

Milwaukee County Exec: Updates regarding COVID-19

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Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele together with Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett and municipal health departments today provided updates on countywide efforts to prevent further spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). An Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has been implemented to prevent further spread throughout the community and safeguard the health and wellness of the general public. The EOC will coordinate a countywide strong response to the pandemic.

“The steps we take now will determine of the outcome of this crisis not only tomorrow, but for the foreseeable future,” said Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele. “We can and will save lives when we follow common-sense best practices like social distancing. It is on each and every one of us to put the health and safety of ourselves and our neighbors above all else.”

“Our top priority is to slow the spread of COVID-19 locally, and the best way to accomplish that is to be in it together,” said Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett. “We are proud to partner with our neighboring municipalities to implement uniform guidelines and protocols to keep us all safe. Milwaukee has weathered challenges before, and our resilience is our most powerful asset.”

Following CDC guidance and recommendations by local public health experts, Milwaukee County will take the following steps to safeguard the health and wellness of the general public.

“Public health is rooted in collaboration and fueled by passionate and highly skilled workers,” said Jeanette Kowalik, City of Milwaukee Commissioner of Health. “The City of Milwaukee Health Department is committed to protecting the public from the ills of COVID-19. This is a strength in numbers approach which includes many sectors including public health, first responders, healthcare systems and clinics, and academia.”

Residents are encouraged to visit <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN> for the most frequent updates.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

The Milwaukee County Executive, Milwaukee County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and municipal health leaders launched an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to monitor and support the response to coronavirus (COVID-19). The EOC will track cases of COVID-19 across the County, coordinate resources and provide public information as necessary. The EOC will operate to ensure preparedness for the potential of widespread transmission of COVID-19 as well as the implementation of community mitigation measures as they become necessary. The activation of the EOC is in accordance with the recent proclamation declaring a local public health emergency due to COVID-19.

MILWAUKEE COUNTY SERVICES

Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) requests that riders limit non-essential bus travel until further notice. MCTS is working with federal, state and local governments to help limit the spread of the virus. Whenever possible, all passengers are encouraged to pay their fare with the MCTS M-Card – a contactless smartcard – or use the electronic fare offered via the Ride MCTS App. Both options allow you to pay your fare without making direct contact with the farebox.

Once on board, MCTS passengers are asked to leave extra space between themselves and others. This form of ‘social distancing’ can help protect from the spread of the virus. MCTS recommends exiting through the rear doors of the bus instead of the front doors to limit contact with the bus driver. Additionally, MCTS requests riders stay behind the yellow line and limit conversation and interaction with the bus driver. Future updates from MCTS will be posted at RideMCTS.com/coronavirus.

Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport is following all directives and best practices from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Milwaukee Health Department. Protocols have been implemented to maintain the health, safety and well-being of all who use the airport. In partnership with our Airport partners and stakeholders, the airport continues to share all relevant CDC recommendations with staff and travelers. They have enhanced the already robust cleaning and disinfecting of restroom facilities, common areas and SuperSaver Parking shuttles. Further updates will be available at <https://www.mitchellairport.com/airport-service-alert>.

Milwaukee County Parks will close all golf courses, club houses and Disc Golf effective March 17, 2020. All dog parks will also be closed and locked until further notice. Parks has canceled park rentals, special events and organized sports activities through April 17, 2020. Reservations are still being taken for events that take place after May 15, 2020.

While information is continuing to evolve, Parks also recommends avoiding use of playgrounds at this time. Signage will be posted to serve as a reminder.

The Milwaukee County Zoo continues to share all relevant CDC recommendations with staff during the closure. It has implemented best practices and proper precautions for essential staff reporting to the Zoo for work at this time. It has cancelled its upcoming special events in April, adhering to the CDC guidelines stating that gatherings of more than 50 people should not occur for the next 60 days. The animals continue to do well and are receiving the same level of professional care on a 24-hour basis.

Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services and the Milwaukee County Department of Aging recommends residents check-in on elderly neighbors, friends and family during this time. Older adults who live alone are at high risk of social isolation and a friendly phone call or check-in can be especially important. To minimize possible transmission of the virus, residents should call the Aging Resource Call Center at (414) 289-6874 rather than come for a walk-in visit.

To ensure older adults remains the top priority for the Department of Aging, Clinton Rose Senior Center, Kelly Senior Center, McGovern Park Senior Center, Washington Park Senior Center, and Wilson Park Senior Center are closed for social programming. Arlington Court, College Court, Convent Hill, Fernwood Court, Franklin, Grobschmidt Senior Center, Lapham Park, Milwaukee Christian Center, and

West Allis Senior Center will transition to carry out meals only effective March 16, 2020. Starting March 17, the following dining sites will also be transitioning to carry out meals only: Clinton Rose Senior Center, Elks Lodge, Greater Galilee, Hart Park Senior Center, Kelly Senior Center, McGovern Park Senior Center, Washington Park Senior Center, and Wilson Senior Center. Indian Council for the Elderly, LGBT Community Center and Muslim Community Health Center are closed for both the senior center and the senior dining sites.

Meals on Wheels remains a top priority and service will continue as normal to the older adults in this program.

Milwaukee County Disabilities Services Division is committed to the safety and needs of children and adults with disabilities. The following are the changes in service at this time: The Friedens' food pantry located at Coggs (1220 W Vliet St) is closed indefinitely; to minimize possible transmission of the virus, we are suggesting people call the Disability Resource Call Center at (414) 289-6660, instead of an in-person visit if people have questions or need assistance with any of the following: burial Assistance, Go Pass, Adult Long-Term Services 18-59, Adult Protective Services. Disability Benefits, Disability Resources and Information, or the Interim Disability Assistance Program. Customers can also call the Children's Intake line at (414) 289-6799 if they have questions or concerns about the Birth to Three Program. Referrals can also be emailed to Birth_to_ThreeDSD@milwaukeecountywi.gov.

Energy Assistance sites are temporarily closed, and residents are urged to move in-person visits to phone calls. 2020 Energy Assistance applications can be completed by phone. Visit KEEPWARMWIS.ORG or call 414-270-4-MKE (4653) to reschedule or make an appointment. In case of a no-heat emergency, call 2-1-1.

Milwaukee County Jail will also video visitations only. Non-contact attorney visitation is available on-site. House of Correction will also allow video visitations only.

Milwaukee County is working closely with all local and state agencies to ensure essential services will continue to be provided, while taking steps to protect the health and safety of employees.