

Board of Commissioners
Thomas F. Mark, Chairman
Jason R. Jones, Vice Chairman
Denny Bucher
George S. Liner
Theron L. McCabe
Etteinne "E.T." Mitchell
Johnnie Sampson, Jr.

Administrative Staff
Jack B. Veit, III, County Manager
Gene Hodges, Assistant County Manager
Nan Holton, Clerk to the Board
Amber M. Parker, Human Resources Director
Craig Warren, Finance Director

Craven County



Administration Building
406 Craven Street
New Bern, NC 28560
Fax 252-636-2728
hr@cravencountync.gov

Commissioners 252-636-6601
Manager 252-636-6600
Finance 252-636-6603
Human Resources 252-636-6602

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
News Release 2: March 13, 2020

Contact: Amber M. Parker
(252) 636-6602

Craven County COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Team Following New Recommended COVID-19 Mitigation Measures Issued by NCDHHS

New Bern, NC – The Craven County COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Team (CCCPRT) met on Friday, March 13, 2020 to discuss how to continue serving citizens while also promoting health and safety for Craven County residents and employees. This meeting was held to implement the new recommended mitigation measures issued by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services sent out in a press release they issued last night after COVID-19 was declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organization.

Craven County Senior Services will be suspending all operations with the exception of the Home Delivered Meals and a modified Congregate Meals program effective March 16, 2020. The suspension of programs is in correlation with guidance from the Department of Health and Human Services related to the clients served by Craven County Senior Services. These operating circumstances will continue until further notice. If you have questions, please contact Craven County Senior Services at 252-638-1790.

At this time there are no approved treatments and no vaccine to prevent COVID-19; however, there are known methods to reduce and slow the spread of infection. Individuals can practice everyday prevention measures like frequent hand washing, staying home when sick, and covering coughs and sneezes. Community-based interventions can also help slow the spread of COVID-19. This includes measures collectively known as "social distancing." Social distancing measures aim to reduce the frequency of contact and increase physical distance between persons, thereby reducing the risks of person-to-person transmission. These measures are most effective when implemented early in an epidemic. North Carolina is at a critical inflection point where we may have the opportunity to slow the spread of this epidemic by taking proactive steps now.

The CCCPRT is following the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) recommended mitigation measures. NC DHHS is making the following recommendations to reduce the spread of infection while North Carolina and Craven County are still in an early stage in order to protect lives and avoid strain on our health care system. NC DHHS is making these recommendations for the next 30 days and will re-assess at that point.

The following recommendations pertain to persons statewide.

1. SYMPTOMATIC PERSONS

If you need medical care and have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or suspect you might have COVID-19, call ahead and tell your health care provider you have or may have COVID-19.

This will allow them to take steps to keep other people from getting exposed. NC DHHS recommends that persons experiencing fever and cough should stay at home and not go out until their symptoms have completely resolved.

2. HIGH RISK PERSONS WITHOUT SYMPTOMS

NC DHHS recommends that people at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 should stay at home to the extent possible to decrease the chance of infection.

People at **high risk** include people:

- Over 65 years of age, or
- with underlying health conditions including heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes, or
- with weakened immune systems.

3. CONGREGATE LIVING FACILITIES

NC DHHS recommends that all facilities that serve as residential establishments for high risk persons described above should restrict visitors. Exceptions should include end of life care or other emergent situations determined by the facility to necessitate a visit. If visitation is allowed, the visitor should be screened and restricted if they have a respiratory illness or potential exposure to COVID-19. Facilities are encouraged to implement social distancing measures and perform temperature and respiratory symptom screening of residents and staff. These establishments include settings such as nursing homes, independent and assisted living facilities, correction facilities, and facilities that care for medically vulnerable children.

4. SCHOOLS

We do not recommend pre-emptive school closure at this time but do recommend that schools and childcare centers cancel or reduce large events and gatherings (e.g., assemblies) and field trips, limit inter-school interactions, and consider distance or e-learning in some settings. Students at high risk should implement individual plans for distance or e-learning. School dismissals may be necessary when staff or student absenteeism impacts the ability to remain open. Short-term closures may also be necessary to facilitate public health investigation and/or cleaning if a case is diagnosed in a student or staff member.

5. WORKPLACE

NC DHHS recommends that employers and employees use teleworking technologies to the greatest extent possible, stagger work schedules, and consider canceling non-essential travel. Workplaces should hold larger meetings virtually, to the extent possible. Additionally, employers should arrange the workspace to optimize distance between employees, ideally at least six feet apart. Employers should urge high risk employees to stay home and urge employees to stay home when they are sick and maximize flexibility in sick leave benefits.

6. MASS GATHERINGS, COMMUNITY, AND SOCIAL EVENTS

NC DHHS recommends that organizers of events that draw more than 100 people should cancel, postpone, modify these events or offer online streaming services. These events include large gatherings where people are in close contact (less than 6 feet), for example concerts, conferences, sporting events, faith-based events and other large gatherings.

7. MASS TRANSIT

Mass transit operators should maximize opportunities for cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces. People should avoid using mass transit (e.g. buses, trains) while sick.

North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper declared a State of Emergency related to COVID-19 on March 10, 2020 which activates the State Emergency Operations Center. This declaration makes it easier for local agencies to coordinate a response to COVID-19. Craven County Emergency Management is maintaining situational awareness by closely monitoring the updated guidelines from the North Carolina Emergency Management State Emergency Operations Center efforts through the Web EOC system and the North Carolina Division of Public Health. Craven County Emergency Management is actively participating in implementing the new emergency medical services protocols that went into effect last week. Craven County Emergency Management has also implemented Emergency Medical Dispatch protocols to screen 911 medical calls to aid emergency medical services response and they are participating in all conference calls with State of North Carolina Emergency Management.

Coronavirus Disease 2019 or COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by a new virus first identified in Wuhan, China. Common symptoms are similar to the flu, including fever, cough, or shortness of breath. Coronaviruses like COVID-19 are most often spread from person to person through the air by coughing or sneezing, through close personal contact (including touching or shaking hands), or through touching your nose, mouth, or eyes before washing your hands. The best way to reduce your risk of becoming infected with a respiratory virus, such as COVID-19, is to practice good hygiene:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water is not available.
- People who are sick should always cover their coughs and sneezes using a tissue or the crook of their elbow; wash your hands after using a tissue to wipe your nose or mouth.
- People who are sick should stay home from work or school until they are well.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with your unwashed hands.

Craven County citizens are encouraged to use reputable sources of information to learn more about coronavirus. Reputable sources of information include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and NC Division of Public Health websites and the NC Division of Public Health's Coronavirus call line 1-866-462-3821.

Craven County Government COVID-19 updates will appear on the Craven County website at www.cravencountync.gov, on the Craven County Facebook page [@cravencounty](https://www.facebook.com/cravencountync) and the Craven County Twitter account [@cravencountync](https://twitter.com/cravencountync). Residents are also encouraged to register to receive notifications via the Craven County website and to register to receive emergency notifications via text, email and phone calls through the CodeRed Emergency Notification System.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html> and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Public Health website at <https://ncdhhs.gov/coronavirus>.

###