

Lee Admin COVID-19 Response Book

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General Messaging

COVID-19 is an unprecedented crisis. It has created both an economic and a health crisis, and the governor's response is working to address both aspects. Our goal is to keep the public, especially vulnerable populations, safe while doing everything possible to keep Tennesseans in a financially stable position.

- This is a rapidly evolving situation that the governor is continuously monitoring. He is committed to acting in the best interest of Tennesseans to protect their health and livelihood.
- The scope and magnitude of this pandemic requires governments across the world to completely rethink the traditional approach to problem solving.

COVID-19 Unified Command

What is the COVID-19 Unified Command?

- Governor Lee established the Unified Command on March 23, 2020 to streamline coordination across key Tennessee departments to fight the COVID-19 pandemic in the state.
- The group is tasked with changing the way the state attacks COVID-19 in Tennessee to simultaneously address health, economic, and supply crises.
- Led by Stuart McWhorter
 - Retired Brigadier General Scott Brower, Chief of Staff
 - Dr. Lisa Piercey of TDOH
 - Maj. General Holmes of Military
 - Patrick Sheehan of TEMA

Have other states set up similar operations?

- Tennessee is the first state to set up a strategic, coordinated, dedicated cross-agency team with a laser-focused shared vision of this kind. Tennessee is leading the nation in providing innovative out-of-the-box solutions to the pandemic.
- States have found that their departments are not adequately equipped to fight an unprecedented attack of this nature, and it's paramount that governments break down barriers to the flow of information and resources.

Why do we need this group?

- This group will be able to problem solve more efficiently and quickly than if they were working as individual entities.
- They will also be able to liaise with the federal government in a more streamlined and unified manner to procure regulatory changes, funding, and other essential services for Tennesseans.
- They are establishing a coordinated effort to strategize and mobilize not only on how to minimize the spread of the virus but also on how to provide PPE, health care capacity, testing capacity, and needed equipment and resources.

Will they only address the health crisis in Tennessee?

- COVID-19 has created both an economic and a health crisis, and this group is working to address both. They are uniquely positioned to address the financial needs coming out of this crisis and work across federal, state, and local entities in the public and private sectors to best allocate funding.

- As funding becomes available through the federal government, state programs, and private entities, it's essential that the state has a central process and structure in place to ensure the funds are most efficiently allocated to best serve all Tennesseans.

What other benefits will this group provide?

- It's imperative that we have the ability to acquire and analyze the high volume of data necessary at a rapid pace. By streamlining these agencies, that process will be optimized, and the state will be able to make structured evidence-based decisions.
- This is a rapidly evolving situation, and it's easy to operate in a reactive posture. This group is focused on finding and implementing proactive solutions to ensure Tennessee remains prepared for what's to come and has contingency plans in place.

Executive Orders

EO 22

- In order to protect the health and safety of Tennesseans, all persons in Tennessee are urged to stay at home unless engaging in essential activity or essential services, as defined in the executive order, which persons are strongly encouraged to limit as much as possible. Essential services should be provided in accordance with the President and CDC's health guidelines and be performed through home or remote work as much as possible.
- All critical infrastructure and services will remain open for provision of essential services.
- Persons and businesses are urged to take precautions to take special care of vulnerable populations, including by following health guidelines and offering delivery service or special shopping opportunities.
- This order does not repeal or otherwise affect local COVID-19-related orders.
- The order goes into effect Tuesday, March 31 at 12:01 a.m. CDT and will last for two weeks.
- [Link](#)

EO 21

- Amends EO 17 to add additional businesses including businesses or organizations that perform close-contact personal services and entertainment and recreational gathering venues.
- Extends EO 17 through April 14, 2020.
- [Link](#)

EO 20

- Waives requirements regarding retired medical professionals to make it easier for them to get back in the medical workforce.
- Suspends certain regulations related to licensing for healthcare professionals, health care facilities, and onsite inspections for laboratories to increase health care services and immediately begin more COVID-19 testing;
- Temporarily suspends continuing education requirements so professionals can continue working through the pandemic;

- Allows for the use of telephone assessments in involuntary commitment cases for individuals with mental illness or emotional disturbances where an in-person evaluation isn't possible; and
- Reduces regulations concerning telemedicine so that all licensed providers may utilize telemedicine during COVID-19 as long as they are practicing within their normal scope of practice.
- [Link](#)

EO 19

- Clarifies that regulations waived to accelerate transport of emergency supplies and supports includes transports of food and sanitation products, suspends requirements for renewing driver licenses and related functions and obtaining vehicle emissions testing to prevent large gatherings at such locations.
- [Link](#)

EO 18

- Prohibits hospitals, surgical outpatient facilities, and dental providers from performing non-essential medical procedures until April 13 to avoid frequent close contact and preserve personal protective equipment (PPE) for treating COVID-19; and
- Practitioners are asked to donate their PPE at their nearest National Guard Armory.
- [Link](#)

Are abortions covered by EO 18?

- The intent of this Executive Order is to gain greater access to PPE. Gov. Lee believes elective abortions aren't essential procedures, and given the state of PPE in Tennessee and across the country, his hope and expectation is that those procedures not take place during this crisis.

EO 17

- Prohibits social gatherings of 10 or more people;
- Directs restaurants, bars, and similar food and drink establishments to offer only drive-thru, take-out or delivery options, while allowing them to sell alcohol (with the purchase of food) in closed containers to those who are age 21 and up;
- Directs gyms and fitness/exercise centers or substantially similar facilities to temporarily close and suspend in-person services;
- Restricts visitation to nursing homes, retirement homes, and long-term care or assisted-living facilities to essential care and end-of-life visitation only; and
- Encourages businesses to enact policies that assist vulnerable populations, including considering measures such as shopping hours exclusive from the general public.
- Expires April 6
- [Link](#)

Does EO 17 apply to liquor stores?

- No, they are not affected by this order.

Mass Gatherings / Social Gatherings

How can order on gatherings and dine-in service be enforced?

- Legal background: Violation of an Executive Order is a Class A misdemeanor under Tenn. Code Ann. § 58-2-120, and local officials have authority to enforce that law just like any other. Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 58-2-107(e) and (f) the Governor may also specifically direct local authorities (sheriff or applicable police chief) to take reasonable efforts to secure compliance from restaurants and other establishments, including but not limited to closure of establishments that refuse to comply, if that becomes necessary.
- The Governor believes persons and businesses should be educated by local authorities and given a chance to comply prior to employing harsher enforcement measures; however, he does believe compliance is critical, and he is prepared on a case-by-case to mandate local enforcement where, when, and if needed.
- The Governor believes that persons and businesses should be educated by local authorities and given an opportunity to comply prior to employing harsher enforcement measures; however, he is prepared on a case-by-case basis to direct enforcement where, when, and if needed.

How do I report a business that is not following the governor's EO or local orders?

- We are in the process of setting up an email address where EO enforcement issues can be directed.

Are there travel restrictions between states?

- There are currently no travel restrictions, but we are urging everyone who is able to remain home at this time.

Are weddings/funerals still permitted?

- While they are not technically social gatherings prohibited by the Executive Order, we strongly advise limiting these events to immediate family, and we urge citizens to observe the CDC guidelines.

Can churches still meet?

- The Governor has strongly encouraged churches to utilize virtual gathering capability in order to avoid gatherings that will spread COVID-19.

EO 16

- Allows for official public meetings to be held remotely due to concerns over COVID-19
- [Link](#)

EO 15

- Declares state of emergency due to COVID-19
- Relieves regulatory burdens and frees up departments to more effectively respond to COVID-19 in Tennessee.
- [Link](#)

EO 14 - Emergency Declaration

- Implements the Tennessee Emergency Management Plan with respect to the recent tornados and storms;
- Permits health care professionals licensed in other states to provide health care services in Tennessee related to COVID-19;
- Allows pharmacists to dispense an extra 30-day supply of maintenance prescriptions as needed in response to COVID-19;
- Allows health care professionals to provide localized treatment to patients in temporary residences;
- Expands testing sites for COVID-19;
- Allows the construction of temporary health care structures in response to COVID-19;
- Implements price-gouging protections on medical and emergency supplies;
- Suspends restrictions on vehicles transporting emergency supplies to areas affected by COVID-19;
- Permits the waiver of certain regulations on child care centers as needed to respond to the effect of COVID-19;
- Authorizes TennCare policy changes to ensure that covered individuals receive medically necessary services without disruption; and
- Directs coordination with health insurance plans to improve access to screening, testing, and treatment for COVID-19.
- [Link](#)

Questions on Future Actions

Does the governor plan to designate grocery workers as “emergency” personnel?

- We are monitoring all issues daily. Many services are designated as “essential services” by the federal Department of Homeland Security, and the food chain is considered essential.

Does the governor plan to issue a statewide “safer at home” order?

- The governor is continuing to monitor this rapidly evolving situation each day. The COVID-19 pandemic has created both an economic and a health crisis and the governor is working to ensure the state’s response continues to address both aspects. Our goal is to keep the public, especially vulnerable populations, safe while doing everything possible to keep Tennesseans in a financially stable position.
- Should the governor determine that a statewide "safer at home" order is necessary he will make that decision at the appropriate time.

Health

What are you doing to increase the use of telemedicine?

- Executive Orders 15 and 20 address telemedicine. Under current state law, certain providers are not authorized to provide services via telemedicine. Executive Order 20 authorizes all licensed health care providers to provide services via telemedicine, during the period of the EO. In addition, Executive Order 15 urges health insurance carriers to cover telemedicine services during the period of the EO.
- While the EO authorizes health care providers to do telemedicine, it does not require them to do so.

Will I still be able to get prescriptions?

- The governor's emergency declaration allows pharmacists to dispense an extra 30-day supply of maintenance prescriptions as needed in response to COVID-19;

COVID-19 Testing

Where can I go to get a test?

- Call your doctor who will determine if you meet the screening criteria. If you don't have a doctor contact your local health department. You can also call a [remote assessment site](#) to schedule an appointment.

Why is there a difference between my county health department and state department's confirmed case number?

- Positive test results are reported first to the local health departments as soon as results are available to ensure quick communication with patients. Those notifications are happening throughout the day, so in some cases, county health departments (such as the Metro Public Health Department) will get information before the Tennessee Department of Health does.
- Those entities determine how frequently to report data. The Department of Health is sharing case counts at 2 p.m. daily.

Has the National Guard been mobilized?

- [March 24] Gov. Lee mobilized the use of the National Guard to assist with the expanded testing efforts in our state.
- 250 personnel, including 150 medical personnel, are now preparing to assist 35 remote assessment facilities across the state.
- We commend private employers for allowing these men and women to take time off of work to help in this important mission

What medical services have been asked to suspend operations?

- EO 18 prohibits hospitals and surgical outpatient facilities from performing elective surgeries and instructs dentists to halt non-emergency dental services.

What commercial labs are currently being utilized in Tennessee?

- The three largest national labs utilized by private providers in TN are Labcorp, Quest, and AEL.
- Private labs include Vanderbilt University Medical Center, which has performed thousands of tests for patients across Middle Tennessee.

I've heard of clinics charging hundreds of dollars for tests.

- EO 14 prohibits charging a price for medical supplies or emergency supplies that is grossly in excess of the price generally charged for the same or similar goods or services in the usual course of business.
- Anyone who believes they have been charged excessively for a service in violation of the Governor's Order should report it to the Tennessee Attorney General's Office and its Division of Consumer Affairs [here](#).
- If the testing charge is related to a service covered under a health insurance policy, then a complaint can also be filed with the Consumer Division of the Tennessee Dept. of Commerce & Insurance [here](#).

PPE & Hospital Capacity

Topline message: Our team is working around the clock to identify personal protective equipment and critical medical supplies and we will keep you updated as we acquire more

How many masks/ventilators/PPE does the state have at its disposal?

- These numbers are constantly changing, but the state's COVID-19 Unified Command is working around the clock to ensure Tennessee's health care professionals receive the PPE they need to respond to this crisis.
- Ventilators [March 19]: 537 unused ventilators. 570 more ordered

Do you plan to utilize closed rural hospitals to increase capacity?

- Potentially. As part of Executive Order 15, Gov. Lee made it easier for closed hospitals to reopen should the need arise to increase capacity.

Businesses

Where can small businesses go to get relief from the effects of coronavirus?

- Businesses can apply for low-interest loans with the Small Business Administration at sba.gov
- Gov. Lee submitted the [request](#) for an economic injury disaster loan declaration on Wednesday, March 18 -- this was granted by the SBA on Friday March 20.

Can gyms operate if there are less than 10 people there?

- No. EO 17 ordered all gyms to close

Are salons, nail parlors, barbers, etc. closed?

- We are urging all businesses to practice social distancing where possible.

Education / Schools

How long are schools closed?

- [March 24] Schools are asked to remain closed through April 24.

Is the Governor's recommendation for school closures a mandate?

- The governor is strongly urging school districts to remain closed through April 24. School closure decisions—when and for how long—remain local district decisions.

Are you mandating private schools close?

- We have advised all schools in Tennessee to close until April 24, and we expect them all to do so.

Can kids still access food services during school closures?

- Yes, districts may continue to provide food services during school closures and TDOE is working to support them in every way possible.

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- Parents and families are encouraged to find site pick up locations by contacting their local school or district or go to <http://schoolfoodfinder.com>.

What are you doing about TNReady tests?

- The state is not administering TNReady tests this year. No student, educator, or school will be adversely affected due to the loss of instructional time caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

What are you doing to continue instruction for all students?

- The Department has compiled a school resource toolkit for continued learning at home. For more information go [here](#).
- It is up to each district how they will work with schools and teachers in providing resources and remote learning options. TDOE is working with districts to help them identify technology supports available to enable remote learning options and leverage online resources to promote continuing instruction for students.
- The Tennessee Department of Education has secured a partnership with the state's PBS stations to deliver daily instructional content for Tennessee students during COVID-19 school closures. This partnership will provide all students with access to daily learning opportunities right in their own homes. For more information go [here](#).

What will happen to graduating seniors?

- The State Board of Education will be reviewing graduation requirements at a special-called meeting on April 9th.

For City and County Mayors

Will counties be reimbursed for cost of remote testing site?

- County EMA director should contact TEMA and maintain careful records of expenses. TEMA advises that CDC/FEMA will reimburse up to 75% of qualified expenses
- Please note that this answer could change based on the details of the federal stimulus package.

Is solid waste disposal service considered "essential"?

- Not anticipating a disruption in this service at this time - it is designated as a "critical infrastructure" by the federal Department of Homeland Security

Unemployment

How do I apply for unemployment?

- Tennessee's unemployment system is completely online. Individuals can apply, check the status of their claim, and complete weekly certifications at www.Jobs4TN.gov.

How many unemployment claims have been filed?

- We will release the weekly number of newly filed claims each Thursday morning at 8:30 a.m. CT. Those numbers will be posted in the COVID-19 newsroom [here](#).

How much money is in the Unemployment Trust Fund?

- It is currently \$1.26 billion.

Are 1099 employees eligible for unemployment?

- Federal lawmakers recently passed the COVID-19 stimulus bill. Once TDLWD determines how Tennessee will obtain federal funding, the state will announcement details for independent contractors, the self-employed and business owners who will soon be eligible for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance.

What are you doing to keep up with the high volume of claims?

- To meet the current demand for unemployment benefits, the Department has shifted resources to triple the number of staff trained to process those claim applications. Starting Monday, March 23, each American Job Center across Tennessee began limiting public access to facilities and primarily conducting business through phone and internet.
- This change allowed state-employed staff to switch their focus from workforce development tasks to claims processing. Nearly 200 employees work inside Tennessee's 23 comprehensive American Job Centers. This shift in job duties will bring the total number of staff focusing on unemployment to approximately 300, which is roughly one-third of the Department's employees.

My doctor has ordered me to quarantine because of COVID-19. Am I eligible for unemployment?

- If you are quarantined or ordered to isolate by a medical professional or health authority, you are eligible to receive unemployment benefits if all other eligibility requirements are met and you intend to return to your job.

My employer closed because of COVID-19 and I am out of work. Can I file for unemployment?

- When a Tennessee business closes to help slow the spread of the virus and temporarily has to lay off employees, those workers can collect unemployment benefits, if they meet other eligibility requirements.

How long will it take me to receive my money?

- The COVID-19 emergency has created a tremendous amount of unemployment claims. The Department is processing them as quickly as possible. You can check the status of your claim on your Jobs4TN.gov dashboard.
- In Executive Order No. 15, Gov. Lee temporarily suspended Tennessee's one-week waiting period to receive benefits. Typically, the state pays the first week of benefits after four consecutive weekly certifications. During this temporary suspension, the state will pay the first week of benefits as soon as an unemployment claim is approved.

My employer closed but continues to pay me while I am not working. Am I eligible for unemployment?

- It depends, if your employer pays your full salary, you will likely not be eligible for UI benefits. If your employer continues to pay at a reduced rate during the time the business is closed you may file a claim, but you must report those payments during your

weekly certification. The payment from your employer may be deducted from your weekly UI benefit amount.

I've exhausted my unemployment benefits, but COVID-19 is keeping me from finding a new job. Is there an extension of benefits available?

- No. The federal government has not authorized an extension of benefits at this time.

My hours were significantly reduced/I'm now working part-time due to COVID-19, am I eligible to receive unemployment benefits?

- You may be eligible and encourage you to apply at www.Jobs4TN.gov.

What is the state doing to help those finding work?

- Tennessee is not only working to provide unemployment benefits, the state is taking a proactive approach by helping citizens find new/temporary employment.
- The state is spearheading a public/private partnership with the Tennessee Grocers and Convenience Store Assoc., Tennessee Retail Assoc., and Hospitality TN to create the Tennessee Talent Exchange powered by Jobs4TN.gov.
- The goal of the exchange is to quickly match Tennesseans who are out of work due to COVID-19 with companies currently experiencing a surge in business and making immediate hires.
- Labor & Workforce has modified the state's workforce development website, Jobs4tn.gov, to quickly post job opening and match job seekers with employers.

Childcare

General Statement from DHS

- The Department of Human Services is working on several measures surrounding COVID-19 and our child care providers. Each individual facility will decide whether to remain open based on the needs in their own community. TDHS has relaxed child care rules so that currently licensed and temporary child care operations can appropriately respond to the needs of their communities. TDHS encourages any provider affected by COVID-19 to contact their licensing program evaluator, so they can understand the provider's situation and determine how best to support them.
- The Child and Adult Care Food Program is a federal reimbursement program. Funding is provided based on the amounts of meals served.
- Child care facilities that currently receive subsidies will continue to receive them, regardless of a potential loss in the wake of COVID-19 through the end of March.

Which childcare facilities are eligible for the \$10 million in grants?

- This particular grant was designed to address the needs of child care facilities licensed by DHS and therefore those entities regulated by other Departments will not qualify for the grants

The governor encouraged other organizations to help provide childcare; what does that mean?

- If a church, gym, or non-profit wants to open an emergency temporary child care facility to support those fighting COVID-19 they can do so by registering with the Department of Human Services.

How are you keeping kids safe as these new child care facilities go up?

- DHS is asking each organization to provide a list of their caregivers, so a basic criminal background check can be conducted on each of them. We are communicating the results of those checks back to the organization. If a result comes back on one of their caregivers, we are asking them to confirm that the person will not be caring for children. We have provided guidance and suggestions to protect the health and safety of children in these temporary settings, but we are not regulating or inspecting those programs.
- We have asked organizations to register with DHS and encouraged them to follow our suggestions, but this is voluntary. These temporary programs are not covered by the licensing regulations of our department. We encourage parents to become familiar with the guidance we have provided and decide whether they are comfortable with the care they may choose from a temporary location.
- The Child Care Resource and Referral Office is a good place for parents to call if they need assistance finding a licensed agency that's open and available near them. The numbers for different regions of the state are below.

Are DHS offices open?

- DHS moved to appointment-only for in-person services starting March 23.
- Local offices will have employees available to respond to questions or applications via telephone.
- Customers can find the number to their local office by going on online <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/humanservices/for-families/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/office-locator-family-assistance.html>.

Assistance for Individuals

Emergency Cash Assistance

I heard DHS is providing emergency cash?

- TDHS issued a new policy offering emergency cash assistance program to qualifying families through our TANF block grant for those impacted by COVID-19.
 - \$500 for a household of 1 to 2 persons.
 - \$750 for a household of 3 to 4 persons.
 - \$1000 for a household with 5 or more persons.
- To be eligible, families must have been employed as of March 11, 2020 but have since then lost employment or at least 50% of their earned income due to the COVID-19 emergency, include a child under the age of 18 or a pregnant woman, have a valid Social Security Number, must not have resources exceeding \$2000, and the gross and/or unearned monthly income may not exceed 85% of the State's Median Income.
- More info [here](#).

Taxes

Will you extend the franchise & excise tax deadline?

- Yes, the filing deadline for franchise and excise taxes has been delayed until July 15, 2020. Taxpayers will have until July 15 to file returns and make any payments, including quarterly estimated payments, originally due in April. Interest will not accrue until the July 15th due date. Additional information can be found [here](#).

Will you extend the deadline for Hall taxes?

- Yes, the filing deadline for the state's Hall income tax has been extended from April 15th to July 15, 2020. Taxpayers will have until July 15th to file returns and make any payments originally due on April 15, 2020. Interest will not accrue until the July 15th due date.

Will you extend the deadline for state and city business taxes?

- Yes, the filing deadline for state and city business tax returns originally due April 15, 2020, have been extended to June 15, 2020.

Utilities/Rent/Mortgages

Will there be assistance for people to pay their utilities?

- [March 27] Tennessee Public Utility Commission ordered private-investor owned natural gas, electric, water, and wastewater utility companies to suspend the disconnection of utility services due to nonpayment during Tennessee's state of emergency status. Additional information can be found [here](#).

Will there be assistance for people to pay their rent/mortgages? Does the governor plan to halt evictions in TN? Will the court stop issuing evictions?

- The governor is exploring various relief options for those impacted by COVID-19, as is the federal government. The governor has relaxed regulations around unemployment to expand relief to those impacted by COVID-19.
- In addition, the Tennessee Supreme Court entered an order on March 25 restricting in-person court proceedings. The Court's order can be found at www.tncourts.gov.

Driver Services

Do I still need to get a REAL ID?

- Tennessee will temporarily suspend the issuance of REAL ID credentials effective March 25, 2020 through May 18, 2020.
- The federal government has waived the October 1 deadline to obtain a REAL ID.

Do I still need to get my emissions test?

- [March 24] Gov. Lee waived emissions testing requirements through April 24

Are driver services centers open? Why?

- Drivers services centers are open, but are offering limited services.
- We encourage everyone to utilize our e-Services portal for available online services such as renewals, duplicates, paying reinstatement fees, and changing your address. The e-Services portal can be accessed [here](#).

My license is going to expire, what do I do?

- Starting March 20, 2020, the Department is waiving its requirement that citizens appear in person and have a new photograph taken through October 1, 2021. This will allow many customers with expiring credentials to renew online and not visit in person.
- Non-US citizens with Temporary driver licenses (Class XD and XID) will still need to visit in person to renew those licenses upon expiration of the current license.
- All Driver Licenses, Learner Permits, Commercial Driver Licenses, Photo Identification Licenses (ID), and Handgun Carry Permits that would expire between March 12, 2020, and May 19, 2020, will be extended for six months from the original expiration date. The Department will issue a letter of extension to the individuals affected. Affected individuals will be required to keep the letter with them during the extension period.

Insurance

Guidance to insurance providers

- [March 24] Gov. Lee directed the Department of Commerce and Insurance to issue guidance to insurance providers requesting as much flexibility as possible for employers and individuals during this crisis.
- More info [here](#).

Do I still have to pay insurance premiums for a COVID-19 test?

- All nine major medical carriers in Tennessee have agreed to cover the cost of COVID-19 testing.

Vulnerable Populations

Elderly/Nursing Homes

- EO 17 [March 22] limited nursing homes to essential care visits only

Gallatin Center for Rehabilitation COVID-19 Outbreak

- [March 29] Unified Command has worked in partnership with the Gallatin Center for Rehabilitation and Healing and local partners in testing residents, transporting the sick and further evaluating those at risk. This situation has escalated quickly, and we urge nursing homes and assisted care facilities to reach out to us as soon as cases are identified within their populations.
- The following timeline outlines actions taken by the COVID-19 Unified Command. The Gallatin Center for Rehabilitation and Healing will undergo further investigation and is believed to have followed proper protocols at this time.
 - Sunday, March 22, 2020
 - Gov. Lee signs Executive Order 17 restricting outside visitors to assisted living facilities and nursing homes.
 - Friday, March 27, 2020
 - The State of Tennessee, through the Unified Command of TDH, Military, and TEMA, worked with the Gallatin Center for Rehabilitation and Healing

to transport 23 residents to Sumner Regional Medical Center on Friday, March 27, 2020. On short notice, the State mobilized to arrange the transport of the residents through an ambulance strike team of EMS professionals from Sumner Co., Cheatham Co., Dickson Co., First Call, and MedicOne. EMS strike team members are highly-trained for these types of emergency health situations, and stand-up quickly to provide valuable life-saving care. The health emergency at the private Gallatin facility necessitated quick decision-making on the part of State and Local emergency professionals to act for the well-being of these residents.

- Saturday, March 28, 2020
 - More than 20 National Guard personnel onsite assisted Gallatin Center with COVID-19 testing for all residents and staff. Residents exhibiting symptoms were isolated pending results. Further guidance was issued to all nursing homes and assisted care facilities across the state, outlining reporting expectations and best practices.
- Sunday, March 29, 2020
 - Results were returned with 59 additional residents testing positive for COVID-19. These residents are now being transported to Sumner Regional Medical Center for care. 33 members of the Gallatin Center staff have tested positive and are now isolated at home. The State of Tennessee is facilitating deep cleaning and disinfecting of the facility and providing supplemental support for residents who currently do not have COVID-19.

Veterans

Are interments still taking place?

- The Department of Veterans is continuing to perform committal services; however, we are strongly urging families and funeral directors to follow CDC guidelines and limit attendance to less than 10 individuals.

Are Tennessee State Cemeteries open?

- Currently, all Tennessee State Cemeteries are open during normal operating hours for gravesite visitors.

Is visitation at veterans homes suspended?

- Facilities in Murfreesboro, Knoxville, Clarksville, and Humboldt will restrict access to all visitors, vendors, and volunteers until further notice. These precautionary measures aim to minimize the risk of exposure to residents, families, and staff.

Incarcerated Individuals

What can we tell family members who can't visit their loved ones but are also concerned about the spread of infection in prisons?

- Telephone calls through the inmate phone system will continue uninterrupted. TDOC offenders with phone accounts through GTL will receive two free five-minute phone calls per week through April 13th.

Why has visitation for family, friends and volunteers been suspended?

- Out of an abundance of caution and to protect what we consider a vulnerable population, the TDOC made the decision to suspend visitation until further notice. This decision is being re-evaluated daily and based on current updates of the COVID-19 impact in Tennessee.

Are prisons on lockdown?

- No. Many regular activities such as educational programs and inmate jobs are continuing.

Do inmates have access to soap and hand sanitizers?

- Yes. Soap and water and hand sanitizers are readily available to the entire population. In accordance with the Tennessee Department of Health recommendations, soap and water is the best option for protection.

How is the TDOC ensuring the health and welfare of the inmate population?

- The TDOC is conducting non-invasive screenings of everyone entering our facilities for symptoms such as fever and difficulty breathing prior to entry to maximize prevention efforts. Facilities are evaluating all inmates upon intake and returns from court/medical and all outside work locations. Additionally, medical co-pays for inmates are being waived at this time.

Are families allowed to attend parole hearings?

- In order to protect the health and safety of all individuals involved, no. Effective immediately, the Board of Parole will begin conducting parole hearings to the extent possible through electronic means. Victims and offenders' family members may submit statements to the Board of Parole by mail or email.

Are inmates allowed to meet with their attorneys?

- Yes. All legal visits are permitted utilizing the described screening process

What happens in the event of a confirmed case of COVID- 19 in a TDOC facility?

- The TDOC has extensive protocols in place to address those who present with symptoms, which will include immediate isolation. Protocols are in place to address scenarios where illness is presented. This includes treatment at facility infirmaries or outside hospitals, as necessary.

What activities can inmates participate in during this time?

- All facilities are maintaining as many services as possible including educational and work programs.

Are inmates allowed to go out on work crews?

Updated 3/31 8:30AM CDT

- All scheduled releases will occur as planned.

If the inmate was due to be released will they be held back or can they leave?

- All scheduled releases will occur as planned.

Will people on probation/parole be required to report in?

- Probationers and parolees continue to be supervised according to risk, with officer contact through electronic platforms. There is limited in-office reporting which incorporates a non-invasive screening process for symptoms. Probationers and parolees with questions about their reporting schedule should contact their supervising officer.

Are any offenders being released from prison early due to the coronavirus?

- There are no plans for early release because of the coronavirus.

Are the Day Reporting Centers (DRCs) still operational?

- DRCs are operating as normal with precautionary measures in place. Please be mindful that if you are sick, you should contact your supervising officer.

Have you had any positive cases in a prison from an inmate or staff?

- No

What is your protocol in the event that you have a confirmed case?

- The TDOC has extensive protocols in place to address those who present with symptoms, which will include immediate isolation. Protocols are in place to address scenarios where illness is presented. This includes treatment at facility infirmaries or outside hospitals, as necessary.

Do you have enough correctional officers to handle this pandemic?

- We receive daily reports on the status of the workforce. Currently, we have been very encouraged by the dedicated staff reporting to work each day in our prisons. We acknowledge that vacancies exist therefore, we have contingencies in place should the need arise. We rely on our employee's faithful and dedicated service to our agency. We are also continuing in our recruitment and hiring efforts.

Have medical co-pays been waved?

- Yes, medical co-pays for inmates are being waived at this time.

Children in state custody/foster children

How will parental visitations work for children in state custody? Are you still conducting home visits?

- DCS received guidance from the Children's Bureau allowing the department to conduct required caseworker visits by videoconference, due to the extraordinary circumstances. DCS staff will continue to make face-to-face contact for initial Child Protective Services visits, any cases in which safety of the child is a concern, or if videoconferencing isn't available. Family visits will also take place by videoconference, when possible.

Updated 3/31 8:30AM CDT

- When it is necessary for face-to-face visits or in-office family visits to occur, staff are calling in advance to complete a health questionnaire with the family to determine any risk due to visitation. Staff are also following guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Tennessee Department of Health.

Have you suspended visitation to residential facilities?

- Yes, all visitor and volunteer access to residential facilities is suspended through at least March 31.

How are you protecting children who could be in dangerous situations?

- Our staff continue to follow the same protocols to ensure all reports of child abuse and neglect are screened and investigated.
- DCS Child Protective Services investigators are still making face-to-face visits for initial reports of child abuse and neglect and will continue to do so in any cases in which the safety of a child is a concern.

Are you still conducting new foster placements?

- Yes, DCS continues to place new foster children every day.

Are court appearances canceled?

- The Tennessee Supreme Court has issued an Order noting that all Tennessee courts will remain open during the coronavirus outbreak, but most in-person judicial proceedings are suspended through April 30, 2020.
- This includes juvenile court proceedings, but there are some exceptions, such as "Proceedings related to relief from abuse" and "Department of Children's Services emergency matters related to child protection."

Mental Health

Are Community Behavioral Health Providers still seeing current patients/taking new patients?

- Yes, and the Department is increasing resources and ability to provide treatment via telehealth.

What is being done to protect patients and staff at the state's four Regional Mental Health Institutes?

- Before the COVID-19 outbreak reached pandemic status, the instituted new protocols for screening patients, staff, and visitors for symptoms of the disease. Additionally, on March 13, 2020, the department suspended all visitation at the RMHIs.
- The department has been holding daily conference calls with RMHI CEOs to communicate the latest developments and respond to issues as they arise. We have been working with TEMA to ensure continued supplies of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and items are being used in accordance with best practices from CDC.

What resources are available to me at this time?

- For persons who are 138 of Federal Poverty Level or below, [Tennessee's Behavioral Health Safety Net](#) provides a range of essential mental health services. Additionally, [our](#)

[substance abuse continuum of care](#) provides addiction treatment services to Tennesseans with no means to pay.

- Tennessee's 24/7/365 Statewide Crisis Line: 855-CRISIS-1 (855-274-7471) or text TN to 741-741 to connect to a trained counselor.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [tip sheet](#).
- Tennessee REDLINE 24/7 for a free, confidential referral to addiction treatment resources: 800-889-9789.
- The TDMHSAS COVID-19 [website](#).

State Employees

How long should state employees work from home (who are able/directed)?

- [March 24] Gov. Lee directed state workers who are currently working from home to remain working from home until April 24.

Have you suspended travel for state employees?

- Yes. Employees should cease all non-essential business travel through March 31, 2020. Essential travel is determined by the Agency Appointing Authority.

Budget

What can the \$150 million in Health & Safety funds in the budget be used for?

- The F&A Commissioner, in consultation with TDOH Commissioner & TEMA director, can allot funds to:
 - Increase Laboratory Capacity
 - Containment Efforts
 - Disease Surveillance & Tracking
 - Mitigation efforts at schools & higher ed institutions
 - Education & prevention programs
 - F&A Commissioner is authorized to adjust federal aid & other department revenues accordingly, as well as increase the number of authorized positions needed

How can local governments access the \$150 million in the budget to combat COVID-19?

- Tennessee's Unified Command, in close consultation with the Department of Finance & Administration, TEMA, the Department of Health, and the Department of the Military is assessing the needs across the State. Counties and cities across the state should communicate with their local EMA Directors.

Legislative

What is the status of your legislation (heartbeat, constitutional carry, FMLA, CJR, etc.) ?

- The governor's administration bills are currently in the committee process. The General Assembly has recessed until June 1.

Parks and Welcome Centers

Are state parks still open?

- Tennessee state parks are currently open. Individuals are encouraged to practice social distancing at state parks and only visit their local state park to avoid travel. Tennessee State Parks will transition to day-use schedules for all 56 state parks, opening daily from 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. The new schedule went into effect on March 26 and will be in place until at least April 10.
- During this period, all public gathering spaces such as visitor centers, shelters and playgrounds at state parks will be closed. Additionally, parks cabins, lodges and campgrounds close. Future reservations with arrival dates between March 26 and April 9 will be canceled. The parks will waive cancellation fees during this time.

Are Tennessee welcome centers still open?

- 15 of Tennessee's 16 welcome centers are continuing to provide essential services to traveler safety including restroom access, parking, ramp access, security and vending machines. One welcome center in downtown Memphis is currently closed.