



# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Media contact:**  
[Lynn Sutfin](#)  
517-241-2112

## **MDHHS extends epidemic order 12 days to ensure COVID-19 surge is stabilizing**

*Indoor and outdoor gatherings to remain limited, department to closely monitor hospital beds with COVID patients, rate of case growth, positivity rate prior to re-engagement*

**LANSING, MICH.** The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has extended by 12 days [the epidemic order](#) that restricts indoor social gatherings and other group activities. The additional 12 days will allow the department to determine the full impact of the Thanksgiving holiday on the spread of COVID-19 across Michigan.

Under today's order, MDHHS continues to urge families to avoid indoor gatherings, and only two households may gather inside, [with strict protocols recommended](#). Individuals should wear masks consistently whenever they are inside with individuals not in their household, and are recommended to [pick only a small group to see regularly](#). Bars and restaurants must remain closed for dine-in service, but can remain open for outdoor dining, carry-out and delivery. Gyms are open for individual exercise with mandatory masking and additional strict safety measures. Casinos, movie theaters and group exercise classes remain closed. Professional and college sports meeting extraordinary standards for risk mitigation may continue without spectators. Colleges, universities and high schools will continue with remote learning, with no in-person classes.

"Hope is on the horizon, but we need an additional 12 days to determine the full impact of the Thanksgiving holiday on our efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus," said Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. "This is all about protecting our families and frontline workers until we eradicate this virus once and for all. With recent daily case counts averaging well above 6,000, the daily death toll at alarming levels and the risk of hospitals becoming overwhelmed, we must work together as Michiganders and listen to our health experts. This may be the most difficult time yet in our struggle with COVID-19, but there is light at the end of the tunnel."

The order will keep existing measures in place through Dec. 20 and does not include a blanket stay-home action. Employees who work in jobs that cannot be performed from home can continue to go to work, including those in manufacturing, construction and health occupations. Outdoor gatherings, outdoor dining and parks remain open. Individualized activities with distancing and face masks are still allowed: retail shopping; public transit; restaurant takeout; personal-care services such as haircuts, by appointment; and individualized exercise at a gym, with extra spacing between machines.

"We each have a personal responsibility to wear a mask consistently and minimize indoor gatherings, so we can protect our frontline heroes and loved ones," said MDHHS Director Robert Gordon. "If we don't, the disease will continue to spread and people will continue to get sick and die."

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**COVID-19**  
**PAUSE TO SAVE LIVES**

**Open**

- Two-household gathering (high precautions)\*
- Small outdoor gatherings (25 people)
- Retail
- Preschool through 8th grade (local district choice)
- Childcare
- Manufacturing, construction, other work that is impossible to do remotely, including technical education
- Public transit
- Hair salons, barber shops, other personal services
- Gyms, ice rinks, and pools (for individual exercise)
- Restaurants and bars (outdoor dining, takeout, and delivery)
- Professional sports\*\* (without spectators)
- Parks and outdoor recreation
- Funerals (25 people)
- Health care

**Not open**

- High schools (in-person learning)
- Colleges and universities (in-person learning)
- Workplaces, when work can be done from home
- Restaurants and bars (indoor dining)
- Organized sports, except professional sports
- Theaters, movie theaters, stadiums, arenas
- Bowling centers, trampoline parks, indoor water parks
- Bingo halls, casinos, arcades
- Group fitness classes

\*See Social Gathering Guidance.  
\*\*Includes a limited number of NCAA sports.

For more information about the order, visit [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://Michigan.gov/Coronavirus).  
Questions or concerns can be emailed to [COVID19@michigan.gov](mailto:COVID19@michigan.gov).

“While we have seen early signs of progress in our case rates and hospitalizations, unfortunately our rates are still alarmingly high and we need more time to understand the impact that Thanksgiving travel may have had on the spread of COVID-19 in Michigan,” said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, chief medical executive and chief deputy for health at MDHHS. “I am hopeful because vaccines will be available soon, potentially later this month. However, it will take time for the vaccine to be widely available to the general public, and it is important that we continue to do what we can to contain this virus.”

MDHHS also [identified three key metrics](#) that will be utilized in determining whether to slowly reopen at the end of the 12 days. Specifically, the department will be looking closely at the percentage of hospital beds with COVID patients, the number of COVID-19 cases and the positivity rate. With improvements in those numbers in context, MDHHS will carefully reopen, with in-person learning at high schools first. Next in line will be entertainment venues where people can maintain consistent masking, such as casinos, theaters and bowling, with concessions closed.

“The last few weeks have been critical to slowing the spread, particularly across the Upper Peninsula given the geography between hospitals and the available resources,” said Karen Cheeseman, President and CEO of Mackinac Straits Health System in St. Ignace. “We won’t see continued improvement without your help. We are asking you to heed the advice of public health experts by washing your hands, wearing your mask, and avoiding crowds.”

Just before Thanksgiving, Gov. Whitmer sent a letter to the Michigan Legislature seeking their support and asking them to pass a COVID relief package to help families and businesses across the state, which included a permanent extension of unemployment benefits. She has also called for the Legislature to

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pass bills to require masks in public, which has received bipartisan support, and would serve to greatly improve compliance, assist law enforcement and help slow the spread of COVID-19.

Just last week, the State Budget Office sent the Appropriations Chairs in the Legislature an additional request to provide supplemental funding in the current budget for additional COVID response needs for testing, contact tracing, PPE, hospital staffing, support for nursing homes and veterans homes and funding to quickly begin distributing vaccines to our highest risk residents as soon as the vaccine becomes available.

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://Michigan.gov/Coronavirus) and [CDC.gov/Coronavirus](https://CDC.gov/Coronavirus). The COVID-19 vaccine is coming soon, learn more at [Michigan.gov/COVIDVaccine](https://Michigan.gov/COVIDVaccine).

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