



## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **MDHHS issues Emergency Order designed to protect the health and safety of all Michiganders**

*Directive restricts gatherings, requires face coverings, limits bars and other venues*

**LANSING, Mich.** – Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Director Robert Gordon today issued an [Emergency Order](#) under MCL 333.2253 restricting gathering sizes, requiring face coverings in public spaces and places limitations on bars and other venues.

The order follows the Michigan Supreme Court decision on Friday, Oct 2, that invalidated COVID-19 related executive orders. Today's order relies on authorities that were first enacted after the Spanish Flu of 1918, and that were not at issue in the Michigan Supreme Court's decision.

"When it comes to fighting COVID-19, we are all in this together. We need Michiganders everywhere to do their part by wearing masks and practicing safe physical distancing so we can keep our schools and small businesses open and protect the brave men and women serving on the front lines of this crisis," said Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. "The epidemic order that Director Gordon issued today is an important step to protect Michiganders across the state from the spread of COVID-19. Let's all mask up and stay safe."

Under MCL 333.2253, if the MDHHS director determines that control of an epidemic is necessary to protect the public health, the director by emergency order may prohibit the gathering of people for any purpose and may establish procedures to be followed during the epidemic to insure continuation of essential public health services and enforcement of health laws. [Gordon shares more about the reasoning behind the order in a recent column.](#)

Violations of this order are punishable by a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than six months or a fine of not more than \$200, or both. Violations of this order are also punishable by a civil fine of up to \$1,000.

"Michigan was hit hard by COVID-19 early in the pandemic," said Gordon. "Strict preventive measures and the cooperation of Michiganders drove those numbers down dramatically, greatly reducing the loss of life. As we head into flu season, this order is necessary to protect vulnerable individuals, ensure the health care system can provide care for all health issues, keep schools open, and maintain economic recovery."

Today's orders largely reinstate, under the department's authority, three major aspects of prior emergency orders:

- Requirements to wear masks at indoor and outdoor gatherings: The order requires individuals to wear masks when in gatherings, defined as any occurrence where persons from multiple households are present in a shared space in a group of two or more, and requires businesses and government offices to enforce those requirements for gatherings on their premises. The order also requires the wearing of masks at schools, except for in Michigan Economic Recovery Council Region 6.
- Limitations on the size of gatherings: The order reinstates limitations on gathering sizes that mirror the requirements that Governor Whitmer had previously put in place. These include indoor gatherings of more than 10 and up to 500 people occurring at a non-residential venue are permitted within the following limits:
  - In venues with fixed seating, limit attendance to 20% of normal capacity. However, gatherings up to 25% of normal capacity are permitted in Michigan Economic Recovery Council Region 6.
  - In venues without fixed seating, limit attendance to 20 persons per 1,000 square feet in each occupied room. However, gatherings of up to 25 persons per 1,000 square feet are permitted in Michigan Economic Recovery Council Region 6.
  - Non-residential outdoor gatherings of between 100 and 1,000 persons at venues with fixed seating are permitted at up to 30% of normal capacity and at 30 persons per 1,000 square feet at venues without fixed seating.
- Limitations on certain establishments: Although the order does not close bars, it requires them to close indoor common areas where people can congregate, dance or otherwise mingle. Indoor gatherings are prohibited anywhere alcoholic beverages are sold except for table services where parties are separated from one another by at least six feet.

In addition, athletes training or practicing for or competing in an organized sport must wear a facial covering, except when swimming, or consistently maintain six feet of social distance.

Pursuant to MCL 333.2235(1), local health departments are authorized to carry out and enforce the terms of this order. Law enforcement officers, as defined in the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards Act, 1965 Public Act 203, MCL 28.602(f), are deemed to be “department representatives” for purposes of enforcing this order, and are specifically authorized to investigate potential violations of this order. They may coordinate as necessary with the appropriate regulatory entity and enforce this order within their jurisdiction.

This order is effective immediately and remains in effect through Friday, Oct. 30. Individuals with suggestions and concerns are invited to submit comments via email to [COVID19@michigan.gov](mailto:COVID19@michigan.gov).

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](http://Michigan.gov/Coronavirus) and [CDC.gov/Coronavirus](http://CDC.gov/Coronavirus).

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#### ***Additional Statements from Local Elected Officials***

**Rosalynn Bliss, Mayor, City of Grand Rapids:** “For the safety of everyone in our community, it is critically important that we all do our part to continue to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Wearing masks in public spaces and maintaining physical distance from others to ensure adequate space is available for social distancing is essential,” said Grand Rapids Mayor Rosalyn Bliss. “I support these requirements staying in place and urge all Grand Rapidians to continue to follow CDC guidelines.”

**Dave Coulter, Oakland County Executive:** “The fundamental role of government is to keep the public safe. We know that we are still in the middle of a pandemic with a highly contagious virus. It is vital that we maintain the measures that are critical to limiting the spread of the virus and allowing businesses to stay open, schools to re-open and our hospitals to operate safely. I support the actions taken by the Governor throughout the pandemic and agree that our State and Local health departments have independent authority – and must now use it – to protect the health of all Michigan residents.”

**Jim Carruthers, Mayor, City of Traverse City:** “Health professionals agree with the CDC guidelines that wearing a mask is an important step toward preventing the spread of COVID-19. This is a health issue not a political battle and we should all be doing our part to protect one another. In Traverse City, we promote and strongly recommend all citizens wear masks in public and practice social distancing. It’s just the right thing to do.”

**Mike Duggan, Mayor, City of Detroit:** “By now, no one should need a reminder of how real and how serious COVID is. Unfortunately, too many people are not following basic safety protocols on their own and putting others at serious risk. I am in complete support of the state’s decision to issue a public health order requiring people to wear masks and socially distance and the city will enforce it.”

**Warren C. Evans, Wayne County Executive:** “The orders and directives issued today make it clear how we can continue to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in a way that is consistent with Michigan law while meeting the safety needs of its residents,” said Wayne County Executive Warren C. Evans. “We know social distancing and properly wearing a face mask are among the most effective ways to control the spread of COVID-19. The new orders will continue these life-saving public health measures. Our goal has been and continues to be providing the safest possible environment in which to live, learn, and work for our residents and visitors.”

**Kevin Lancaster, Pastor, Macomb County Ministerial Alliance:** “I support the wearing of masks to promote public safety, not just for yourself but for the care of others.”