



Jewish Federation OF GREATER HOUSTON

June 26 PM - Jran Email **BREAKING NEWS**

Dear Jran Community:

Harris County

Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo announced that as of noon today, Harris County is in “[Level 1: Stay Home](#).” The County Judge issued an [advisory](#), not an executive order, that mirrors the April Stay Home, Work Safe order. Governor Greg Abbott has prevented County Judges and Mayors of issuing any order broader than his orders that apply to the whole state.

Under the County level one threat, the public is urged to:

- Stay home, except for the most essential needs like going to the grocery store for food and medicine.
- Avoid and cancel all gatherings of any size.
- Essential workers practice special precautions to prevent spread.
- All vulnerable individuals (65+ or with pre-existing health conditions) stay home.
- Self-quarantine for 14 days if in close and prolonged contact with someone who has tested positive with COVID-19.
- Wear face coverings to protect others.
- Avoid non-essential business and personal travel. Avoid public transportation where possible.
- Cancel visits to nursing homes, long term care facilities, and hospitals.
- Avoid and cancel all indoor and outdoor gatherings, including concerts, rodeos, large sporting events, etc. Schools and after-school activities for youth close, as directed by educational authorities.

Outdoor gatherings of over 100 people are prohibited in unincorporated areas of Harris County. The Governor’s most recent orders do not allow the County Judge to apply this prohibition of gatherings to the whole county.

The County Judge sent a message to other communities across the nation: Harris County was the canary in the coal mine, the pace at which Texas was allowed to open was not sustainable and has led us into a critical health crisis. She stated that if we do not act now, we will be at the point of no return.

Dr. Umair Shah reiterated the County Judge's comments and stated that this pandemic is far from over.

State of Texas

Governor Greg Abbott issued a [new executive order](#) today in response to the spike in Texas cases and hospitalizations. Under the Governor's new order, businesses are being required to operated at no more than 50% of listed occupancy. Businesses exempt from the Governor's order are:

There is no occupancy limit for the following:

- any services listed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) in its Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce, Version 3.1 or any subsequent version;
- religious services, including those conducted in churches, congregations, and houses of worship;
- local government operations, including county and municipal governmental operations relating to licensing (including marriage licenses), permitting, recordation, and document-filing services, as determined by the local government;
- child-care services;
- youth camps, including but not limited to those defined as such under Chapter 141 of the Texas Health and Safety Code, and including all summer camps and other daytime and overnight camps for youths; and
- recreational sports programs for youths and adults

The Governor's order lists a myriad of exemptions to the 50% capacity. Generally, here's a list of businesses that must close or roll back their occupancy limits:

- All bars and similar establishments that receive more than 51% of their gross receipts from the sale of alcoholic beverages are required to close at 12:00 PM today. These businesses may remain open for delivery and take-out, including for alcoholic beverages, as authorized by the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission.
- Restaurants may remain open for dine-in service, but at a capacity not to exceed 50% of total listed indoor occupancy, beginning Monday, June 29, 2020.
- Rafting and tubing businesses must close.
- Outdoor gatherings of 100 or more people must be approved by local governments, with certain exceptions.

What Does This Mean?



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The Governor has taken away the local authority to enact new emergency orders more restrictive of his executive order. The County Judge issued an advisory, which is not legally enforceable, but strongly encourages all businesses to close until further notice.

Under the Governor's order, most businesses may remain open, unless specifically ordered to close (see above).

As the County Judge put it during her press conference:

...the calculus should not be how hard can we work our doctors and nurses. That's the story of New York City, that's the story of Italy. We can do better than that. Remember who we are as a community and who we were during Harvey when we looked out for each other.

As Houston Jews, we have a choice today. As we grapple with making choices of whether to follow the Governor's executive order or the County Judge's advisory, let's remember the guiding principles of our work during this public health crisis and make decisions with them in mind:

- *Pikuah Nefesh* – the safeguarding of life as a bedrock of Jewish law
- *She'at Hadehak* – the need to be flexible and make adjustments in times of crisis and uncertainty
- *Hesed* – the practice of love and kindness as we make decisions.

If you have any questions or need clarification during this dynamic time, please feel free to email me at jfisherman@houstonjewish.org or call me on my cell at 512-565-4660.

Take care today and Shabbat Shalom,

Jackie

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