



# Jewish Federation OF GREATER HOUSTON

May 13 PM - Jran Email

Dear Jran Community:

Today, we will go over updates from the City and County, additional resources on the Federation's website, paycheck protection program updates, resources from the Secure Communities Network, possible changes to the school year, and more mental health resources.

## **Updates from the City and County**

During her press conference, Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo announced the hiring of 300 contact tracers and 100 managers, increasing the County's ability to conduct tracing to help isolate and combat the virus. Contact tracing is a tried and true method of helping to quickly isolate individuals who may have been exposed to a virus so they can get tested and quarantine. Dr. Umair Shaw, Executive Director of Harris Public Health, stated that contact tracers are critical when we have no vaccine or treatment for a virus. He explained that contact tracing is the best way to identify which individuals need to be quickly tested for COVID19. The County Judge reiterated that so long as we do not have a large outbreak event, like a concert or party, the County's contact tracers should be within their capacity.

The County's contact tracers will never ask for social security numbers, immigration status, or payment/banking information. This is a free service and information will be kept confidential. Johns Hopkins University is hosting a [free online course](#) to train contact tracers.

Harris County now has six free testing sites open to the public. You can fill out the [online assessment](#) to get tested and you do not need to be symptomatic.

Houston is continuing to be an [example of flattening the curve](#) in Texas. While other cities continue to see a rise in cases, Houston's cases have generally plateaued. This means that Houstonians are doing a good job at staying home and wearing face masks, not that the virus is out of our community. Mayor Sylvester Turner announced that the City's rental assistance program reached its capacity within 90 minutes of opening today. Houston Health will be hosting [virtual job fairs](#) to ramp up their COVID19 workforce.

## **Federation's COVID19 Resource Page**

We continue to update the Federation's [COVID19 resource page and tool kit](#). Please take a look and let us know if there are any additional resources we can help you with.

## **Paycheck Protection Program Update**

Today, the US Department of Treasury issued additional guidance on the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) use of funds. In FAQ #46, the Treasury states that a "safe harbor" policy has been adopted to provide clarity and certainty for those who received loans. PPP loans under \$2 million dollars will not be subject to an automatic audit unless flagged for specific reasons. This means, that organizations that certified in their original application that funds are being requested in good faith, can proceed in using those funds under the good faith provision.

## **Keeping Our Institutions Secure While Locked Down**

The Secure Communities Network continues to produce helpful guidance on securing our institutions during this public health crisis. They have posted several resources, including a "[Low Cost/No Cost Security Measures for Jewish Facilities](#)" document.

## **Texas Education Agency Guidance for Schools**

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has issued [several documents on guidance for schools](#) as they look forward to opening in the fall. Notably, TEA issued guidelines for an adjusted school year to make up for the learning loss that has resulted from the shortened spring semester and taking into account a fall spike that may lead to additional closures.

## **Mental Health Month Continues**

The Jewish Federations of North America will be hosting a free webinar tomorrow on "[Building Mental Strength and Resilience Despite COVID19](#)." You must register in advance.

## **In Other News...**



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OF GREATER HOUSTON

As a sign that we are spending way too much money on alcohol during the pandemic, Tito's Handmade Vodka has [donated \\$1 million to Baylor College of Medicine](#) for COVID19 vaccine research. This comes at a time when alcohol sales have [jumped more than 240%](#) since the pandemic began. So, thank you Tito's, it's the least you can do!

Take care and I hope you find time to relax a bit tonight,

Jackie

**Jackie Fisherman** | Director of Government Affairs

[Jewish Federation of Greater Houston](#)

[5603 S. Braeswood Blvd. | Houston, TX 77096](#)

[Main: 713.729.7000 ext 325](#)

[jfisherman@houstonjewish.org](mailto:jfisherman@houstonjewish.org) | [www.houstonjewish.org](http://www.houstonjewish.org)