

March 20, 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](#),¹ 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.²

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 touted slashing red tape to get COVID-19 drugs to market as quickly as possible. There are suggestions that a proposed roughly 250-page Trillion Dollar Stimulus package may not be the last one, depending on how the economy responds.

Texas Governor Gregg Abbot for the first time on Thursday used his emergency power to place restrictions on private citizens and businesses. He stressed that Texas has historically left these matters in the hands of local officials and on a very limited basis, but due to the worldwide nature and gravity of the current crisis, he chose to move forward with a statewide Order.

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

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

That Order, and the accompanying Declaration of Public Health Crisis by the State Health Commissioner (the first such declaration in nearly a Century), provide:

1. All restaurants and bars will be closed excluding drive-thru, delivery, and pick-up orders.

Note: if you do not wish to purchase cooked food from a local restaurant, nothing in the Governor's order prohibits the sale of raw food you can cook from home, which can even be delivered to your door. For example, you could order a raw whole chicken, tomatoes, breadcrumbs, a lemon, and an onion. Just negotiate the price with your local restaurant and make the meal yourself. This allows these restaurants to eliminate perishable inventory and keep the delivery people employed, so it is a win-win.

2. All gyms and workout facilities will be closed.

Note: please do not stop exercising just because your gym is closed. See tips later in this Update.

3. All schools will be closed, but instruction will not cease. School districts are working to sustain the education of their students through online or at-home assignments.

4. No gatherings greater than 10 people.

5. No visitation will be allowed to retirement or nursing homes.

Note: Please call anyone you normally visit at a retirement or nursing home and talk to them: this will be tough for them because, aside from your visits, they also get visits from organizations who sing, put on plays, or just say hello. Those visits will unfortunately but necessarily stop during this pandemic.

All effective at 11:59pm On Friday, March 20.

The Governor has given local jurisdictions the authority to postpone the upcoming May elections. This occurs in a particular area during or after a natural disaster. Implementing this statewide is an unusual step and further evidence of the seriousness of the situation.

To keep trucks on the road and food on the shelves, new Commercial Driver License applications are being expeditiously processed at Driver License offices by appointment only and with limited contact.

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.

There is optimism about new tests which are cheaper, easier to administer and faster to process. Approval is being expedited to make them available.

The supply chain is still strong and full. Grocery stores continue to report that there is plenty of food. Even as store shelves are emptying quickly, they are refilled overnight, and more food is arriving each day without any problems in sight. More than one major Texas grocery chain is aggressively hiring for all positions – and some are giving hiring preference to those whose jobs have been displaced by the pandemic.

There is also encouraging news that American manufacturing is quickly responding to the country's needs and shifting production to much needed medical supplies. Many have made comparison to WWII, when America's manufacturing quickly retooled for military production.

Additionally, many hotels have offered to house those with moderate levels of illness that do not need hospitalization but need to be isolated to prevent the spread.

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.

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

Hot Spots

California announced a statewide “stay at home” order. New York's governor and NYC's mayor continue to clash over an NYC “shelter in place” order. Washington State's governor asked that the U.S.S. Mercy be sent to Puget Sound, shut down restaurants and expanded gatherings, and Tweeted in response to various accusations “Let's put aside the rumors about martial law or military rule. IT'S JUST NOT TRUE.”

As of March 19, 2020, Texas has 143 confirmed cases in 27 counties (35 cases are awaiting county assignment). These remain generally heaviest in the Dallas-Fort Worth and greater Houston metropolitan areas, but more counties in less populous areas are reporting cases. We note again 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:
<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/news/updates.shtm>

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 counselors³ 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.
- 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 is 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.

³ 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.

- 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.⁴
- 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.

⁴ Symptoms of mental illness can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm> under the “Types of Mental Illness” tab.

- 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.