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news release

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State Provides New Social Distancing Recommendations as County Launches Additional COVID Info Line

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) issued new social distancing guidance late yesterday, recommending postponement or cancellation of large gatherings across the state through the end of March.

Social distancing is a preventative practice recommended by public health officials to stop or slow down the spread of contagious diseases. It requires the creation of physical space between individuals so there is less risk of person-to-person transmission.

Humboldt County Health Officer Teresa Frankovich said that with the new guidance, CDPH is signaling the importance of taking additional preventive measures. "The intent is to create physical space between people. This guidance is considered necessary to protect the public's health."

According to the CDPH:

- Large gatherings, those that include 250 people or more, should be postponed or canceled.
 - This includes concerts, conferences, and professional, college, and school sporting events.
- Smaller gatherings, those held in venues that do not allow social distancing of six feet or more per person, should be postponed or canceled.
 - This includes gatherings in crowded auditoriums, churches, rooms or other venues.
- Gatherings of individuals who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 should be limited to no more than 10 people.

- This includes gatherings at retirement facilities, assisted living facilities, developmental homes, and support groups for people with health conditions.

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, large conference room, meeting hall, cafeteria, or any other indoor or outdoor space.

This guidance does not currently pertain to businesses, but applies to all non-essential professional, social, and community gatherings regardless of their sponsor. Gatherings that do not meet the aforementioned criteria should only be conducted when they are essential—that is, if the activity is essential and could not be postponed or achieved without gathering, meaning that some other means of communication could not be used to conduct the essential function.

What will this achieve?

The timely implementation of aggressive strategies that create social distance and those that reduce close contact of people not regularly together, including limiting gatherings, has proven effective in prior pandemics at delaying rates of transmission and reducing illness and death.

By decreasing the prevalence of disease across California we will:

- Reduce the number of Californians who contract COVID-19 before an effective treatment or vaccine is available.
- Protect those most likely to experience severe symptoms, such as older Californians and those with underlying chronic conditions.
- Preserve and protect our health care delivery system, including our health care workforce, so they can care for the least healthy individuals in the community for any medical condition, not just COVID-19.
- Minimize the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 over the long run.

How long will these limitations apply?

This guidance will remain in place at least through the month of March. As with all guidance that relates to COVID-19 response, authorities will revisit this guidance on a regular basis to evaluate the continued public health need for it and to evaluate if any elements need to be changed. To stay informed, continue to monitor this link: www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Guidance.aspx.

What is Social Distancing and how is it achieved?

Social distancing is a practice recommended by public health officials to stop or slow down the spread of contagious diseases. It requires the creation of physical space between individuals who may spread infectious diseases. The key is to minimize the number of gatherings as much as possible and to achieve space between individuals when events or activities cannot be modified, postponed, or canceled.

Achieving space between individuals of approximately six feet is advisable. Additionally, there is a particular focus on creating space between individuals who have come together on a one-time or rare basis and who have very different travel patterns such as those coming from multiple countries, states or counties.

What can be done to a make a gathering safer if it is essential or small?

- Stagger activities.
- Add frequency of an event to spread out attendance, e.g. hold more, smaller gatherings.
- Add distance between where individuals sit or stand around tables.
- Add additional hand washing stations and restrooms.
- Limit the number of people in lines.
- Avoid direct physical contact, such as hand-shaking, holding hands, and hugging.
- Extend hours to allow for staggering of attendance or participation.
- Use phones, videos or video conferencing to reduce the need for close interactions.
- Consider ways to encourage anyone with fever and respiratory symptoms to stay home when sick, such as:
 - Offering refunds or support reselling of tickets for persons who become ill.
 - Placing messages on websites, tickets, and venue entrances reminding people to protect one another by staying home if sick.

Examples of Essential Events this Does Not Apply To

The goal of this recommendation is to prevent people physically coming together unnecessarily, where people who have the infection can easily spread it to others. This guidance does not apply to activities such as attendance at regular school classes, work, or essential services. These entities should be implementing risk-reduction strategies in their own setting.

Certain activities are essential to the functioning of our state and must continue. Hence, this does not apply to essential public transportation, airport travel, or shopping at a store or mall. Other specific guidance can be found on the CDPH website to help people take actions that can protect them in those settings.

This does not apply to congregate living situations, including dormitories and homeless encampments.

Click on the link to access the CDPH's social distancing guidance www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/Gathering_Guidance_03.11.20.pdf.

Click on the link to view the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance for preventing community spread www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html.

For current information about COVID-19, visit [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or [CDPH.ca.gov](https://www.cdph.ca.gov). Local information is available 24 hours a day at humboldt.gov/HumboldtHealthAlert, or during business hours by emailing covidinfo@co.humboldt.ca.us or calling 707-441-5000. For medical advice or questions about testing, contact Public Health by emailing hhsphb@co.humboldt.ca.us or calling 707-445-6200.

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