



Jewish Federation OF GREATER HOUSTON

March 22 PM - JРАН Email

Dear JРАН Community:

Today, Governor Gregg Abbott issued a [new executive order](#) in the State's effort to further combat COVID-19. I will share a breakdown of what the order means and what we can expect. I will also update the list of testing sites and the process for getting tested.

This afternoon, during a [press conference](#), Gov. Abbott issued a new executive order, effective immediately and until midnight on April 21st, to increase hospital capacity and conserve necessary supplies for our health care system. Here is an overview of the press conference:

- Executive Order to increase hospital capacity
 - All hospitals and doctors must postpone all surgeries and procedures not deemed medically necessary to correct a serious medical condition or preserve life
 - Procedures that do not use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or take up bed space that could be used to treat COVID-19 may continue
 - **My analysis:** if you have an outpatient procedure that doesn't require your doctor to wear a mask, you can probably proceed – but I would call in advance and check with your medical provider
 - The Governor suspended several rules in order to increase the number of nurses and beds in hospitals
 - He waived several requirements for retired, inactive, out-of-state, and students near the end of their nursing coursework so they may reactivate their licenses or fast-track to a temporary license
 - Bed limits have been waived in order to allow multiple patients with COVID19 to be treated in the same room
- The Governor has asked that people **comply with the social distancing order**, if not penalties will be enforced. They include:
 - fines up to \$1000
 - jail for 180 days
 - mandatory quarantine
- The Governor announced a “strike force” to help with procuring necessary PPEs and testing supplies. Members include:

- Keith Miers, Senior Vice President of Worldwide Procurement at Dell Technologies, to serve as Supply Chain Director for the state of Texas
- State Representative John Zerwas, MD, will assist with hospital relations and preparedness
- Clint Harp, Vice President of Transmission Strategic Services for the Lower Colorado River Authority, will assist with asset research and procurement, and
- Elaine Mendoza, Chair of the A&M Board of Regents, will assist with statewide childcare infrastructure for critical workers
- Finally, the Governor announced that beginning next week, the National Guard will be deployed to major cities in Texas to:
 - Help local hospitals
 - Assist with managing drive thru testing sites
 - Stand up additional health care facilities (medical tents, reactivating recently vacated medical facilities)

Here is a brief update on COVID-19 testing in our area:

- Texas has 566 confirmed cases of COVID-19, but officials recognize this is a severe undercount due to lack of testing and confirmed presence of community spread
- Texas is ramping up its testing capabilities
 - Houston now has several testing sites (private and public)
 - The City now has a free drive thru testing site
 - Must speak with a live nurse for second screening
 - Then will be giving a unique code, only those with a code will be given testing location
 - Just showing up to a testing location will not result in being tested, only those with a code will be tested
 - The site will collect insurance information but will not take payments
 - City of Houston Criteria for testing
 - First responders
 - Medical professionals
 - 65 and older, with symptoms
 - People with chronic illnesses
 - **Call the Houston Health Department's COVID-19 call center at 832-393-4220 between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. to get pre-screened**



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- **Harris County residents can call 713-634-1110 daily 9 a.m. -7 p.m. for COVID-19 related health questions**
- If you have mild to moderate symptoms, officials are asking that you do the following:
 - Stay home when you are sick
 - Do not go out in public when you are sick
 - Avoid medical settings in general unless necessary
 - If you are ill in any way, call your doctor's office first before going in
 - Do not go to the emergency room unless it's a medical emergency. Emergency rooms need to be able to serve those with the most critical needs.
 - If you have symptoms like cough, fever, or other respiratory problems, contact a healthcare professional. You must call ahead before going
 - You will likely be asked to stay at home unless your condition worsens
 - The CDC has [guidelines for when to discontinue home isolation](#)
- Please note that there are no FDA-approved drugs to treat COVID-19, although there are several hundred clinical trials across the globe
- City Council Member Abbie Kamin has created a [resource spreadsheet](#) with helpful information

There is no shelter-in-place order for the City of Houston or Harris County, but during his press conference today, the Governor did encourage the large cities to make the call. I will keep you updated if I hear anything.

Take care tonight,

Jackie

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