

March 13, 2020

March 13, 2020: Order imposing a mandatory countywide moratorium on gatherings of more than 100 persons, and a conditional countywide moratorium on gatherings of between 35-100 persons, to mitigate the spread of COVID-19; and statement on school closure

Legal Prohibition on Gatherings of More than 100 People

The County Health Officer issued an order, effective at 12:00 a.m. on March 14, 2020, prohibiting public or private gatherings of more than 100 people.

The County Health Officer has also banned gatherings of 35 to 100 people unless certain conditions are met.

A “gathering” is any event or convening that brings together people in a single room or single space at the same time, such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, conference room, meeting hall, cafeteria, theater, restaurant, bar, or any other confined indoor or confined outdoor space.

A “gathering” does not include normal operations at airports or spaces where persons may be in transit. It also does not include office environments; classrooms; medical offices, hospitals, or clinics; or retail, pharmacy, or grocery stores where large numbers of people may be present, but it is unusual for them to be within arm’s length of one another.

Immediately Halt Gatherings of 35 to 100 People

The Santa Clara County Public Health Department is making its strongest call to all county residents to immediately cancel or postpone all gatherings and community events with 35 to 100 people.

If a gathering is necessary for essential societal functions, it is your responsibility to:

- Stop anyone who is sick with fever or respiratory symptoms from attending.
- Ensure that those who are at higher risk for serious illness do not attend.
- Provide people enough physical space so that they can stay more than arm’s length apart from others.
- Ensure that there are adequate supplies for hand washing including soap, paper towels, and waste receptacles and urge attendees to wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be used.
- Direct attendees to:
 - Avoid close contact with other people.
 - Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - Cover their cough or sneeze with a tissue - if available - or into their elbow.
- Clean surfaces with disinfecting wipes or other standard cleaners before, during, and after the event.

Statement on School Closure in the County

The County Superintendent of Schools and all district superintendents in the County have decided to close schools to students for three weeks beginning Monday, March 16, 2020. This school closure is designed to provide schools with the time needed to create long-term plans to operate in ways that facilitate social distancing, provide all necessary hygiene and cleaning supplies, ensure adequate staff time and resources to follow public health guidance, and create plans to address the possibility that a significant portion of their staff will need to stay home sick if they contract COVID-19. We support the decision to close in order to facilitate these planning efforts.

Because we hope to slow the spread of COVID-19 and “flatten the curve” of transmission in our community to not overwhelm healthcare facilities, COVID-19 may be present in our community for months to come. We urge schools to get plans in place quickly to operate in a manner that complies with all applicable public health guidance, so that they can reopen as soon as they are able to do so.

The negative effects of school closure on children, families, and communities are significant, and children have not been shown to be a high-risk group for serious illness from this virus. As much as possible, children should be allowed to carry on with their education and normal activities. School closure also removes parents from the work force, including those who provide essential services.

We will continue to work in close partnership with the County Office of Education and local school districts to support the children, parents, and essential workforce of Santa Clara County.

Guidance for All Schools in Light of Closure:

The County Office of Education and local school districts are working to provide support to students and families during the period they are closed. Even when closed, we expect schools to do all they can to:

- Continue to provide free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch to all eligible students;
- Continue to provide academic instruction to students who are at home, including those who have no access to the internet, computers, or school supplies;
- Provide parents with resources to appropriately support the education, development, and wellbeing of students; and
- Provide families with resources regarding access to emergency childcare, particularly in families where parents are healthcare providers or are otherwise providing essential services to the community.

Updated Guidance for Workplaces and Businesses

Employers are responsible for taking steps to make it more feasible for their employees to work in ways that minimize close contact with large numbers of people. This guidance is designed to both protect employees and all members of the public with whom they come into contact at work.

Employers should immediately:

- Ensure employees who are sick do not come to work.
- Suspend nonessential employee travel.
- Minimize the number of employees working within arm's length of one another.

- Cancel all large in-person meetings and conferences, or hold them via telephone or video conference.