

**For your information, this release will be distributed to the news media statewide today.**

## **ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

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### ***NEWS RELEASE***

State Health Officer issues

amended health order suspending public gatherings

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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As the number of COVID-19 cases identified in Alabama increases, State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris has provided additional guidance suspending public gatherings to Alabamians in an amended health order which is applicable statewide. In addition, direction is given concerning in-person instruction at schools, and several other measures to protect Alabamians were ordered. A determination of whether the order will be extended will be made prior to April 6, 2020. Under the order, all non-work related gatherings of 25 or more persons, or non-work related gatherings of any size that cannot maintain a consistent six-foot distance between persons, are prohibited. Employers are to take all reasonable steps to meet these standards for employees and customers. Regular programs at senior citizen centers are to be closed except that senior centers and their partners are ordered to continue to receive needed meals via curbside pickup or delivery.

In-person instruction at all schools is prohibited. So long as certain guidelines are followed, local board of education providing childcare for children (ages 6-12) of essential employees are permitted, so long as no more than 11 children are allowed in any one room at the same time. The following categories of employees are considered essential: State and local governments, first responders (including EMS and fire services), law enforcement, hospitals, nursing home/long term care facilities (including assisted living and specialty care assisted living facilities), end-stage renal disease treatment centers, pharmacies and grocery stores. Other recommendations are as follows:

*Hair, Nail, Massage and Tattoo Businesses*

The department recommends businesses follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidance for employers that can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>. The department recommends limiting the number of patrons and staff to less than 25, social distancing, no walk-ins, services by appointment only, spacing patrons in waiting areas, and posting signs not to enter and reschedule if ill.

*Day Cares: Department of Human Resources regulated, home-based, exempt (church affiliated)*

Facilities providing child day care, including any child day care facility described in Ala. Code Section 38-7-2, may remain open so long as 12 or more children are not allowed in a room or other enclosed or separated space at the same time. Facilities are encouraged to use enhanced

sanitation and social-distancing practices consistent with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH).

The order does not change the Minimum Standards for Day Care promulgated by the Alabama Department of Human Resources, except that 12 or more children shall not be allowed in a room or other enclosed or separated space at the same time.

*Funerals, Weddings and Reunions (School and Family)*

Limiting the size of gatherings at such events is burdensome, however, due to the increased risk of disease spread, the health order includes all gatherings. A request may be submitted in writing for a specific exception. These exceptions will be closely evaluated based on the ability to maintain social distancing and to limit the possibility of disease spread. It is suggested that families have private family services and hold larger services later.

*Caregivers for Elderly and Disabled*

The elderly and disabled who have sitters to assist them with feeding, bathing and other essential life activities will be considered medically necessary. Frequent handwashing and disinfecting surfaces is strongly recommended. ADPH realizes that the 6 feet of social distancing cannot always be observed when bathing and changing patients. Please do not care for any of these fragile patients if you are experiencing any illness.