



## CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

March 2, 2020

Metro Health is taking steps to prevent the introduction and spread of [novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) in our community. Our health care community plays an important role in this effort. You can help by sharing the information below with your staff and patients:

**Maintain perspective.** The United States has seen 16,000 deaths from influenza so far this flu season, compared to 1 from COVID-19 as of this writing. San Antonio has no identified cases of community transmission to date. Among people infected with COVID-19, only 20% become seriously ill.

**Take simple actions to slow the spread of respiratory infections and protect our community members who are at higher risk, such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions.** Stay home when sick, wash your hands often, avoid touching your face, cover your cough with your arm or a tissue, and disinfect surfaces.

**Fight misinformation.** Avoid spreading the stigma that this is a disease limited to one type of people. Know that people released from quarantine or isolation do not pose a risk of infection to other people.

Additional information and guidance for clinicians:

- Be prepared: Review and update your Emergency Operations Plan. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) continues to push out new resources and modify its guidance as we learn more about COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/index.html>.
- The CDC has guidance on optimizing PPE supply: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/healthcare-supply-ppe-index.html>
- Metro Health issued a Health Alert on 3-2-2020, attached.
- Local COVID-19 testing will not be available for several weeks. Metro Health is advising the general public that only people who are seriously ill are candidates for testing.
- Re-emphasize infection control and PPE training for all staff, particularly those working with elderly populations.
- Know the symptoms of novel coronavirus infection: fever (100.4F or more) and a dry cough; not a runny nose, typically. Over time, shortness of breath.
- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home. Employees who become sick at work should be sent home as soon as possible, and other employees should keep a 6-foot distance from them. We encourage employers to offer paid sick leave. Promote telemedicine urgent care, if that is an option for your employees.
- Monitor and plan for absenteeism. Absenteeism may arise because of sick employees, because healthy employees are caretakers for sick family members, because parents stay home with their



## CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

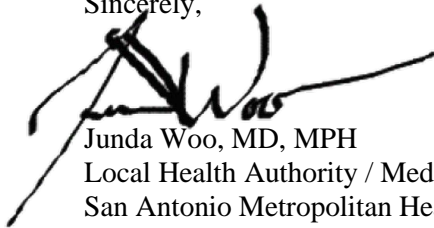
children during school closures, or because a staffer was in close contact with a sick person. We encourage facilities to cross-train staff in preparation for absenteeism. Your plan also could include alternate workflows and/or suspending some services.

- Surge plans could include consideration of cohorting patients to limit the number of staff who are exposed to COVID-19 and to conserve PPE.
- Disseminate culturally and linguistically appropriate information to employees about your preparedness and response plan.
- Employees planning to travel should review [CDC: Travel Health Notices](#) and keep an eye on the news for updates. Employees who recently arrived from places other than the identified affected areas do not have any special restrictions or need to seek health care unless they are sick.
- We are in cold and flu season. COVID-19 symptoms are similar to these more common infections—it is far more likely that anyone with respiratory symptoms is suffering from a cold or flu. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin.
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, be sure to maintain their confidentiality as required under the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- We know there may be specific situations that arise where you have questions. We encourage you to call us at **210-207-8876** (24 -7), so we can work together to determine the best course of action.

At this time, we are not making a recommendation to cancel large gatherings or social events. This is a rapidly evolving situation. For ongoing updates and for additional COVID-19 resources, including posters and fact sheets in multiple languages, please visit: [sanantonio.gov/Health/News/Alerts/CoronaVirus](http://sanantonio.gov/Health/News/Alerts/CoronaVirus) and [dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/](http://dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/).

Thank you for serving our community, and for partnering with us for a healthy San Antonio.

Sincerely,



Junda Woo, MD, MPH  
Local Health Authority / Medical Director  
San Antonio Metropolitan Health District  
[Junda.woo@sanantonio.gov](mailto:Junda.woo@sanantonio.gov)

P.S. Metro Health now offers health alerts by text. If interested, text DOCALERT to 55000. **Summary Terms & Conditions:** Mobile text messages are intended for subscribers over the age of 18 and are delivered via USA short code 55000. You may receive up to **4 message(s) per month for text alerts. Message and data rates may apply.** This service is available to persons with text-capable phones subscribing to carriers including AT&T, Verizon Wireless, T-Mobile®, Sprint, Virgin Mobile USA, Cincinnati Bell, Centennial Wireless, Unicef, U.S. Cellular®, and Boost. For help, text **HELP** to 55000, email [junda.woo@sanantonio.gov](mailto:junda.woo@sanantonio.gov), or call +1 2102075738. You may stop your mobile subscription at any time by text messaging **STOP** to short code 55000.