

RESOURCE AND INFORMATION GUIDE

For Harris County, Texas

Prepared by the Office of Precinct One

Commissioner Rodney Ellis



GENERAL INFO

[Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China. The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

As the number of positive cases of COVID-19 in this region climbs, the Harris County Public Health's [Novel Coronavirus page](#) is the best resource for the most up-to-date information and data.

COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

Per Texas Executive Order, effective July 3 **every person in Texas must wear a face covering over the nose and mouth when inside a commercial entity** or other building or space open to the public, or when in an outdoor public space, where it is not possible to maintain six feet of social distancing from another person not in the same household. See complete order [here](#).

[Mayor Sylvester Turner announced](#) on August 3 that Houston law enforcement officials will issue fines and citations to **people who do not comply with the mask order**. People who receive a warning first and still do not comply **will be fined \$250**.

On June 11th **Harris County announced a new color-coded system to inform residents regarding the current level of risk from COVID-19** and actions we strongly urge residents take to stay healthy, save lives, and ensure our local economy recovers in a way that is sustainable over the long term. We are **currently at level 1: Stay Home**. [Learn what that means and what the other levels of risk are here](#).

The CDC now recommends that everyone, even people who do not have symptoms, wear a cloth mask while in public. See the CDC's [simple tips for making your own mask](#) from household materials.

[Stay Home, Work Safe](#). Judge Hidalgo, in coordination with Mayor Turner and the City of Houston, has issued a *Stay-At-Home Order*. It is imperative that we mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our community and support our elected officials and health professionals with flattening the curve of person-to-person related infections. [See all the details of the order here](#).

- **People working from home do not have to shelter in place, but may leave their residence only to perform “Essential Activities.”** Groceries stores, pharmacies, gas station, parks, and other areas will remain open.
- Governor Abbott’s [Executive Order Relating to COVID-19 Preparedness and Mitigation](#), issued March 19, 2020.
- [Social distancing](#) is for everyone, not just those with risk factors (examples of high risk individuals include those who have had contact with an individual who has tested positive, have a compromised immune system, or are age 60+). Stay home if you’re sick, but also, work from home as much as is possible for your situation.
- Minimize physical contact—we should all avoid places and situations where you cannot stay 6 feet away, or at least arm’s length, from other people. [Wash your hands](#) for at least 20 seconds and avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. Wipe down frequently touched surfaces (like your phone).

Even if you do not feel symptoms, or are a younger person who is less at risk, everyone should all assume they are carriers of the virus and act accordingly to protect our neighbors. *We’re all in this together!*

VOTE S.A.F.E

This November, Harris County is anticipating historic turn-out in the election. COVID-19 poses unique challenges to ensuring that everyone can vote safely. In order to prepare for this election, the County Clerk’s Office has launched the **vote S.A.F.E initiatives**. **These initiatives have been put in place to make sure the election is safe, secure, accessible, fair and efficient.**

[Read all 23 initiatives here.](#)

RELIABLE RESOURCES

CALL CENTERS

- Ask My Nurse: 713-634-1110
- Harris County Residents: 832-927-7575
- Texas DSHS Hotline: 1-800-570-9779
- COVID19 Mental Health Support Line: 833-251-7544

INFORMATION

- [City of Houston: Mayor Sylvester Turner](#)
- [Harris County Public Health](#)
- [Harris Health](#)
- [Houston Emergency Operations Center](#)
- [Houston Health Department](#)
- [Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management \(Ready Harris\)](#)
- [ASL Resources](#)

TRUSTED COVID-19 RESEARCH

- [NIH LitCOVID](#)
- [WHO COVID Research](#)
- [NEJM, Lancet, Wiley, JAMA](#)
- [IDSA COVID19 Resource Center](#)
- [CORD-19 COVID19 Open Research Dataset](#)

HOW TO GET HELP

Having a place to live during a global pandemic is a matter of life and death, and many families' homes are in jeopardy. Despite limited resources, we're getting aid to those who need it most with the **\$25M Emergency Rental Assistance Fund**. Applications for Landlords are open until August 26. [Apply today.](#)

In response to the current conditions, Harris Health System is extending its [financial assistance program](#) until August 31 for current patients who have been approved for financial assistance.

Harris County will always stand up for its residents. If you witness an instance of [price gouging](#), report it to the Harris County Attorney's Office so that we can hold them accountable. They can be contacted at ConsumerHelp@cao.hctx.net or 832-839-6941.

If your income or job has been affected by the coronavirus, WIC is here to help. Call your local [Texas WIC office](#) or start your [application online](#) today. WIC benefits include healthy food and the application only takes a few minutes.

HOW TO HELP

During these times we all must work together to get through. There are a lot of [opportunities for Houston residents to give back.](#)

The Houston Food Bank is working diligently to get food to our community [but they need your help.](#)

Due to this outbreak closing blood drives, The American Red Cross is experiencing a historic shortage. Click [here](#) to see how you can help out.

[Houston Animal Shelters](#) are in desperate need of fosters. Having a furry friend at home during these stressful times can be mutually beneficial.

Residents and business owners, we encourage you to print and post visual reminders that will help you, your family and customers remember basic steps that everyone can take to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Feel free to print, post and share these flyers for your homes and businesses. Using your home printer, you can easily print these on regular 8.5" x 11" paper. These are great for businesses that are reopening.



FLYERS: [Did you wash your hands?](#) | [Handshake-free Zone](#) | [Keep Your Distance](#)

TESTING

The CDC has launched a [COVID-19 symptom self-checker](#). The purpose of the self-checker is to help make decisions about seeking appropriate medical care. But the system is not meant to diagnose or provide treatment options for COVID-19 or other conditions.

Harris County now has open testing sites! **In order to receive a test at one of these sites, you must complete [this self-assessment](#) to see whether further assessment or testing is necessary.** Sites will only accept people with a unique ID code obtained through the screening process.

SURGE TESTING

Residents must sign up for testing at one of our surge locations directly through www.DoINeedCOVID19test.com or by visiting ReadyHarris.org. You can also register by calling **832-927-7575**.

The Harris County Pidgeon Stadium and San Jacinto College Central will now have **evening testing** from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm. To register, [click here](#).

[Click here](#) for more information on where and how to get tested in Harris County.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Harris County Precinct One is partnering with the Houston Food Bank to distribute food every Tuesday starting at 9 AM at Julia C Hester House.

The following organizations are also working to distribute food. Please see their websites for details and schedules:

[Second Servings](#)

[MESA Outreach Community Food Pantry](#)

[Catholic Charities](#)

[Mission Bells Food Pantry](#)

[Target Hunger](#)

[St. Charles Borromeo](#)

[North Channel Assistance Ministries](#)

[Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church](#)

[House of Amos Emergency Food Pantry](#)

[Mana Food Pantry](#)

[West Houston Assistance Ministries](#)

[St. Monica Catholic Church Food Pantry](#)

[The Heights Interfaith Ministries Food Pantry](#)

SHOPPING

In order to help protect our more vulnerable population, **certain stores will be opening to seniors only for part of their business days**. Please see a list below and check with your local stores for specific hours.

- Whole Foods Market will service customers over the age of 60 one hour before opening to the public.
- Food Town will open their doors from 7am-8am to allow those aged 65 and older to shop in a less crowded environment (ID required).
- Dollar General will allow seniors to shop from 8am-9am.
- Walmart will allow those age 60 and older to shop the store and pharmacy one hour before opening each Tuesday.
- Every Tuesday and Thursday, Randalls will allow senior citizens to shop from 6:00 am to 9:00 am.
- Costco: Any member 60 and older can shop on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8 to 9 a.m.

Shopping Malls may also be operating on limited schedules but are open at this time.

HEALTHCARE

[Texas Department of State Health Services](#): If you need help finding a doctor or accessing medical care, dial 2-1-1, then choose Option 6 or call toll-free at 877-541-7905 or visit <http://www.211texas.org>

Hours: 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., 7 days per week.

[If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19](#) and develop a fever and symptoms, such as cough or difficulty breathing, call your healthcare provider for medical advice.

If you are sick with COVID-19 or think you might have it, stay home except to get medical care. If you have a regular primary care physician, call and see if you can set up a virtual appointment or e-visit. If you do not have a regular primary care doctor, you can still find a clinic that is offering these no-contact visits. (See the trusted resources section of this guide)

If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19 get medical attention immediately. Emergency warning signs include, but are not limited to, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, bluish lips or face. Call 911 if you have a medical emergency.

MENTAL HEALTH

Taking care of your emotional health during an emergency will help your long-term healing. It is natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief and worry during and after disease outbreaks. The CDC has put together this [resource guide](#) to help people cope with and manage their stress during this time. **The Disaster Distress Line offers free counseling 24/7, just call 1-800-985-5990.** If you or someone you know shows signs of stress for several days or weeks, get help by accessing **Harris County's COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line at 832-251-7544.**

If you are a Parent or Caregiver, here is a [guide created by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) with tips and strategies for helping your children cope during these stressful times.

Social distancing doesn't mean social isolation. Technology gives us the opportunity to stay connected even when we are physically separated. [The Neighborhood Project](#) is a service that helps facilitate conversations that people can engage with online while under quarantine and can help people feel less alone during these times.

Working from home brings new challenges. Everyday Health offers [Your Work-From-Home Survival Guide for Self-Care](#). It has tips to stay productive and healthy while working from home and coping with all the stress this situation brings.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) – It is important that we continue to take care of ourselves during this outbreak. [This resource](#) discusses feelings and thoughts that may arise during this time and has suggestions for ways to cope and support oneself during an outbreak.

Harvard Medical School advice on [coping with coronavirus anxiety](#).

The Child Mind Institute has compiled [resources on talking to children about COVID-19](#).

National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) – [Talking to Children About COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\): A Parent Resource](#):

For people with severe mental health needs, ensuring ongoing linkages to care is essential. HHSC contracts with 37 local mental health authorities (LMHAs) and two local behavioral health authorities (LBHAs) across Texas to deliver mental health services in our communities. A list of LMHAs and LBHAs in Texas can be [found here](#).

SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

The SBA Houston Office has resources and programs tailored for local business owners. Go to <https://www.sba.gov/offices/district/tx/houston> for more information.

SBA COVID-19 Small Business Guidance: <https://www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources>

SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loans: <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/>

[City of Houston Small Business Economic Relief Program \(SBERP\) – Applications close September 4th](#)

Harris County is dedicated to our hard working Small Business Owners that help make our area and economy great. **Harris County and the State of Texas are working to qualify for Small Business Administration Economic Injury Loan Disaster.** To complete an EIDL worksheet, business owners can go [here](#). This is NOT a loan application, but will help qualify Texas for inclusion in the program. For more information on what is needed to determine the eligibility and application process [click here](#).

America's Small Business Development Center Network (SBDCN) is the association that represents America's nationwide network of SBDCs. This site contains information and resources to help small businesses plan for and respond to COVID-19: [Corona Virus Information for Small Business](#)

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) is working with federal, state and local government officials and agencies to help manage the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. **To locate information and resources for employers seeking workers or as a jobseeker seeking employment or other support services,** [sign-up for TWC COVID-19 updates](#). To view the TWC website, go to [COVID-19 Resources Employers](#)

TRANSPORTATION

[METRO Changes:](#)

- **Limited Park & Ride service resumes on May 18.** For the full schedule [click here](#). METRO continues to encourage riders to use public transit for essential trips only.
- All **HOV/HOT Lanes have resumed normal operations.**
- Local Bus routes will continue to run on a Saturday schedule seven days a week, but frequency will be reduced from every 30 minutes to one hour.
- The Red Line will operate on a Sunday schedule every 12 minutes, Purple on a regular Sunday schedule every 18 minutes and Green will run bus shuttles every 20 minutes.
- The 322 Texas Medical Center shuttle from Fannin South to Hermann Park/Rice U station will operate every 10 minutes during peak morning and evening hours.
- METROLift will continue to operate with reduced capacity to allow social distancing.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

[The Marshall Project](#) is a nonprofit journalism organization that focuses on criminal justice. It has a curated collection of articles on the coronavirus and is a good resource for information.

EDUCATION

While the situation for schools going back in the fall is still developing here is the most up-to-date information:

To see the [state guidelines from T.E.A click here](#). According to the guidelines, schools must offer in-person learning and an online option. Parents will be able to choose and change their student's enrollment type.

[See Judge Hidalgo's Roadmap to reopen schools.](#)

Inaccessibility to online learning affects many children in our area, especially in vulnerable communities. Harris County is shrinking the digital divide by allocating \$32 million so children won't fall behind during and after this pandemic. Read [about it here](#).

Based on those guidelines independent school districts will be able to decide for themselves what their plan will be for the fall. Harris County and Houston health authorities have advised delaying in-person instruction until at least Sept. 8. See the different districts' plans below:

[HISD](#)

[Clear Creek ISD](#)

[Aldine ISD](#)

[Spring ISD](#)

[Alief ISD](#)

HOMELESSNESS

On July 1 The City of Houston, Harris County, and the Coalition for the Homeless announced a joint, **\$65-million plan to house 5,000 people experiencing homelessness over the next two years** to limit the spread of COVID-19. The Community-wide COVID-19 Housing Program (CCHP) represents an unprecedented coordinated effort on the part of the City and the County to address homelessness in the region.

If you need information or resources visit the [Coalition for the Homeless website](#).

For those experiencing homelessness, the following agencies are working to assist those who are overcoming homelessness.

- Harris County Public Health
- Office of Emergency Managements
- Coalition for the Homeless/The Way Home
- Continuum of Care
- Please see the Coalition's COVID-19 response [here](#).

IMMIGRANTS

No one should be afraid to get the medical help they need. [US Citizenship and Immigration Services](#) announced that **any testing, treatment or services relating to COVID-19 will NOT be used against immigrants in their public charge evaluation.**

VETERANS

All Veterans should call first before going to any of our VA facilities, especially if you have symptoms of fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Calling first helps us protect you, medical staff, and other patients. Ask your VA health care team about the option of care by phone or video instead of an in-person visit.

The [Veteran Services Department](#) is closed until further notice. Please access their website for assistance. **If you have flu-like symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath, call us at 713-794- 8985, before you visit your Houston VA or CBOC.** Clinical staff are available to provide 24/7 virtual care and support, including nurse advice and triage.

COUNTY DEPARTMENT CLOSURES

Harris County Animal Shelter is accepting animal surrenders only on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Visit the [County Pets website](#) for additional information about changes to availability of services and facilities.

The Harris County Law Library is closed until further notice. Due to public health concerns, in-person services will be temporarily suspended. To continue providing valuable services to patrons, the Law Library will expand virtual and remote services.

For the health and safety of staff and visitors, **Harris County Public Library** buildings will remain closed until further notice.

Following government guidance and protocols, **Harris County Clerk's** downtown office and all annex locations are accepting appointments for Assumed Names/DBA, Birth/Death Certificates, and Marriage Licenses. Please [reserve an appointment here](#). Employees will continue serving the public by email and phone, and residents can still access most services online.

The **Tax Office** is open for in-person appointments in the Automobile Services and Property Tax Departments. Drop-off services resumed for Franchised/Independent Dealerships and Title Services at all Tax Office locations except for the Kyle Chapman Tax Office location.

Harris County Treasurer's Office has reduced office hours until further notice. The office will be open from 9am to 2pm in an attempt to limit employee exposure to the general public. Staff will be in the office until 4:30 pm to assist with internal transfers and wires. The office is committed to meeting its statutory requirements and customer expectations, but it is also committed to employees' well-being.

Household Hazardous Waste Facility will be closed until further notice due to COVID-19.

Precinct One Community Centers are closed to the public in adherence to the guidelines on gatherings and social distancing recommendations. We will keep our residents informed on when we will reopen.

Visitors will no longer be allowed to attend **Commissioners Court**. Residents can watch the meeting on the county's live stream. And you can sign up to [speak virtually here](#).

OTHER CLOSURES

Harris Health System is closing some centers to visitors in response to COVID19.

Locations closed until further notice:

- East Mount Houston Center
- Strawberry Health Center

Locations closed to public but accepting drop-offs:

- Lois J. Moore Eligibility Center
- Southeast Eligibility Center

To reduce the risk of transmission and enhance patient and employee safety, Harris Health facilities is implementing a new visitor access policy:

Visitor access to Harris Health hospitals and clinics is no longer permitted, with exceptions for:

- Parents visiting her/his baby
- Visitors helping patients with personal mobility
- Visitors of end-of-life patients
- Individuals serving as surrogate decision makers for a patient.
- All visitors will be subject to the screening process.