



**Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson**  
Office of Communications

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**COVID-19 PRESS BRIEFING**  
**MARCH 24, 2020**

3:00 PM (CST)

Good afternoon – thank you all for listening again today.

As I mentioned yesterday, these daily briefings will now be online in order to abide by the social distancing order issued statewide last week.

We know that COVID-19 testing and PPE are still two of the biggest concerns right now, and I want to assure you that we are doing all we can to address this issue.

We continue to use both public and private resources to increase our testing capacity and set up more mobile units across the state.

Our SEMA and DPS teams are also working 24/7 to get millions of PPE for hospitals, law enforcement, and first responders.

We're working out the logistics to get this important equipment to the people who need it as quickly as possible. We will be receiving more shipments this week and in the weeks ahead.

Public Safety Director Sandy Karsten is here again today to provide more details on PPE.

Commissioner Margie Vandeven is also here today to provide updates from the Missouri Department of Secondary and Elementary Education, and Commissioner Zora Mulligan is here to give updates from the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development.

We know school closures have been another big topic of concern, and we want to make sure parents, teachers, administrators, and everyone else impacted by Missouri's education system are as updated as possible on the ongoing COVID-19 situation.

As most Missourians are aware, all 555 of Missouri's public school districts and charter schools are currently closed, impacting nearly 915,000 students.

I want to thank our local school leaders for the leadership they have shown during this challenging time for our state.



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School leaders in our state make decisions every day about the health and safety of their students, and it is important that they have the flexibility to do what they feel is best for their community.

Every school district is different, and it has been great to see so many schools working to find alternate educational opportunities for our students. It's important to remember that learning can take place in a variety of ways. Even though school buildings are closed, learning can and will continue.

In addition to learning, another big concern with school closures has been meals for students. So many students rely on school meals each day, and it has been heartwarming to see every public school in Missouri find a way to continue feeding their students during COVID-19 closures.

We are proud of DESE for working quickly to secure the necessary USDA waivers to make this happen. Those waivers give schools the ability to prepare and serve meals even though they are closed.

Our higher education institutions have also been severely impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

More than 350,000 students are enrolled in two and four-year universities across Missouri. Many campuses have closed down but are working to meet the COVID-19 challenge by delivering courses and resources in new ways, such as moving to online classes.

We also appreciate that colleges and universities are not only supporting their students and staff, but also their communities. Many universities are exploring how they can use their expertise, technology, and other resources to help during this time of crisis.

COVID-19 is affecting everyone, but DESE and Higher Education have been working hard to remove barriers and provide more flexibility for schools, so they can stay focused on the health and safety of their students and communities.

Before I turn it over to Commissioner Vandeven and Commissioner Mulligan for more updates, we will have Director Sandy Karsten give an update on Public Safety and PPE.

*(DIRECTOR KARSTEN SPEAKS)*

*(COMMISSIONER VANDEVEN SPEAKS)*

*(COMMISSIONER MULLIGAN SPEAKS)*



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Thank you again to everyone listening today.

We are proud of our schools across the state for stepping in to help serve their students in any way they can during these unprecedented times. This is what it is going to take to overcome this challenge – everyone working together for a common cause.

I will say this over and over again: it is crucial to follow our order and social distance as much as possible. Unless absolutely necessary to get out, stay at home.

Whether you personally think so or not, this is serious, and you are putting not only your own health in jeopardy but the health of everyone around you in jeopardy.

COVID-19 isn't going to go away in just a few days or weeks. But if everyone will look out for one another, follow the order and social distance, and work together for the greater good of Missouri, we will overcome COVID-19 and come back stronger than ever before.

Thank you.