due to public health closures.</p>

Grocery store inventories have been especially affected by COVID-19 as people seek to keep a two-week supply of food and necessities. Consequently, on March 14th, the governor directed the Department of Transportation (DOT) to issue COVID-19 Relief Effort Supply Permits for transporting inventory to grocery retailers affected by COVID-19. The permits allow for additional supplies to be efficiently transported over Wisconsin interstates and most highways and local roadways by increasing weight limits and waiving truck driver hours of service limitations. More information can be found on DOT's website [here](#).

In addition to declaring a public health emergency, Executive Order #72 also declares that Wisconsin is experiencing a period of "abnormal economic disruption" because of COVID-19. This declaration authorizes DATCP to enforce Wisconsin's [price gouging statute](#) until the emergency has ended. In addition to price gouging, DATCP remains the agency charged with investigating scams and other

fraudulent trade practices in Wisconsin. If you receive any constituent contacts related to suspected scams, fraud, false marketing claims, price gouging or other consumer complaints related to COVID-19, please refer those contacts to DATCP's Consumer Protection Hotline at DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov or (800) 422-7128, or have them file an [online complaint](#).

As you are likely aware, 38 Wisconsinites were aboard the Grand Princess cruise ship, which was quarantined due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Gov. Evers, the Wisconsin National Guard, and the DHS, in collaboration with partners at the federal level, have been working with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the White House to get the necessary information we need to bring these Wisconsinites home as quickly and safely as possible. Through direct outreach by the DHS and calls into the governor's office, we have also learned from passengers and family members concerning reports about conditions and that some passengers have needed medical accommodations. Our team has been working with the HHS to improve conditions and get those accommodations and medications to the passengers as soon as possible.

Initially, the HHS communicated to the governor's office that HHS would transport passengers to Wisconsin at which time the Wisconsin National Guard would transport passengers to their homes for self-isolation. Given the initial lack of details from HHS, on March 13th, Gov. Evers directed the Wisconsin National Guard to instead develop its own plans to go to all five sites to bring these Wisconsinites home. Nearly 30 Soldiers and Airmen from the Wisconsin National Guard were mobilized to state active duty after the governor declared a public health emergency, and they were standing by to transport the passengers upon landing at the National Guard's Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center in Camp Douglas, Wisconsin.

On March 16th, Gov. Evers announced 29 Wisconsin residents who were aboard the Grand Princess cruise ship were safely transported back to Wisconsin around 4:18 am Monday morning. Two other passengers chose to remain in quarantine in Texas under the custody of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HSS), citing personal reasons. Upon return, Adjutant General Paul Knapp welcomed Wisconsinites home on behalf of Gov. Evers. Passengers received a welcome-home packet which included a letter from the governor, information about their 14 days of quarantine, and how to contact their local health department or the DHS with any questions. The governor's office has also provided direct contact information for our constituent services director to assist in providing support and assistance to help ensure passengers' transition and return to Wisconsin is as seamless and safe as possible. Upon landing at the National Guard's Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center in Camp Douglas, Wisconsin, Guard members transported passengers home in state vans.

As of the morning of March 16th, none of the returning Wisconsin citizens have tested positive for COVID-19 and all are asymptomatic, but the residents will follow Center for Disease Control and Wisconsin Department of Health Services protocols and continue to self-quarantine for the requisite 14-day period. The Soldiers and Airmen involved will self-monitor for 14 days upon the conclusion of their mission. Gov. Evers, our staff, the Wisconsin National Guard, and the DHS will continue to work with HHS to bring the remaining seven Wisconsinites home as quickly as possible and will provide updates as we get more information.

On March 19th, the Wisconsin National Guard announced that it has mobilized approximately 300 troops to help provide further state support, if needed. The Wisconsin National Guard's action today is pursuant to Gov. Evers' [executive order](#) declaring a state of emergency, at which time he authorized the Adjutant General to activate the Wisconsin National Guard as necessary to help assist the state's response to the public health emergency. See the Wisconsin National Guard's announcement [here](#).

On March 16th, Gov. Evers directed the DHS to issue an order banning mass gatherings—both public and private—of 50 people or more effective at 12:01 a.m. on Tuesday, March 17th. A new order was issued on March 17th banning mass gatherings—both public and private—of 10 people or more effective at 5:00 p.m. on March 17th. Critical infrastructure and services such as grocery stores, food pantries, childcare centers, pharmacies, and hospitals, among other venues, are currently exempt from this order. “Mass gathering” is any planned or spontaneous, public or private event or convening that will bring together or is likely to bring together 10 or more people in a single room or single confined or enclosed space at the same time. This is not a decision the governor took lightly, but the safety of Wisconsinites, their families, and our communities has and must continue to be our top priority.

MASS GATHERINGS RESTRICTION FAQs
<p>What is a “mass gathering”? The order defines a “mass gathering” as any planned or spontaneous, public or private event or convening that will bring together or is likely to bring together 10 or more people in a single room or single confined or enclosed space at the same time.</p>
<p>Why are mass gatherings being prohibited? DHS is intending to slow the spread of this epidemic to a level such that the healthcare system is able to maintain quality care for patients. Mass gatherings during an outbreak of a particularly infectious disease such as COVID-19 have the potential to result in large numbers of ill people that can quickly overwhelm local hospitals.</p>
<p>What types of spaces are subject to the order? This order applies to all spaces where 10 or more people may gather, unless they are specifically exempt. This order may include, but is not limited to mass gatherings at: public or private schools, auditoriums, theaters, movie theaters, museums, stadiums, arenas, conference rooms, meeting halls, exhibition centers, taverns, health and fitness centers, recreation centers, licensed pools, and places of worship and religious gatherings.</p>
<p>Are any spaces exempt? Yes – The order specifically exempts the following spaces:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Airports as long as restaurants within them comply with the restrictions below ○ Mass transportation • Public, private, and charter schools only for noninstructional purposes, such as medication pickup, childcare services, providing meals, and when operating as polling places • Childcare locations (including those that operate within a facility that is otherwise prohibited), residential care centers, and group homes. • Hotels and motels as long as restaurants comply with the restrictions below. • Government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Military and National Guard facilities ○ Law enforcement, jails, secure treatment centers, and correctional facilities, including any facility operated by the Department of Corrections, and any facility used to respond to natural disasters or public health emergencies ○ State and local government facilities, including government service centers, unless prohibited elsewhere in this order or another order ○ Facilities operated by the Wisconsin Legislature or Wisconsin Court System • Relief Facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Food pantries and shelter facilities, including day centers, for individuals and families. • Residential Buildings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All residential buildings • Healthcare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All health care facilities, including hospitals, medical facilities, home health agencies, personal care agencies, hospices, adult family homes, and pharmacies ○ Long-term care and assisted living facilities, as long as the facility follows all current Department of Health Services’ Recommendations for Prevention of COVID-

<p>19 in Long-Term Care Facilities and Assisted Living Facilities and all Centers for Disease Control recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alcohol and drug treatment centers or similar facilities ● Facilities for Voting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Libraries when operating as polling places ● Commercial and Non-Profit Entities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Office spaces. Such facilities must implement social distancing, including teleworking, as much as practicable. ○ Manufacturing, processing, distribution, and production facilities ○ Utility facilities ○ Job centers <p><i>Please see FAQs below for additional, specific exemptions and guidance. DHS guidance regarding social distancing should still be followed in these spaces.</i></p>
<p>Does my workplace have to close?</p> <p>It depends – If your workplace falls into one of the exemptions listed above, your workplace can remain open subject to any applicable conditions in the order. For example, office spaces, manufacturing facilities, processing facilities, and retail establishments are exempt. Employers should seek guidance from their local public health departments if they have questions and should follow DHS guidance regarding social distancing in the workplace.</p>
<p>Are banks required to close?</p> <p>No. Banks are not required to close. The Department of Financial Institutions has encouraged banks and credit unions to be proactive in preventing disruption of operations.</p>
<p>Does this order apply to having 10 or more people my home?</p> <p>No. Residential facilities are exempt.</p>
<p>Does this order move up the school closure timeline?</p> <p>A previous order mandating the closure of public and private schools at 5pm on Wednesday, March 18th is still in effect. The previous anticipated re-opening date of April 6th has been rescinded. All schools should remain closed for instructional and extracurricular activities for the duration of the public health emergency or until a subsequent order lifts this specific restriction.</p>
<p>Will hospitals remain open?</p> <p>Hospitals, medical facilities, and pharmacies are exempt from the order and will remain open.</p>
<p>Are dental offices exempt?</p> <p>Yes. Dental offices fall under the healthcare exemption.</p>
<p>Are restaurants, bars, hotels and motels required to close?</p> <p>Restaurants may remain open for take-out or delivery service only. No seating may be provided, and food may not be consumed in the restaurant. Restaurants must preserve social distancing of six feet between customers during pick up. Hotels and motels may remain open, but their restaurant facilities must comply with these restrictions. Bars must close.</p>
<p>Will Senior Centers remain open?</p> <p>Senior Centers will not remain open unless they are located in a government facility.</p>
<p>Will grocery stores remain open?</p> <p>Grocery stores, convenience stores, and farmer’s markets are exempt from the order as long as: (1) they close all seating intended for consuming food; (2) self-service operations of salad bars and buffets is ceased; and (3) customers are prohibited from self-dispensing all unpackaged food.</p>
<p>Will retail stores remain open?</p> <p>Retail establishments where large numbers of people may be present but are not generally within arm’s length of each other for more than 10 minutes may remain open. Indoor shopping malls must close. This exemption covers retail establishments such as salons, banks, and stores.</p>
<p>Are bakeries considered restaurants?</p> <p>Bakeries and other food retail and food processing facilities are exempt.</p>
<p>Does it matter if the gathering is held outdoors?</p> <p>The order applies to gatherings of 10 or more people that are held in a single room or single confined or enclosed space at the same time.</p>
<p>Should mass gatherings smaller than 10 be canceled?</p> <p>Voluntary cancelation, closure, or limitations on size of gathering beyond the requirements of the order are permitted.</p>

<p>All gatherings that bring together or are likely to bring together less than 10 people in a single room or confined or enclosed space at the same time must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve social distancing of 6 feet between people, and • Follow all other public health recommendations issued by the Wisconsin Department of Health Service and Center for Disease Control.
<p>Will hourly staff at affected businesses be paid?</p> <p>Governor Evers recognizes that the closure presents challenges to businesses across Wisconsin, including financial impact. Individual businesses will need to determine how to best address the impacts of closures on hourly staff. Governor Evers encourages business to take whatever steps they can to minimize the economic impact to workers due to public health closures, and he will work with legislative leaders to provide assistance to Wisconsinites impacted by workplace closures.</p>
<p>Can local government bodies of 10 or more people meet?</p> <p>The order specifically exempts local government facilities, so that local governments can continue to function. They should follow DHS guidance regarding social distancing, cleaning, and other measures to protect the health and safety of those in attendance. The Wisconsin Department of Justice has provided additional guidance on this topic.</p>
<p>How long will this order remain in effect?</p> <p>The order will remain in effect for the duration of the public health emergency and will be re-evaluated as updated information becomes available.</p>
<p>How will the order be enforced?</p> <p>Violation or obstruction of this order is punishable by imprisonment, fines, or both. Wis. Stat. § 252.25.</p>

On March 15th, the Department of Children and Families issued guidance for childcare, head start, and pre-K program providers. They also announced rule waivers for childcare providers and Wisconsin Shares eligibility. Consistent with Gov. Evers' orders on mass gathering, on March 18th, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) issued new guidance for childcare, Head Start, and 3K/4K programs. We need to be able to rely on healthcare workers and first responders to keep our families, our neighbors, and our communities safe. Thus, we are currently not closing childcare centers because we need those centers to stay open for our healthcare workers, first responders, among other essential workers to help minimize disruption to those essential services. At this time, childcare centers may not operate with more than 10 staff present at a time and may not operate with more than 50 children present at a time. Voluntary closure beyond the scope of this order is allowed and left to the decision of individual providers. Find DCF's guidance [here](#).

Gov. Evers, our staff, and our administration are continuing to work on U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Disaster Assistance. This is a top priority for the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) and Wisconsin Emergency Management and they are actively working to collect all the needed information from regional economic development directors across the state in order to make the SBA declaration request.

Additionally, on March 18th, the WEDC announced a \$5-million grant program, Small Business 20/20, which will provide grants of up to \$20,000 to targeted businesses with 20 employees or less to cover rent and meet payroll expenses, including paid leave. The grants will be deployed by partnering with state's 23 community development financial institutions (CDFIs). Because the CDFIs have pre-existing relationships with many of these small businesses, CDFIs will be able to provide the grants quickly and directly to their clients. Find more information on Small Business 20/20 [here](#).

The Department of Financial Institutions (DFI) also issued emergency guidance on character and fitness requirements for all payday and licensed lenders in Wisconsin. The DFI cautioned payday and licensed lenders that increasing interest rates, fees or borrowing costs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic could result in license suspension or revocation. Find DFI's release and guidance [here](#). The DFI also announced emergency guidance on remote online notarization to allow people across Wisconsin to access

notarization services while ensuring the integrity of the notarization process. The DFI's emergency guidance can be found [here](#).

Additionally, on March 18th, Gov. Evers issued an emergency order waiving work search and modifying availability requirements for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits for workers affected by COVID-19. Gov. Evers' order waives the requirement that (UI) claimants conduct at least four weekly search actions during the COVID-19 emergency while ensuring that claimants are considered available for work (and therefore eligible for benefits) if they are eligible for but out of work due to COVID-19.

On March 17th, the DHS and Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene to move to tiered COVID-19 testing to manage capacity. Despite The Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH) significantly increasing their capacity for COVID-19 testing, the number of testing specimens being received far exceeds their daily capacity. In order to conserve supplies for testing, WSLH and DHS are now prioritizing two tiers of cases for testing:

Tier One (Individuals who):

- are critically ill and receiving ICU level care with unexplained viral pneumonia or respiratory failure
- are hospitalized (non-ICU) with fever or signs and symptoms of lower respiratory tract illness (cough, shortness of breath) and either known exposure to a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient or travel to an area with sustained community transmission

Tier Two (Individuals who):

- are hospitalized (non-ICU) with unexplained fever and signs/symptoms of lower respiratory tract illness
- are health care workers with unexplained fever and signs/symptoms of a lower-respiratory illness, regardless of hospitalization

Test requests that do not meet these criteria will be sent to other labs in the state and country for testing, resulting in longer wait times. Patients without symptoms and patients with mild upper respiratory symptoms who are not health care workers should not be tested in order to ensure that there is capacity to test ill people.

The DHS will continue to hold regular informational briefings for members of the media as has been the case for the past several weeks to help ensure the most accurate and up-to-date information is consistently reported out to the public.

In addition to these efforts, effective on March 13th, the Wisconsin State Capitol suspended all Capitol tours until further notice. As of March 16th, signage has been posted at all entrances of the Capitol advising against entering if persons are exhibiting symptoms or meet other criteria described. Additionally, on March 14th, the DOA sent out correspondence to state agency employees announcing telecommuting as an option for employees whose job duties are conducive to working from home. Supervisors will approve telecommuting on case-by-case bases. State agencies are otherwise continuing normal operations at this time. The governor's office, the DOA, and the DHS continue to provide guidance for state employees and protecting the health and wellbeing of individuals who may be at a higher risk. Agencies are also continuing to review their continuity of operations plans to ensure that the business of the people of Wisconsin can continue.

NEXT STEPS

Gov. Evers, the DHS, and the governor's administration are continuing to receive consistent updates on the status of COVID-19. The governor's office will continue sharing information and provide updates as quickly as new actions or information become available. Please continue reaching out to the governor's legislative team and the DHS legislative team with any questions.

Additionally, we ask for your assistance in helping us disseminate accurate, up-to-date information so our constituents and members of the public can make informed decisions and keep themselves, family members, and neighbors safe. Please also continue to share any and all public health or COVID-19 related content from the governor's and DHS' Facebook and Twitter accounts to ensure your constituents and members of the public continue to receive accurate and current information about the status of COVID-19 in Wisconsin.

Please continue to share information with members of the public on how to prevent illness or avoid exposure to this virus. In the case of COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) currently advises that common symptoms include flu-like symptoms (fever (100° F or higher), cough or sore throat, headache or body aches, and in some cases diarrhea and vomiting) or symptoms of respiratory illness (fever (100° F or higher), cough, and shortness of breath).

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. In order to slow or stop the spread of these illnesses, it is critical to follow the below instructions, which is [guidance from the CDC as of 3/11/2020](#). However, as a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are able.
- 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 CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.
 - CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
 - 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 patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 (at home or in a health care setting).
- 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.
 - 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.
 - For information about handwashing, see CDC's Handwashing website.
 - For information specific to healthcare providers, see CDC's Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings.