

March 19, 2020

Texas State Sen. Bryan Hughes is the Chair of the Committees on State Affairs and on Administration and leads this effort to provide accurate information to the public. Additional information is compiled from FSC medical professionals working on the front line to treat, prevent, and manage COVID-19. Find additional resources [here](#),<sup>1</sup> including links to all 50 states' primary references on COVID-19.

## Basic Problem

COVID-19 can potentially create a “pig through a python” situation where a large percentage of people develop the virus simultaneously. If that happens in a particular region, as it has in some other countries, the health care system for that area could be overwhelmed.

Your personal safety is best served by not being part of the “pig through the python”. Use this sheet to educate yourself on some of the safety precautions that front-line emergency room physicians take to protect their families.

We typically do not recommend anonymous sources, but in this instance, the author is known to and deemed credible by one of our medical professionals. We therefore suggest reading this article: [Newsweek](#): Young and Unafraid.<sup>2</sup>

Note: we disagree with the box following the article in that it implies that masks are effective for members of the general public. As we later report, masks are a poor strategy for anyone other than someone trained to fit and wear a mask.

## Political Update

The White House recommends [Coronavirus Guidelines for America](#),<sup>3</sup> including that organizers cancel or postpone in-person gatherings that consist of 10 people or more throughout the U.S.

A growing federal response exists to the virus. Congress may vote on a record-breaking stimulus package in the next few days. It may exceed one trillion dollars and include payments to individuals as well as bailouts for specific industries. Each part of the proposal will be intensely negotiated. Also:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://fscllp.com/fsc-covid-19-resources/>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.newsweek.com/young-unafraid-coronavirus-pandemic-good-you-now-stop-killing-people-opinion-1491797>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/coronavirus-guidelines-america/>.

*This publication provides only general information and should not be relied upon as legal or medical advice. This publication may be considered attorney advertising in certain jurisdictions.*

- Medical diagnosis via technology – commonly known as telehealth – is limited in most states due to various factors. In light of the virus, telehealth will now be open to all Medicaid patients – around 62M people – with no co-pay.
- The federal government will reimburse for all COVID-19 treatment, regardless of type or status of coverage.
- The Small Business Administration will extend disaster loans to small businesses, nonprofits, homeowners, and renters. It's hopeful that credit decisions will be expedited from the normal 2-3 weeks. More details coming soon on this.
- The IRS and Treasury have announced a three-month delay for tax payments owed – up to \$1M. Tax returns must be timely filed, but payment of taxes due is extended from April 15 to July 15
- Restaurant and commercial property investor and Trump-appointed former Overseas Private Investment Corporation head Ray Washburn appeared on *Tucker Carlson Tonight* suggesting the federal government back insurers covering COVID-19 losses as business interruption. Washburn said much of the business impact could be resolved by business interruption insurers if they had federal financial backing.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott earlier in the week declared a State of Disaster. The Governor's executive actions thus far have dealt with relaxing and suspending government rules and regulations. He has not yet placed any restrictions or taken any action that would affect private businesses or citizens. Yesterday, he indicated that such orders may be coming.

The steps taken thus far have been to keep the supply chain for food, medical supplies, and consumables flowing and also easing the burdens of daily life during this time. Over 900 Texas public schools – representing almost 5.5M students - have closed. Every county in Texas now has a school closure. The current list of closings is [here](#).<sup>4</sup>

Working with private enterprise, Texas continues to open testing locations. The state can now test 200-300 people per day, and private labs have even more. By week's end, the Governor's office expects Texas to have testing capacity of 15,000-20,000 persons per week.

Regarding the supply chain, the news is encouraging. Grocery stores report that there is plenty of food. Many store shelves are emptying quickly, but they are refilled overnight and there is more stock arriving each day without any problems in sight. More than one major Texas grocery chain reports that it is aggressively hiring for all positions.

For residents of a city in Texas, the Mayor and City Council have the responsibility and authority to respond to health concerns in the City. For residents outside the city limits, the County Judge and Commissioners' Court fulfill this role.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/texas\\_school\\_closures\\_as\\_of\\_march\\_18th\\_at\\_12pm.pdf](https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/texas_school_closures_as_of_march_18th_at_12pm.pdf)

Each region of Texas also has a local Public Health Entity that coordinates with the Department of State Health Services and is specifically tasked with helping address the virus. Contact info for local Public Health Entities is [here](#).<sup>5</sup>

## Hot Spots

Washington State, New York State, and Northern California continue to be American “hot spots” for COVID-19. A U.S. list of cases by state is [here](#).<sup>6</sup>

As of March 18, 2020, there are 83 confirmed cases in 22 Texas counties. These are generally heaviest in the Dallas-Fort Worth and greater Houston metropolitan areas. Note that the Texas Department of State Health Services and the CDC update their official counts at noon each day; so, there is a reporting lag. The list of confirmed Texas cases by County as reported by the Department of State Health Services is [here](#).<sup>7</sup>

## Social Distancing

One of the worst consequences of social distancing is the mental toll it takes on everyone who is hunkered down. Make sure you are taking care of yourself both physically *and* mentally. Three of the nation’s top counselors<sup>8</sup> recommend the following practices during this time of social distancing:

- Exercise.
  - Many people now offer exercise classes live via video options. It may not be the same as being there in person, but it will help you feel connected to others while you also get a great workout.
  - Develop a fitness routine for mind as well as body by practicing mindfulness and meditation. There is a lot of research showing the benefits of meditation on mood and it helps folks learn to accept even the most uncomfortable of circumstances.
- Go outside every day if safe to do so.
- Call friends and relatives on the phone (not text or email) and catch up.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/regions/2019-nCoV-Local-Health-Entities/>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/graphics/2020/03/10/us-coronavirus-map-tracking-united-states-outbreak/4945223002/>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/news/updates.shtm>.

<sup>8</sup> Dr. Rick Gressard was chair of the National Board of Certified Counselors and the Virginia Board of Counseling. Dr. Spencer Niles serves as Dean of the School of Education and a Professor of Counselor Education at the College of William & Mary. Dr. Daniel Gutierrez is Associate Editor for quantitative research for the Journal of Counseling and Development and the director of the New Leaf Clinic.

- Talk to *at least* one friend on the phone every day.
- Eat well.
  - Spice up your meals by trying a new recipe. If you don't have all the ingredients be creative and use what you have. Invent something delicious!
- If you have a group that meets at a regular time (e.g., religious study, bridge club) do not cancel the appointment, but instead use that time to “meet” by phone.
- If you have a group of people you regularly play a sport with, call one of the people you enjoy talking to during that time and talk about the sport, or if safe to do so, go practice the sport by yourself. Ask your doctor if the sport is safe to practice with a friend or family member.
- Maintain interests outside work/school.
- Avoid self-medication.
- Talk with others about your problems.
- Pets offer emotional support to their families. If you've been thinking about adopting a pet, this may be a great time to do that.
- If you already feel like you've been in a rut, use this opportunity to develop a new routine. Set some goals and develop a schedule to stay active.
- Think about starting a family dinner, movie, or game night if you don't already do this. Use the time when you are home to engage in this family tradition – you can still maintain social distancing but participate in a common activity such as breaking bread, playing games, or movie watching.
- Make technology work for you by staying connected to others, learning something new, and engaging in healthy activities such as exercise and counseling by phone and computer.
- Know your family history concerning mental illness.
- Research has shown that religious people are happier than people who are not religious. There are many reasons for this, but an important thing many people take for granted is that there is wisdom in the great books of faith. Very smart people throughout history – including our Founding Fathers – have turned to these books for comfort and wisdom during difficult times.
  - There is a difference between solitude and isolation – one can be healing and one can be toxic. This can really be an opportunity for folks to practice converting one

into the other through the healing practices of solitude and silence that are found in many religious and spiritual practices.

- Recognize the symptoms of mental illness and seek help in early stages.<sup>9</sup>
- After a traumatic event, reach out to a support group or a professional counselor.
  - Know that many counselors offer counseling by phone and/or video. If you feel like you need help, you can still receive it without leaving your home.
  - For those who may have addiction issues, remember that there are a number of online 12 step meetings.
- Hold on to hope. Don't ignore the challenge we are all facing, but it can be easy to focus so much on the negative circumstances that we miss out on what good might be possible. Protect your mental health by exercising sober judgement and remembering what we haven't lost. Enjoy and reflect on the things you love and for which you are grateful.
- Reduce anxiety by following the COVID-19 protection strategies, which are available [here](#).

**We are continually learning more about how COVID-19. This information is subject to change and we have no responsibility for updating this publication.**

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<sup>9</sup> Symptoms of mental illness can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm> under the “Types of Mental Illness” tab.