

Responding to COVID-19 in Pennsylvania

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The 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus that causes respiratory illness in people and can spread from person-to-person. This virus was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

All Pennsylvanians have an important role to play in stopping the spread of COVID-19 and saving lives. Here are resources to help individuals, families, and businesses do their part.

Keep checking back. This guide will be kept up to date as resources and information change.

You can find up-to-date information about cases in Pennsylvania at on.pa.gov/coronavirus.

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Popular Resources

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- Download Graphics and Posters
- Information for Travelers
- Request a Waiver to Keep Physical Locations Open
- Translated COVID-19 Resources

Symptoms and Prevention

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include: fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

Symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure. Reported illnesses have ranged from people with little to no symptoms to people being severely ill and dying.

Human coronaviruses spread just like the flu or a cold:

- Through the air by coughing or sneezing.
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands.
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it.
- Occasionally, fecal contamination.

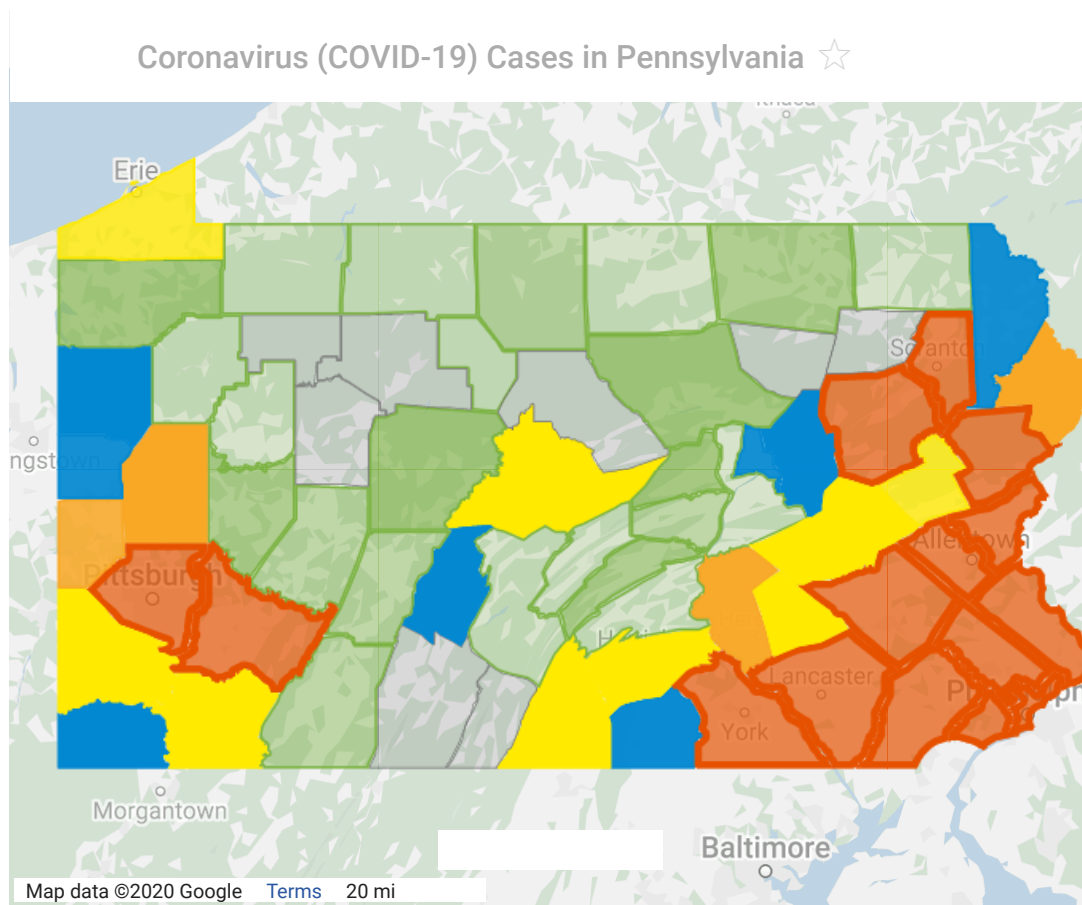
Here's how you can protect yourself:

- Cover coughs or sneezes with your elbow. Do not use your hands!
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Clean surfaces frequently, including countertops, light switches, cell phones, remotes, and other frequently touched items.
- Contain: if you are sick, stay home until you are feeling better.

Cases in Pennsylvania

The Department of Health COVID-19 website is updated daily with total cases, number of counties with cases, and number of positive and negative tests.

Here is a map of COVID-19 cases in Pennsylvania:



Statewide Mitigation

The entire commonwealth is now under statewide COVID-19 mitigation. Here is what statewide mitigation means.

General Guidance

- Freedom of travel will remain, but all Pennsylvanians are asked to refrain from non-essential travel.
- The Wolf Administration strongly encourages the suspension of large gatherings, events, conferences of more than 10 people, and per White House guidelines, ask that individuals and groups cancel any gatherings planned over the next eight weeks.
- The Wolf Administration encourages religious leaders to exercise discretion in order to mitigate the spread of illness.

Businesses

- Governor Tom Wolf ordered all non-life-sustaining businesses in Pennsylvania to close their physical locations as of 8 p.m. March 19, 2020 to slow the spread of COVID-19. Enforcement actions against businesses that do not close physical locations will begin Monday, March 23, at 8:00 AM.
- The governor also required restaurants and bars to stop all dine-in services. Enforcement for establishments with a liquor license began at 8 p.m. March 18, and enforcement for all other food establishments will begin at 8 p.m. March 19. Food establishments can offer carry-out, delivery, and drive-through food and beverage service, including alcohol.

More information about the order can be found [here](#).

To request a waiver to keep your location open, please submit this form. All decisions will be communicated by email and will balance public health, safety, and the security of our industry supply chains supporting life-sustaining businesses.

A list of life-sustaining businesses can be found [here](#) (updated March 24, 2020).

Schools

- All schools statewide will remain closed until further notice.

Care Facilities

- Restricted visitors in state centers to ensure health and safety for individuals with an intellectual disability.
- Restricted visitors in assisted living and personal care homes to minimize exposure to our seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- All child care centers licensed by the commonwealth close as of Tuesday, March 17 and will be re-evaluated at the conclusion of the 14-day statewide closures. Philadelphia County families should check with their child care facilities to determine status of business operations.
- Adult day care centers, adult training facilities, Provocations facilities, LIFE centers and Senior Community Centers close beginning Tuesday, March 17, and will be re-evaluated at the conclusion of the 14-day statewide closures.

Government Services

- Essential state, county, and municipal services will be open: police, fire, emergency medical services, sanitation, and essential services for vulnerable populations.
- A no-visitor policy for correctional facilities and nursing homes has been implemented and will be evaluated for other facilities.

Stay at Home Order

The Stay at Home order now includes these 26 counties: Allegheny, Beaver, Berks, Bucks, Butler, Carbon, Centre, Chester, Cumberland, Dauphin, Delaware, Erie, Lackawanna, Lancaster, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia, Pike, Schuylkill, Washington, Wayne, Westmoreland and York counties.

All stay-at-home orders are now extended through April 30.

All individuals in counties subject to this policy must STAY AT HOME except for certain essential activities and work to provide life-sustaining business and government services.

See Governor Wolf's order and the Secretary of Health's order.

Law enforcement officers should refer to Business Closure Order Enforcement Guidance available online here.

Allowable Activities and Travel

Allowable Individual Activities

Individuals may leave their residence ONLY to perform any of the following allowable individual activities and allowable essential travel.

- Tasks essential to maintain health and safety, or the health and safety of their family or household members (including, but not limited to, pets), such as obtaining medicine or medical supplies, visiting a health care professional, or obtaining supplies they need to work from home.
- Getting necessary services or supplies for themselves or their family or household members, or to deliver those services or supplies to others, such as getting food and household consumer products, pet food, and supplies necessary to maintain the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences. This includes volunteer efforts to distribute meals and other life-sustaining services to those in need.
- Engaging in outdoor activity, such as walking, hiking or running if they maintain social distancing.
- To perform work providing essential products and services at a life-sustaining business (see below for details about life-sustaining business activities).
- To care for a family member or pet in another household.

Allowable Essential Travel

- Any travel related to the provision of or access to the above-mentioned individual activities or life-sustaining business activities (see below for details about life-sustaining business activities).
- Travel to care for elderly, minors, dependents, persons with disabilities, or other vulnerable persons.
- Travel to or from educational institutions for purposes of receiving materials for distance learning, for receiving meals, and any other related services.
- Travel to return to a place of residence from an outside jurisdiction.
- Travel required by law enforcement or court order.

- Travel required for non-residents to return to their place of residence outside the commonwealth.
- Anyone performing life-sustaining travel does not need paperwork to prove the reason for travel.

Exemptions

Life-sustaining Business Activities

Life-sustaining business activities are exempt from this policy. On March 19, Governor Wolf ordered the closure of the physical locations of businesses that are not critical to sustaining life in a pandemic.

Businesses can determine whether they are considered a life-sustaining business, and are therefore allowed to continue in-person, physical operations, by first referring to the Governor's Order and the list of life-sustaining business which is available here. This list has been updated to conform with guidance on Essential Critical Infrastructure issued by the Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency advisory.

If the answer remains unclear, businesses may email the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) for further assistance at the following email account: ra-dcedcs@pa.gov. Inquiries will be answered as promptly as possible.

Businesses that are ordered closed but believe they could help mitigate this crisis by providing a life-sustaining service may apply for a waiver to re-open.

This exemption is subject to continuance of and compliance with the social distancing and other mitigation measures to protect employees and the public, including virtual and telework operations (e.g. work from home) as the primary option when available.

State and Local Governments

Governments should use best judgment in exercising their authorities and issuing implementation directives and guidance. All such decisions should appropriately balance public health and safety while ensuring the continued delivery of critical services and functions. Government employees and contractors should continue to operate under the direction of their supervisors.

Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

Individuals experiencing homelessness are not subject to this policy but are strongly urged to find shelter and government agencies are urged to take steps needed to provide shelter for those individuals.

Displaced Students

International students, foster youth, and any other students who would otherwise experience displacement or homelessness as a result of campus closures are exempt from this policy and may remain in campus housing.

Additional Guidance

Additionally, nothing in this policy shall be construed to affect the operations of:

- Health care or medical service providers.
- Access to life-sustaining services for low-income residents, including, but not limited to, food banks.
- Access to child care services for employees of life-sustaining businesses that remain open as follows: child care facilities operating under the Department of Human Services, Office of Child Development and Early Learning waiver process; group and family child care operating in a residence; and part-day school age programs operating under an exemption from the March 19, 2020 business closure Orders.
- The news media.
- Law enforcement.
- The federal government.
- Religious institutions.

Frequently Asked Questions

How is a Stay at Home order different than previous mitigation efforts?

Previously our focus was placed on institutions (education, businesses, etc.). People were encouraged to stay at home and non-life-sustaining businesses and schools were ordered to close.

While those focuses continue, this effort focuses on individuals. We want to ensure that the maximum number of people self-isolate in their homes to the maximum extent feasible, while enabling life-sustaining services to continue.

How does this order compare to those made in New Jersey, Ohio, and other states?

Other states have made statewide orders. At this point, Pennsylvania's Stay at Home order is limited to counties where community spread is assumed.

Pennsylvania's order is also through at least April 30, whereas the orders in other states may vary in duration.

Pennsylvania has already taken action to close the physical locations of non-life-sustaining businesses, which is part of many of the other state's orders.

Does this align with Philadelphia's Stay at Home order?

The orders are compatible.

Are people going to be cited for leaving their homes?

No. People will not be cited for leaving their homes.

Additionally, people are not required to carry written authorization to travel for the purposes allowed under the order.

How will this order be enforced?

Law enforcement will be focused on making sure that people are aware of the order and informing the public of social distancing practices.

To report a noncompliant business, contact your local law enforcement agency through their non-emergency number. Please do not call 911 or the Department of Community of Economic Development to file reports.

What does this order mean for life-sustaining businesses?

Life-sustaining business activities must abide by this order, but they are permitted to maintain physical operations in support of providing life-sustaining goods and services, while abiding by social distancing and other mitigation measures to ensure employee health and safety.

Are people permitted to travel and do they need an official letter or notification to travel?

Individuals are permitted to travel:

- To return home from an outside jurisdiction including out of state.
- As required by a law enforcement court order.
- To perform tasks essential to maintain health and safety for themselves, their households or household members (including pets).

Official letters or notifications are NOT required to travel.

What does this mean for county and local governments?

Governments should use their best judgment in exercising their authorities and issuing implementation directives and guidance.

All such decisions should appropriately balance public health and safety, while ensuring the continued delivery of critical services and functions. Government employees and contractors should continue to operate under the direction of their supervisors.

How does this order affect the order to close non-life-sustaining businesses?

The Stay at Home order builds on our previous efforts. For now, it is targeted to specific counties where community spread is assumed. The governor's and Secretary of Health's existing orders regarding business closures remain in full effect.

Does the governor's Stay at Home order affect child custody orders?

No, the governor's Stay at Home order does not change or overrule custody orders or agreements. Those orders will continue to govern where the child will reside.

More broadly, a parent should not use the crisis as an excuse to violate court-ordered custody arrangements. If you feel you have an emergency reason (compromised health, etc.), the courts are open for emergency petitions.

What Is Social Distancing?

Social distancing means staying away from close contact in public spaces. It includes actions like staying out of places where lots of people gather and maintaining distance — approximately 6 feet — from others.

Social distancing also includes minimizing contact with people by avoiding public transportation when possible, limiting nonessential travel, working from home, and skipping social gatherings.

All Pennsylvanians should practice social distancing — not just those who are seriously ill or at high risk.

Social distancing is a proven way to slow the spread of pandemics.

For Individuals Unemployment Compensation

If you are employed in Pennsylvania and are unable to work because of COVID-19, you may be eligible for Unemployment Compensation (UC) or Workers' Compensation (WC) benefits.

The following changes to UC have been made to help Pennsylvanians during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- The Waiting Week is suspended. Previously, claimants were not eligible for benefits during their first week of unemployment (the “waiting week”). This has been suspended; eligible claimants may receive benefits for the first week that they are unemployed.
- Work Search and Work Registration requirements are temporarily waived for all UC claimants. Claimants are not required to prove they have applied or searched for a new job to maintain their UC benefits. Claimants are also not required to register with PACareerLink.gov.

Find out more about UC and WC eligibility and how to apply.

Financial Help

Credit Cards

If you have seen a reduction in pay due to COVID-19 and are struggling to make your credit card or loan payments, contact your lender right away.

Regulatory agencies have encouraged financial institutions to work with customers impacted by the coronavirus.

For guidance visit the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau or contact a credit counselor near you.

Mortgage or Rent

If you can't cover your mortgage payment or rent, contact your lender or landlord immediately. Do not wait until you're behind on payments.

Some lenders may work out an agreement with you to waive late fees, set up a repayment plan or offer loan forbearance.

- Mortgage information: visit the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau or find a housing counselor near you.
- Rental assistance: visit the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Utilities

On March 6, 2020, Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission Chairman signed an emergency order prohibiting terminations by utilities that are under the PUC's jurisdiction, including:

- Electric
- Natural Gas
- Water
- Wastewater
- Telecommunication
- Steam

This memorandum is in place for as long as Governor Tom Wolf's Proclamation of Disaster is in effect.

If you are struggling to pay your utility bills, contact your service provider for possible emergency assistance programs.

Food Assistance

Food Pantries

Food pantries continue to operate throughout Pennsylvania, although some have updated hours and all are working on ways to connect people with food without risking contact.

Find a pantry near you, then give them a call to make arrangements.

Find out more about how to get emergency food assistance.

Meals for Students

The Pennsylvania Department of Education received approval from the federal government to allow K-12 schools in Pennsylvania closed due to COVID-19 to serve meals offsite to students.

These meals will be available at no cost to low-income children and make it possible for kids to receive nutritious meals and snacks while schools are temporarily closed.

See a county map of schools and districts distributing meals at no cost to children under age 18. For more information, contact your local school.

Grocery Help for Low-Income Individuals

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps families, older adults, and individuals pay for groceries. Benefits are loaded onto an EBT card, which can then be used to purchase food at grocery stores, supermarkets, some farmers markets, and other stores that accept SNAP.

Emergency SNAP applications can be expedited and issued in five days. Pennsylvanians can apply for SNAP online.

Food for Women, Children, and Families

WIC helps with nutrition for pregnant women, nursing women, postpartum women, and infants and children younger than 5. Benefits can be used for approved grocery items at stores that accept WIC.

Apply by calling the toll-free hotline at 800-WIC-WINS, or start your WIC application online.

Meals for Older Adults

Area Agencies on Aging continue to provide meals for older adults throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Call your local Area Agency on Aging and request that you be connected with meals.

Driver Services

All Driver License Centers and Photo License Centers in Pennsylvania will be closed for two weeks effective close of business on Monday, March 16.

Driver and vehicle online services are still available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. These services include driver's license, photo ID and vehicle registration renewals; driver-history services; changes of address; driver license and vehicle registration restoration letters; ability to pay driver license or vehicle insurance restoration fee; driver license and photo ID duplicates; and driver exam scheduling. There are no additional fees for using online services.

More information on changes being implemented as part of PennDOT's response to COVID-19.

Expiration Dates

Driver licenses, photo ID cards and learner's permits scheduled to expire from March 16, 2020 through April 30, 2020, the expiration date is now extended until May 31, 2020.

Pennsylvania Turnpike

The Pennsylvania Turnpike has temporarily suspended cash payments. Find out more about accepted forms of payment.

Rest Areas

Some PennDOT rest areas and welcome centers statewide will be closed to the public effective 12:01 AM Tuesday, March 17, 2020. See below a list of open locations.

REAL ID

The Department of Homeland Security has postponed the enforcement date for REAL ID from October 1, 2020, to October 1, 2021, in response to COVID-19 and the national emergency declaration. Find out more about REAL ID in Pennsylvania.

State Correctional Institutions

As part of the statewide COVID-19 mitigation effort, visits at all state correctional institutions are cancelled through April 10, 2020.

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections understands the impact that canceling visits could have on inmates and their families and friends.

Video visitation is a free service being offered to inmates and authorized visitors while visitation is suspended at the facilities in response to COVID-19 precautions. Find out how to participate.

Additional Resources

- [Apply for Benefits](#)
- [New Tax Return Filing Deadline](#)
- [Report Neglect or Abuse](#)
- [Substance Use Disorder Resources](#)
- [Mental Health Help](#)
- [New Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program Deadline](#)
- [Tips for Avoiding Scams](#)
- [Tips for Pet Owners](#)
- [Talk to Kids About COVID-19](#)
- [Temporary Medical Marijuana Program Changes](#)
- [New PACE Program Deadline](#)
- [New Primary Election Dates](#)

For Businesses

Life-Sustaining Businesses

Governor Wolf has ordered all non-life-sustaining businesses in Pennsylvania to close their physical locations as of 8 p.m. March 19, to slow the spread of COVID-19. Enforcement actions against businesses that do not close physical locations are now in effect.

Business guidance has been updated after conversations with businesses, stakeholders, and individuals and has been aligned with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency advisory released.

To request a waiver to keep your location open, please submit this form. All decisions will be communicated by email and will balance public health, safety, and the security of our industry supply chains supporting life-sustaining businesses.

Restaurants and Bars

All restaurants and bars have been ordered to close their dine-in facilities to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Businesses that offer carry-out, delivery, and drive-through food and beverage service may continue to do so, but eating and drinking inside restaurants and bars is temporarily prohibited.

The Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board announced steps to enforce this order beginning on Wednesday, March 18 at 8:00 PM.

Businesses offering carry-out, delivery, and drive-through food and beverage should employ social distancing best practices and be aware of the Trump Administration's guidance to avoid gatherings of 10 or more people.

Failure to Comply and Enforcement

Failure to comply with these requirements will result in enforcement action that could include citations, fines, or license suspensions.

The governor has directed the following state agencies and local officials to enforce the closure orders to the full extent of the law:

- [Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board](#)

- Department of Health
- Department of Agriculture
- Pennsylvania State Police
- Local officials, using their resources to enforce closure orders within their jurisdictions

Private businesses, local organizations and other noncompliant entities that fail or refuse to comply with the governor's orders that protect the lives and health of Pennsylvanians will forfeit their ability to receive any applicable disaster relief and/or may be subject to other appropriate administrative action. Such action may include termination of state loan or grant funding, including Redevelopment Assistance Capital Project (RACP) grant funding and/or suspension or revocation of licensure for violation of the law.

Finally, in addition to any other criminal charges that might be applicable, the Department of Health is authorized to prosecute noncompliant entities for the failure to comply with health laws, including quarantine, isolation or other disease control measures. Violators are subject to fines or imprisonment.

Resources and Loans

COVID-19 Working Capital Access Program

On March 25, Governor Wolf announced that new funding is available to help small businesses impacted by COVID-19 through a new program under the Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority's Small Business First Fund, the COVID-19 Working Capital Access Program.

Funds are expected to become available this week. Find out more about the program and how to apply.

Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development

The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development offers working capital loans that could be of assistance to businesses impacted by COVID-19. Resources and information can be found here as they become available.

U.S. Small Business Administration

On March 19, 2020, Governor Wolf announced the availability of low-interest loans for small businesses and eligible non-profits in all 67 counties in Pennsylvania through the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

Loan applications can also be downloaded at sba.gov/disaster. Applicants may apply online using the Electronic Loan Application (ELA) via the SBA's secure website at disasterloan.sba.gov/ela. Completed applications should be returned to the local DLOC or mailed to: U.S. Small Business Administration, Processing and Disbursement Center, 14925 Kingsport Road, Fort Worth, TX 76155.

Industry-specific Guidance

The Wolf Administration has released the following industry-specific COVID-19 mitigation guidance:

- Licensing for Health Care Workers
- Child Care Providers
- Food Supply
 - Essential Agricultural Businesses
 - Farms and On-Farm Deliveries
 - Farmers Markets and On-Farm Markets
 - Food Processors and Manufacturers (PDF)
 - Dairy Guidance (PDF)
- Behavioral Health Services
- Aging Services
- Telemedicine
- Opioid Treatment Providers
- Vets, pet food stores, boarding kennels, etc.: These industries are life-sustaining.
- Protective Services for Older Adults
- Pharmacies
- Public Libraries

Additional Resources

- [Life-Sustaining Business List \(updated 3/24/20\)](#)
- [See Life-Sustaining Business FAQ's](#)
- [Request a Waiver to Keep Physical Locations Open](#)
- [See Governor Wolf's Order](#)
- [See the Secretary of Health's Order](#)
- [Find Child Care for Life-Sustaining Employees](#)
- [Critical Medical Supplies Procurement](#)

For Schools

The Pennsylvania Department of Education is committed to providing school communities with ongoing guidance, resources, and information regarding COVID-19.

You can find up-to-date guidance and answers to common questions on the Department of Education website.