



([/web/20230127073525/https://www.dshs.texas.gov/](https://web/20230127073525/https://www.dshs.texas.gov/)) 

[Home \(/web/20230127073525/https://www.dshs.texas.gov/\)](#)

[/ News & Alerts \(/web/20230127073525/https://www.dshs.texas.gov/news-alerts\)](#)

[/ Texas Health Commissioner Declares Public Health Disaster](#)

# Texas Health Commissioner Declares Public Health Disaster

---

 NEWS RELEASE

March 19, 2020

## News Release March 19, 2020

Calls on Texans to stay home and limit gatherings to 10 people

Dr. John Hellerstedt, commissioner of the Texas Department of State Health Services, today declared a public health disaster in Texas because COVID-19 “has created an immediate threat, poses a high risk of death to a large number of people and creates a substantial risk of public exposure because of the disease’s method of transmission and evidence that there is community spread in Texas.”

The declaration cites the requirement under Section 81.002 of the Texas Health and Safety Code that “each person shall act responsibly to prevent and control communicable disease.” To do that:

- People, businesses and communities should immediately undertake hygiene, cleanliness and sanitation practices that are accessible, affordable and known to be effective against COVID-19.
- Limit trips into the public to essential outings. Traveling to work, the grocery store, the pharmacy or to seek medical care would be considered essential trips.
- Limit as much as possible close contact with other people. Stay six feet away.

- Do not gather in social groups of more than ten (10) individuals.
- Employers should allow work at home alternatives to the greatest extent possible.
- Restaurants should not allow dine-in options, either inside or outside. Take-out and curbside options with minimal contact are permitted and highly encouraged.

“The time to act is now,” said Dr. Hellerstedt. “If we delay, we will not only pay a higher price than necessary, we will also rue the day that we – all of Texas – did not choose to act decisively.”

The declaration further calls on people who are sick with COVID-19 symptoms to isolate themselves at home until they recover and only go to the doctor if they cannot be cared for at home. If someone with symptoms needs medical care, they should call their doctor or health care facility before arriving to allow them to prepare.

People who have, are suspected of having, or are under monitoring for COVID-19 should follow the guidance of public health officials. Failure to follow that direction may result in involuntary quarantine or isolation to prevent further spread of the disease.

DSHS is posting updated information, guidance for the public, health care providers and others, and updating case counts daily at [/coronavirus](#)

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20230127073525/https://www.dshs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/coronavirus/>).

-30-

**(News Media Contact:** *Chris Van Deusen, DSHS Director of Media Relations, 512-776-7119*)

DSHS Press Office on [Twitter](#)

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20230127073525/http://www.twitter.com/TexasDSHS>)

## **Subscribe to our email list**

Sign up to receive DSHS email and text updates

Sign up for Updates

([https://web.archive.org/web/20230127073525/https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/TXHHSC/subscriber/new?topic\\_id=TXHHSC\\_328](https://web.archive.org/web/20230127073525/https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/TXHHSC/subscriber/new?topic_id=TXHHSC_328))