

## Office of Equity and Minority Health COVID-19 Q&A

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### 1. What to do if you do not have hand sanitizer or other supplies?

Washing with soap and warm water is the best way to protect yourself from illness. If soap and warm water are not available, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol may be used. Hand sanitizers containing less than 60% alcohol are not known to be effective in killing viruses.

### 2. What is the bleach and sanitizer dilution recommendation?

If you don't have household cleaner on hand to disinfect surfaces, you can use diluted bleach, if appropriate for the surface.

- Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.
- **Follow manufacturer's instructions** for application and proper ventilation. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.
- **Leave solution** on the surface for **at least 1 minute**

**To make a bleach solution**, mix:

- Five tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water, or
- Four teaspoons bleach per quart of water

### 3. What does "eligible" for vaccinations mean?

Vaccine eligibility means that the individual meets specific criteria (e.g., age, interval, indication) to be vaccinated. Although this criterion is met, it is also important to check for contraindications and precautions. There are some conditions in which individuals may

temporarily or permanently not be able to receive the vaccine (e.g., allergies, health conditions, and pregnancy). This is why herd immunity is so important, to protect individuals who may be eligible for vaccine but cannot receive it due to a contraindication or precaution.

#### **4. Do you have any resources/agencies/home health workers that will go into seniors' homes (that live alone) to make sure they are eating and taking medication?**

MDHHS has partnered with Area Agencies on Aging and local volunteers around Michigan to help older adults get the food and support that they need. MDHHS and its partners are specifically offering the following types of services:

- Meal Delivery – If you are 60+ you may qualify for home delivered meals through your local Area Agency on Aging. If you are eligible after you sign up, your regional agency or volunteer will contact you to have meals delivered. Meals can be fresh, frozen or shelf stable (non-perishable).
- Friendly Reassurance and Daily Check in Calls – This option is for older adults who are 60+ and would like to receive a daily check in call from a volunteer who can make sure they are doing ok and spend some time catching up, sharing news and important updates.

If you are in need of any of these services, [please complete the form](#).

- You can also call the Elder Law Hotline: Legal Aid for Seniors 866.400.9164

#### **5. If you are over the age of 65 is it safe to still donate blood?**

Healthy Michiganders are encouraged to continue to give blood – the need remains high during this pandemic. You can contact the American Red Cross ([RedCross.org](https://www.redcross.org)) to schedule an appointment to give blood if you wish to do so. American Red Cross has implemented mitigation measures at blood donation centers to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

#### **6. I have heard of families seeking financial assistance for burials--especially families who have had multiple deaths. Is there any funding or public assistance for this?**

When the descendant's estate, mandatory copayments, etc., are not enough, burial payment assistance may be available to pay for:

- Burial;
- Cremation; or
- Costs associated with donation of a body to a medical school.

An application for burial assistance must be made no later than 10 business days after the burial, cremation or donation takes place.

The decedent's remains must be in Michigan. Transportation, or other charges to bring a decedent back to Michigan, is not covered.

For more information, please visit the [Department's website](#).

**7. What resources are available for residents facing homelessness, losing their home, needing housing resources?**

- Find their [Local Homeless Assistance Resource Agencies \(HARAs\)](#)
- Select link, open document: Michigan Local Housing and Resource Agency (HARA) Contact List
- HARAs (by county) can provide guidance and assistance to individuals/families who are homeless or facing homelessness.

**8. Where can residents go for assistance with healthcare, food, cash, housing, paying bills?**

- Visit MI Bridges and fill out an application for possible benefits: [www.michigan.gov/mibridges](http://www.michigan.gov/mibridges)
- Michigan 2-1-1 (Information on programs that assist with food, housing, paying bills)
- United Ways COVID-19 Community Resources, including for dislocated workers: [COVID-19 Toolkit](#)

**9. Where can residents find childcare resources, assistance with childcare expenses?**

Visit MI Bridges at [www.michigan.gov/mibridges](http://www.michigan.gov/mibridges) for information on child care and additional resources available to eligible parents.

**10. I need help with transportation to medical appointments or to get tested. Where should I go?**

**i. For Medicaid Beneficiaries**

- Use this [brochure on Non-Emergency Medical Transportation \(NEMT\) for guidance](#):
- **Beneficiaries with a Medicaid health plan** should contact their health plan for transportation

- **Beneficiaries without a Medicaid health plan (excluding SE Michigan)** should contact their local MDHHS office
  - **Beneficiaries without a Medicaid health plan who live in SE Michigan** should contact LogistiCare Solutions at: 866-569-1902
- ii. **For Individuals with Private Health Insurance**
- Contact their health plan to see if they offer Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) as part of their benefits
  - If their health plan does not offer NEMT, contact 2-1-1
- iii. **For Individuals Who are Uninsured**
- If someone is uninsured, they should apply for Medicaid to see if they are eligible. If they are not eligible for Medicaid or other insurance, they can go to their local Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) to receive services. They may have to pay for these services based on a sliding fee scale, which is based on the patient's income.
- iv. **For Seniors**
- If they have a Medicare Advantage (Part C) health plan, contact the health plan to see if they offer Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT)
  - Contact their [local Area Agency on Aging for assistance with NEMT](#)

## **11. Where can I find information on nutritional programs and other supports for older adults?**

MDHHS has partnered with Area Agencies on Aging and local volunteers around Michigan to help older adults get the food and support that they need. MDHHS and its partners are specifically offering the following types of services:

- **Meal Delivery** – If you are 60+ you may qualify for home delivered meals through your local Area Agency on Aging. If you are eligible after you sign up, your regional agency or volunteer will contact you to have meals delivered. Meals can be fresh, frozen or shelf stable (non-perishable).
- **Friendly Reassurance and Daily Check in Calls** – This option is for older adults who are 60+ and would like to receive a daily check in call from a volunteer who can make sure they are doing ok and spend some time catching up, sharing news and important updates.

If you are interested in any of these services, please [complete the online form](#).

## **12. What is the state doing to address COVID-19, specifically for those living with disabilities?**

1. In terms of access to care – many insurance companies are allowing telemedicine and phone visits so that patients can still talk to physicians as needed to manage their disabilities and existing conditions. Behavioral health providers continue to support through electronic means based on individual abilities.
2. We are making sure all communication is accessible – electronic documents from MDHHS are being reviewed for accessibility, Governor town halls all have sign language interpreters present, informational videos are being created using ASL.
3. We are working to expand testing accessibility, to make sure that all people can get tested if deemed appropriate by a healthcare provider.
4. MDHHS is issuing guidance to improve access for disability groups as identified through frequent meetings with public mental health system leaders.

### **13. How and where to get testing with insurance?**

- Individuals who are concerned about their health and experiencing respiratory illness or other concerning symptoms, should contact their healthcare provider to discuss their symptoms.
- Healthcare providers make decisions about testing based on signs and symptoms of respiratory illness and potential exposure. They also try to rule out other causes for respiratory illness.
  - a. If your healthcare provider decides it is necessary to test for COVID-19, they will take the sample and order testing. You will receive your results from your healthcare provider.
  - b. If your healthcare provider decides it is not necessary to test for COVID-19, and you do not agree, you could consider getting a second opinion.
  - c. If your healthcare provider does not offer COVID-19 testing, and you are concerned about your health, you should contact a different healthcare provider.
  - d. If you do not have a healthcare provider, contact an urgent care center.

### **14. When to seek testing.**

If you feel like you are experiencing symptoms of respiratory illness (cough, fever, shortness of breath) and are concerned about your health, you should contact your healthcare provider to discuss your symptoms. If you do not have a healthcare provider, you can contact your local urgent care center.

### **Prevention precautions to take:**

1. Frequently Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
2. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
3. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or upper sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
4. Avoid contact with people who are sick.
5. Stay home if you are sick and contact your healthcare provider.

6. Maintain 6 feet of space between yourself and others from outside your household. If you must go in public for an essential need (like to get groceries or to seek medical care), wear a face covering. CDC, [Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19](#)

### **15. Is the cost of testing covered?**

As of March 14, the following insurance companies in Michigan have agreed to waive the cost sharing component of medically necessary testing for COVID-19:

- Blue Cross Blue Shield
- Priority
- HAP
- McLaren
- Aetna (CVS)
- Meridian/Centene
- Total
- Cigna
- United
- Oscar

Several of these insurers also announced they will cover and encourage the use of virtual care and telemedicine.

Michigan's Bureau of Laboratories (BOL) does not ever charge for testing, however your provider may charge for collecting the specimen. Not everyone can be tested at the BOL, BOL is reserved for people at high risk from illness or people who live in high-risk environments (like congregate care).

### **16. Where should residents go for testing without insurance?**

If you are sick with respiratory illness, and are concerned about your health, you should contact your healthcare provider or urgent care center to discuss your symptoms.

If someone is uninsured, they should apply for Medicaid to see if they are eligible. If they are not eligible for Medicaid or other insurance, they can go to their local Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) to receive services. They may have to pay for these services based on a sliding fee scale, which is based on the patient's income.

### **17. Is the cost of testing covered for people without insurance?**

On March 6, Governor Whitmer announced that the Michigan Medicaid Program will waive copays and cost-sharing for testing and health care treatment related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). MDHHS is waiving copayment and cost-sharing requirements for both inpatient and outpatient services associated with coronavirus (COVID-19) testing and treatment across Medicaid programs.

In addition, Governor Whitmer announced that Medicaid will expand access to telemedicine for Michiganders. Medicaid beneficiaries will be able to receive services in their home while the state combats the spread of COVID-19. [View the Medicaid bulletin.](#)

### **18. What if someone we serve doesn't have a health care provider or insurance?**

If you don't have a health care provider, call your nearest urgent care. Any testing site has the ability to take someone without insurance if testing is decided to be necessary. There is no charge for COVID-19 testing.

If someone is uninsured, they should apply for Medicaid to see if they are eligible. If they are not eligible for Medicaid or other insurance, they can go to their local Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) to receive services. They may have to pay for these services based on a sliding fee scale, which is based on the patient's income.

### **19. What if a doctor tells a person they can't be tested, but they have symptoms?**

Testing criteria for Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) has been expanded in Michigan to include individuals with mild symptoms. <https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98189---,00.html>

Local health department are facilitating the approval and prioritization of specimens being submitted to the MDHHS Bureau of Laboratories. They are not conducting specimen collection for COVID-19 testing. Some physicians are also not collecting specimens. The best advice we can give is to call ahead to provider locations to determine the availability of testing. Please inform them of your current symptoms in case there are special instructions for individuals with respiratory symptoms who are presenting to their facility.

### **20. How can I take care of a COVID-19 patient at home?**

Many people who have COVID-19 will experience mild symptoms that can be cared for at home. There are 10 easy ways to take care of yourself at home for people who are not seriously sick. This information is available to download as a handout:

[English](#) | [Spanish](#) | [Chinese](#) | [Vietnamese](#) | [Korean](#)

1. Stay home from work, school, and away from other public places. If you must go out, avoid using any kind of public transportation, ridesharing, or taxis.
2. Monitor your symptoms carefully. If your symptoms get worse, call your healthcare provider immediately.
3. Get rest and stay hydrated.
4. If you have a medical appointment, call the healthcare provider ahead of time and tell them that you have or may have COVID-19.
5. For medical emergencies, call 911 and notify the dispatch personnel that you have or may have COVID-19.
6. Cover your cough and sneezes.
7. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

8. As much as possible, stay in a specific room and away from other people in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available. If you need to be around other people in or outside of the home, wear a facemask.
9. Avoid sharing personal items with other people in your household, like dishes, towels, and bedding.
10. Clean all surfaces that are touched often, like counters, tabletops, and doorknobs. Use household cleaning sprays or wipes according to the label instructions.

There is also more detailed information about [caring for yourself at home](#). MDHHS has also released [discharge instructions](#) and information about [caring for emotional well-being while recovering](#).

## **21. What is the theory on facemasks? Use them or not use them as you are going about looking for groceries or the pharmacy?**

Even healthy people are now encouraged to wear a cloth face covering when in public. There are lots of cost-effective ways to make a covering for your face. [The U.S. Surgeon General created a video](#) to show you how to make coverings with materials you have around your house. There are also patterns available on the [CDC website](#).

It is important to remember that medical face masks (like surgical masks and N95 respirators) must be saved for healthcare workers. Medical facemasks should be worn by:

- [Healthcare workers](#)
- [People taking care of someone with COVID-19](#)
- If you are sick with respiratory illness, your healthcare provider may recommend that you wear a mask. This is to protect others from the risk of getting infected.

## **22. What is happening concerning Medicaid coverage for children and adults who are unable to submit necessary reapplication materials but have ongoing health needs?**

As a result of the federal emergency health declaration, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is suspending program coverage closures for all Medicaid programs beginning March 16, 2020 and will be in effect through the month of April 2020 or until the first of the month following the termination of the Governor's Declaration of a State of Emergency Order (2020-04, COVID-19), whichever is later. Medicaid coverage will only be closed if the individual moves out of state, requests that their benefits close, or they become deceased.

This temporary suspension of closures applies to Medicaid, MIChild, Healthy Michigan Plan (HMP), and individuals who have active coverage through a met deductible (i.e., spend down). Individuals who meet their deductible during the declared health emergency period will remain open until the end of the health emergency. Temporary closure restrictions do not apply to the MOMS program as this is not a Medicaid group. While closures will not take place except for the reasons stated above, individuals may (in limited cases) move to other Medicaid groups. These



individuals will not see a decrease in their benefit amount and their case will stay open during the health emergency. More information about this policy change can be found in [MSA 20-19](#).

### **23. How do State and Federal agencies plan to assist hospital systems that are bearing the financial burden of the pandemic?**

There are currently no state programs in place for financial assistance for hospital systems.

### **24. What are some steps to help prevent COVID-19?**

- Frequently wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or having been in a public place.
- If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or upper sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home if you are sick and contact your healthcare provider.
- Maintain 6 feet of space between yourself and others. If you must go in public for an essential need (like groceries or medications) and cannot avoid other people, wear a face covering.
- To the extent possible, avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places – elevator buttons, door handles, handrails, handshaking with people, etc.
- Use a tissue or your sleeve to cover your hand or finger if you must touch something in a public place.
- Clean and disinfect your home to remove germs: practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (for example: tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks & cell phones)
- Avoid crowds, especially in poorly ventilated spaces. Your risk of exposure to respiratory viruses like COVID-19 may increase in crowded, closed-in settings with little air circulation if there are people in the crowd who are sick.
- Avoid all non-essential travel including plane trips, and especially avoid embarking on [cruise ships](#).

### **25. What should I do if I have any symptoms of COVID-19?**

Symptoms may appear in 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Common symptoms are:

1. Fever
2. Cough
3. Shortness of breath

- If you are experiencing these symptoms, and are concerned about your health, you should contact your healthcare provider. If you do not have a healthcare provider, contact an urgent care center.
- If you think you have been exposed to someone who is sick with COVID-19, you should stay home and away from other people.
- If your local health department contacts you to tell you of an exposure, you should **follow their directions carefully.**

If you develop **emergency warning signs** for COVID-19, get **medical attention immediately.** Emergency warning signs include\*:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or inability to arouse
- Bluish lips or face

\*This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning.

**26. What diagnostic tools should be kept handy, to give an accurate report to doctors on the phone?**

- **Self-observation** means people should remain alert for subjective fever, cough, or difficulty breathing. If they feel feverish or develop cough or difficulty breathing during the self-observation period, they should take their temperature, self-isolate, limit contact with others, and seek advice by telephone from a healthcare provider or their local health department to determine whether medical evaluation or testing is needed.
- **Self-monitoring** means people should monitor themselves for fever by taking their temperatures twice a day and remain alert for cough or difficulty breathing. If they feel feverish or develop measured fever, cough, or difficulty breathing during the self-monitoring period, they should self-isolate, limit contact with others, and seek advice by telephone from a healthcare provider or their local health department to determine whether medical evaluation is needed.

**27. What are we doing to address those who are undocumented during this time? Are we addressing the increased presence of ICE noted in communities?**

Priority is keeping people safe regardless of legal status. Please direct those individuals who have concerns to the COVID-19 hotline or email box.

**28. What steps is MDHHS taking to minimize COVID-19 related racial rhetoric and incidents against Asian Americans and Asians?**

Our message is that everyone is at risk. Hate crimes have been happening across the country towards Asian Americans and others. Discrimination, prejudice and violence is unacceptable. One of the actions we can all take is to listen to, acknowledge and with permission, share the stories of people experiencing stigma. We asked everyone to rally together with a clear message that bias, and racism is not acceptable in our communities.

It is important to remember that stigma and discrimination occur when people associate an infectious disease, with a population or nationality. COVID-19 does not target people from specific populations, ethnicities, or racial backgrounds. Sharing accurate information and data is one step that has been taken.

Hate crimes should be reported to the [Attorney General Hate Crimes Unit](#).

**29. What are we doing to address the concern for the possibility of an increase in abuse for domestic violence survivors who may be quarantined with the abuser? How are we addressing the potential increase in child abuse?**

Any person in an abusive relationship should know that there are resources out there to help them, no matter where they are in the country. The National Association of Domestic Violence hotline, 1-800-799-SAFE, is manned and open 24/7. Those at risk may also access it online in case they don't want to risk calling.

**30. How should I report violations of EOs that have to do with businesses?**

1. Enforcing Executive Orders: contact local law enforcement
2. MIOSHA is, and will continue, to take questions/complaints from workers or businesses on safety issues. They are not interpreting the essential or non-essential under the EO.
3. If a worker feels unsafe, direct them to [MIOSHA](#) for FAQ's and guidance, [MIOSHAinfo-gi@michigan.gov](mailto:MIOSHAinfo-gi@michigan.gov).
4. A question on "I'm being forced to continue to work and don't believe I'm essential," goes to local law enforcement, while a question on "I'm being forced to work and my employer isn't following the guidelines," would be MIOSHA.

**31. Is it ok to check on neighbors or friends, or have small gatherings with family? What can we do to help when we hear someone say this?**

All public and private gatherings of any number of people occurring among persons outside a single household are temporarily prohibited. Try to stay in touch with others by phone or email. Stay at home as much as possible and avoid non-essential travel.

You may bring essential items to others who are otherwise unable to leave their homes, for example if they are self-isolating. Contact should be avoided while dropping off items, an option could be to leave them on the porch.

### **32. How are Detention Centers addressing the crisis?**

Until further notice, anyone coming into a prison facility will be asked a series of screening questions and may have their temperature checked before being allowed entrance into a prison. This includes all staff, visitors, volunteers and contractors. In communities where there are outbreaks, the department will consult with the local health department and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and will potentially disallow all visits and outside contact from anyone other than MDOC personnel.

If visits are cancelled, prisoners will have increased time for phone calls and for sending electronic messages to family and friends.

Information on prevention is being provided to the prison population and MDOC staff. For the past week, facilities have undergone additional and more frequent cleaning of all facilities.

The department is also reviewing all previously scheduled large events including graduations, corrections officer training academies and other training events.

Any people in facilities like detention centers and MDOC facilities are also being prioritized for testing to ensure that quick action can be taken and that they will receive the care they need.

### **33. Is it safe to go outdoors for leisure walks, to ride bikes, etc.?**

Outdoor activities are permitted, including walking, hiking, running, cycling, or any other recreational activity. Outdoor activities must not conflict with an executive order and individuals must remain at least six feet from other people.

### **34. Is there translated information in multiple languages?**

A repository of resources in other languages can be found on the Michigan COVID-19 website [Alternate Languages Page](#).

The Department is continuing to add resources in additional languages. There are currently resources in the following languages:

- Spanish
- Arabic
- Simplified and traditional Chinese
- Korean
- Burmese
- American Sign Language
- French
- Swahili

**35. Does the COVID-19 hotline provide access to interpretation/non-English options?**

Spanish is available on the COVID-19 hotline 7 days per week. Call the hotline and select the "Spanish" option. If no Spanish-speaking call handlers are available at that time, a message instructs the caller (in Spanish) to leave a voicemail and one of the Spanish-speaking volunteers will return their call when they are available.

As of right now only English and Spanish are available on the hotline, but callers are encouraged to go to the [Alternate Languages Page](#) to view information available in the language of their choice.

**36. What measures are MDHHS and other public health organizations taking to make sure that immigrant and other language speaking community members have the same access to information, resources, and treatment as their non-immigrant neighbors?**

A repository of resources in other languages can be found on the Michigan COVID-19 website [Alternate Languages Page](#).

**37. Deaf and hard of hearing – need for specific outreach; flint community working on video to get information – they do not use the same channels.**

- MDHHS has released important information in ASL on the [alternate language portion of the webpage](#).
- ASL translators are on site for every announcement from Governor Whitmer.
- Important documents on the website are made accessible for screen readers to the extent possible.

There are various organizations that have put out videos: <https://deafhhs.org/updates-on-coronavirus-covid-19/>

**38. What if water to a household was shut off? What if someone can't afford their water bill as the pandemic continues?**

**[Executive Order 2020-28: restores water service to occupied residences during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)**

The order requires public water suppliers to immediately identify residences in their service area that do not currently have water service, and to make best efforts to restore service to homes where the service has been disconnected due to non-payment or damaged infrastructure.

The order is effective for the duration of the COVID-19 emergency. It does not absolve anyone from responsibility for past-due bills.

To assist communities in complying with the order, a \$2-million fund has been established through Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). The Water Restart Grant Program will provide funding to local communities to help reconnect homes to their water supplies.

[EGLE will provide limited grants to communities based on available funds](#). Grants will be provided to high-risk areas. Communities interested in accessing the funding should email [EGLE-RestartGrants@michigan.gov](mailto:EGLE-RestartGrants@michigan.gov)

### **39. How can people safely access food pantries?**

Michiganders can [identify their local food bank](#) to find out more information on their current operations and distribution.

Older Michiganders may refer to the [article from AARP for Meals on Wheels](#), as well as a list of food banks. Most importantly, they can call 2-1-1 to get more information on food programs in their area.

Free Food: Michigan residents 60 years and older are eligible for home-delivery or pick-up meals during the COVID-19 pandemic. Seniors can also request a daily wellness-check phone call. To request a delivery, meal or friendly reassurance call visit [www.newmibridges.michigan.gov](http://www.newmibridges.michigan.gov) or [Fill out the form here](#).

### **40. How should Soup Kitchens operate safely to serve clients?**

All meals have switched to a "to go" style bagged meal that can be either "grab and go" or dropped off for people in scattered site locations. Meals are no longer being served in a congregate setting (cafeteria) and people need to eat their meals either in their rooms or in areas where they are sufficiently distanced.

### **41. What are schools doing to help provide breakfast and lunch to students who qualified for receiving those meals at their school, when it was in session?**

Under the Governor's executive order, K-12 school food services are considered critical infrastructure and should continue. [Find an out-of-school food program](#).

### **42. Will the MDHHS loosen up income eligibility standards for Food Assistance benefits during the COVID-19 time?**

Yes, we are actively working on loosening standards with federal government and hoping to make an official announcement soon. There are a couple of changes related to COVID-19 that have already taken effect:

- Michigan families currently receiving Food Assistance Program benefits were provided an emergency allotment if they were not already receiving the maximum benefit. This increased food assistance for more than half of families receiving benefits from the program.
- Families with students who are enrolled in the Michigan Department of Education program for free or reduced-price lunch are eligible to receive additional support through the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer Program (P-EBT). This includes families currently receiving Food Assistance Program benefits as well as those not currently enrolled in the program. Families will be notified by mail.

**43. Will Food Assistance recipients be able to use their EBT cards to purchase non-food items?**

EBT cards must be used for food items.

**44. Is there food delivery available for people in quarantine?**

The state is working aggressively to get any and all approval from the federal government to allow SNAP recipients to use their EBT cards in online ordering. At this time, Amazon and Walmart are authorized retailers in select states to allow the use of EBT cards online, the state is working to bring that function to Michigan to support residents staying home.

**45. Will ID be required for the Meet up & Eat Up program? Are parents able to pick up food and will they have to have proof that they have children 18 and under?**

No. ID will not be required and children will not need to be present.

In accordance with the Families First Coronavirus Act of 2020, FNS has begun granting waivers that allow states approved for non-congregate feeding, greater flexibilities which allow parents and/or guardians to pick up meals for their children, without the student needing to be present. This waiver is in support of social distancing and minimizes the exposure of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), it is effective immediately, and remains in effect through June 30, 2020, or until expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier.

**46. We already live in a food desert. What is being done to help us get fresh food?**

Based on the county and resources, each foodbank, pantry, farmers market and food service program is operating as quickly and safely as they can in response to the Governor's Stay Home, Stay Safe Executive Order. Several Summer Feeding Service Programs (SFSP) have now been mobilized with the closing of all schools in the State of Michigan. [Find a feeding program site.](#)

For the months of March and April, [eligible households will receive additional food assistance benefits](#), along with temporarily waiving the SNAP work requirements.

Michiganders can [identify their local food bank](#) to find out more information on their current operations and distribution.

Older Michiganders may refer to the [article from AARP for Meals on Wheels](#), as well as a list of food banks. Most importantly, they can call 2-1-1 to get more information on food programs in their area.

Free Food: Michigan residents 60 years and older are eligible for home-delivery or pick-up meals during the COVID-19 pandemic. Seniors can also request a daily wellness-check phone call. To request a delivery, meal or friendly reassurance call visit [www.newmibridges.michigan.gov](http://www.newmibridges.michigan.gov) or [Fill out the form here](#).

#### **47. How are school districts handling meal debt and costs to families at this time?**

Due to the mandatory closure of all Michigan K-12 schools, the Michigan Department of Education is allowing all Sponsors who participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and SFSP to serve meals during this time. During this mandatory closure meals/snacks served must meet the meal pattern and are not required to be consumed onsite. [Find a Meet Up & Eat Up site for your student](#).

Families with students who are enrolled in the Michigan Department of Education program for free or reduced-price lunch are eligible to receive additional support through the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer Program (P-EBT). This includes families currently receiving Food Assistance Program benefits as well as those not currently enrolled in the program. Families will be notified by mail.

#### **48. Group Homes - if people are positive; how do we provide adequate housing.**

1. Quickly move guests who are ill to an area isolated from the rest of the facility.
2. Consider designating a sick room. Beds in this area should be placed 6 feet apart or head-to-toe with beds 3 feet apart. Mobile screens can be used to encourage compliance with separation areas.
3. Guests who are ill should eat meals separate (such as in their room) from guests who are not ill.
4. If guests who are ill need to move through common areas, they should perform hand hygiene, wear a surgical mask, and minimize time in those areas.



**49. For renters who are not working, how can we help them avoid fees for paying rent late?**

Workers experiencing unemployment or reduced employment due to COVID-19, should file for unemployment to avoid falling behind on bills including rent.

On March 20, Governor Whitmer signed an [executive order](#) temporarily suspending evictions, allowing tenants and mobile home owners to remain in their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are adhering to this policy at properties financed, assisted or administered by MSHDA and including but not limited to: Section 8, Section 236, Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), Rural Housing, Tax-Exempt Bonds, Taxable Bonds, Neighborhood Preservation Program, TEAM, HOME, HOME TEAM Advantage and Pass-through programs.

**50. How will this affect the requirement for (unmet) payments for the upcoming funding year if clients cannot pay their utility bills**

In response to COVID-19, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) will be making the following changes to State Emergency Relief (SER) policy in order to allow for faster processing of emergency requests and to make access to benefits easier to Michigan's most vulnerable households.

Effective Monday, March 30, 2020, the following SER changes will be in effect and should be applied to any case being processed on or after March 30, 2020.

1. **A phone interview is no longer required.**
  - In instances where changes are reported or there are discrepancies that must be resolved, the worker may choose to complete an interview.
2. **Suspension of one-time energy assists**
  - SER energy services will no longer be limited to one payment for the remainder of the fiscal year; however, the service caps will remain the same:
  - \$1,200 for propane and fuel oil
  - \$850 for all other energy types
3. **The non-cash asset limit will be increased to \$15,000.**
  - The non-cash asset limit will be changed to align with the cash asset limit of \$15,000 for all SER services (except burial when the deceased is the only group member).
  - SER groups who are composed of Family Independence Program (FIP), State Disability Assistance (SDA), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medical Assistance (MA) and Food Assistance Program (FAP) recipients continue to have automatic eligibility on the basis of non-cash assets.
4. **Elimination of the shortfall determination**

- [MDHHS will not be making a shortfall determination for any month for energy or utility services until further notice](#). The required payment amount for electricity, heat, water, and sewer services is \$0.

### **51. How do I apply for unemployment? (Answered in general Q & A)**

Eligible employees are strongly encouraged to apply for unemployment benefits online at [Michigan.gov/UIA](https://Michigan.gov/UIA) or by calling 866-500-0017. A factsheet on how to apply for benefits can also be found online.

Filing online remains the fastest way for Michiganders to apply for unemployment benefits at [Michigan.gov/UIA](https://Michigan.gov/UIA). **The Unemployment Insurance Agency urges Michiganders to file during off-peak hours to avoid longer load times (between 8:00pm and 8:00am)**. Users are asked to be patient and not click more than once to reload a page.

### **52. What if I don't have paid sick leave?**

If you are following guidance issued by a medical professional or public health official to isolate or quarantine yourself as a result of exposure to COVID-19 and you are not receiving paid sick leave from your employer, you may be eligible to receive unemployment benefits.

**[Employees may also be eligible for paid sick leave under a new federal law – Families First Coronavirus Response Act \(FFCRA\)](#)**. If an employee is eligible for emergency leave under the FFCRA, an employer may not require an employee to use other paid leave provided by the employer to the employee before the employee uses emergency paid leave under the FFCRA.

### **53. What if I work for a business that is allowed to stay open, but I feel like it is putting me at risk?**

The Michigan Department of Attorney General has established a "[Know Your Employment Rights](#)" section on the department's website to provide information and answers to questions about the legal rights of employees and employers under Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's Stay Home, Stay Safe executive order. If an employee believes their employer is failing to take the proper precautions to protect employees from exposure to various threats, they can learn [how to file a complaint with MIOSHA online](#).



### **54. What steps is MDHHS taking to assist newly unemployed people get enrolled in Medicaid quickly during the pandemic?**

Michiganders who lose employer-based health insurance may have options to continue or replace their coverage. Residents are encouraged to [apply for Medicaid online](#) to expedite the process.

Anyone who has lost their job will also be able to use a special enrollment period to enroll for insurance through the Affordable Care Act Marketplace within 60 days of the loss.

**55. When can self-employed individuals file for unemployment benefits?**

**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**  
**File Your Claim By Last Name**

ONLINE SCHEDULE:	CALL CENTER SCHEDULE:
 <b>michigan.gov/uia</b> WEBSITE IS 24/7	 <b>1-866-500-0017</b> 8 AM-6 PM MON-FRI, 7 AM-2 PM SAT
<b>A-L</b> FILE CLAIMS Monday Wednesday Friday	<b>A-L</b> CALL ON Monday & Wednesday
<b>M-Z</b> FILE CLAIMS Sunday Tuesday Thursday	<b>M-Z</b> CALL ON Tuesday & Thursday
Saturday if you missed your days	Friday and Saturday if you missed your days

The day or time of day in which a claim is filed will not impact whether you receive benefits or your benefit amount. Additionally, your claim can be backdated to reflect the date you were laid off or let go due to COVID-19.

Under the new federal law, benefits are open to many people who previously did not qualify, including various classes of self-employed workers. The benefits are under pandemic unemployment assistance programs.

The weekly benefit amount is calculated under 20 CFR 625.6 and allows full benefits, currently \$362, to self-employed people who can document net income in excess of this maximum weekly benefit amount. The federal regulation contemplates using tax return information to calculate the weekly benefit amount, although it is advisable to have additional pay and income information available to further substantiate your income. Those with income below this threshold or with insufficient wages to typically qualify will be paid a lesser amount. The minimum weekly benefit amount is currently set at \$160.00. Please note, the independent contractor or self-employed worker is entitled to the additional \$600.00 per week federal payment in addition to whatever state benefit they qualify for. [This will start of](#)

[April 13, 2020.](#)

**56. What is the best way to get to food pantries now with the limited transportation options?**

Some people can use public transportation. If it is soap and water are not available, carry hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol, when soap and water is not available, also wear a cloth face covering.

**57. How are the Instructions for Completing the Human Infection with 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Person Under Investigation (PUI) and Case Report Form followed? How is demographic data being collected?**

MDHHS is rapidly expanding and improving capacity to report data related to the coronavirus outbreak, and will be reporting COVID-19 updates daily at 3 p.m., starting March 27 at <http://Michigan.gov/Coronavirus>. Reports will contain information on the following:

- Cumulative cases and deaths by county
- A map illustrating case density by county
- Percentage of cases by age range
- Overall percentage of cases by sex
- Overall percentage of deceased by sex
- Cumulative number of specimens tested for COVID-19
- Average age, median age and age range of deaths

Once on the website, you can click the "See Cumulative Data" button for state-wide results.

Demographic data is being collected by the medical provider, local health department, or public health staff by communicating with the individual. These professionals fill out the PUI and Case Report form and share it with the local health department and CDC officials, as needed. Demographic data is also reported into the Michigan Disease Surveillance System (MDSS).

**58. Is testing data broken down by county residence or race/ethnicity?**

MDHHS is rapidly expanding and improving capacity to report data related to the coronavirus outbreak, and will be reporting COVID-19 updates daily at 3 p.m., starting March 27 at <Michigan.gov/Coronavirus>. Reports contain information on the following:

- Cumulative cases and deaths by county

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- Percentage of cases by age range
- Overall percentage of cases by sex
- Overall percentage of deceased by sex
- Cumulative number of specimens tested for COVID-19
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Once on the website, you can click the "See Cumulative Data" button for state-wide results.

More testing information will be available to local health departments on the Michigan Health Alert Network. The local health department will decide how to share this information for their jurisdiction.

**59. On the site [Michigan.gov/coronavirus](https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus), data shows basically 50/50 of men and women have the virus. Then they show Overall Percentage of Deceased by Sex, where a larger percentage of males is dying than women. Why are more men dying than women?**

There is still a lot that is unknown about COVID-19 and the effects of the disease. This trend has been noted and research is being done to learn more.

**60. Is there data on the number of African Americans being tested compared to other races?**

Information including demographics, locations, and testing data are available on at [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://www.michigan.gov/Coronavirus).

**61. Do you think that higher numbers for older adults stem from the lack of willingness younger adults/people have of going to be checked? Do you think the numbers are actually higher?**

Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more severe complications from COVID-19. Due to limited testing, people with higher risk for severe illness are prioritized for testing. Numbers are very likely higher than what is being reported, both due to the lack of testing availability and due to the mild symptoms that many people may experience (and would not feel the need to get testing, or their doctor would not determine a need for testing). MDHHS has expanded and is continuing to expand testing availability to get the most accurate number possible in our state.

## **62. What social, emotional, and mental health resources are available to help residents looking for mental health support?**

Many organizations have resources available to help people get through the emotional hardship brought on by COVID-19.

- Michigan COVID-19 mental health peer line: 888-733-7753 (daily 10 am – 2 am)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)  
Disaster Distress Helpline: Call: 1-800-985-5990 Text: TalkWithUs to 66746  
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Call: 800-273-8255 Text: TALK to 741741
- [American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry](#)
- [Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress](#)
- [American Psychiatric Association](#)
- [National Council for Behavioral Health](#)

## **63. How are we dealing with the mental health impact on racial/ethnic communities?**

Given the severity of the illness some people experience and the unprecedented situation we are all in, the mental health of people will be affected statewide.

MDHHS has launched a hotline to connect individuals with certified peer support specialists who have lived experiences of behavioral health issues, trauma, or personal crises, and are trained to support and empower callers. **Call 888-PEER-753** (888-733-7753) daily, 10 am – 2 am.

MDHHS continues to work to identify ways to expand access to mental health care.

## **64. What can we do to reduce subsequent trauma from this situation?**

Many organizations have resources available to help people get through the emotional hardship brought on by COVID-19.

- Michigan COVID-19 mental health peer line: 888-733-7753 (daily 10 am – 2 am)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)  
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- [American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry](#)
- [Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress](#)
- [American Psychiatric Association](#)
- [National Council for Behavioral Health](#)

## **65. Are there any special precautions for these individuals with mental health/substance use disorders in the jail? How are facilities ensuring their needed services continue?**

For information on how COVID-19 is being addressed in your local jail, you will need to reach out to the local sheriff's office. Chief Justice Bridget McCormack's addressed how the [courts and jails are taking steps to counteract the spread of COVID-19](#).

For additional information, review the [Michigan Department of Corrections FAQ](#).

**66. With a study that confirms that coronavirus virus is spread through breathing and talking, what is the state's plan to disseminate this information widely and provide recommendations for prevention when there is a need to go out?**

It is important to clarify that talking is consistent with droplet formation, but transmission by breathing is still unknown. The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to be mainly spread through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs, especially between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).

Some recent studies have suggested that COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms. That is why the state has updated its recommendation to include that all individuals wear a cloth face covering when outside the home, and why maintaining good social distance (about 6 feet) is very important in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Public communications such as the #MIMaskChallenge are important strategies to getting the word out about the newly recommended guidance.

**67. What are best ways that local nonprofits and service delivery providers can assist in this effort?**

Community partners can help by sharing information and resources about keeping people safe and healthy. Partners that work with 2-1-1 should keep information about the services they provide updated with 2-1-1. There is a wealth of information and communication resources available at [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://Michigan.gov/Coronavirus). Materials are available in English and other languages.

**68. What is being done by the State to communicate with low-income communities of color knowing some families don't have access to a phone, the internet? Has there been a print mailer or something developed?**

MDHHS is partnering with organizations such as the Food Bank Council of Michigan and sharing information with local agencies and community partners, like organizations that serve Michigan's homeless population or provide food to share information on prevention and testing.

**69. How can we access print copies of resources mentioned to put in student meal bags?**

Information and communication resources on COVID-19 are available at [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://www.michigan.gov/Coronavirus). Information is available in multiple languages in addition to English.

**70. Where can I find communication resources (social media and other graphics posted on the COVID-19 website)?**

[Download communication resources and social media graphics from the state's coronavirus website](#)

**71. What information would help the Office of Equity and Minority Health in efforts to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on minority and undeserved communities?**

In addition to the recent virtual town hall, our office has assisted in drafting guidance for:

- Improving the collection and use of race and ethnicity and other demographic data
- Culturally and linguistically competent guidance for mediation strategies
- Emotional and mental health practices for racial and ethnic minorities

We also continue to seek information and guidance from national, state, and local stakeholders to inform our response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please continue to ask your questions and share the challenges by calling the COVID-19 hotline at 888-535-6136 or send emails to [COVID19@michigan.gov](mailto:COVID19@michigan.gov). If there is anything else you believe the Office of Equity and Minority Health staff should be doing to assist during this critical time, send an email to [jegedeb@michigan.gov](mailto:jegedeb@michigan.gov).