

## Public Safety Alert!

March 17, 2020  
Osage County, Missouri  
Susan Long  
Health Department

Smart911/Osage County Public Safety Alert:

Good afternoon, this is Susan Long with the Osage County Health Department again. And again, I apologize for the intrusion into your lives. I am announcing that this morning, in accordance with the president's and the CDC directives, that I and the 3 county commissioners signed an order restricting intentional gatherings of 10 people or more until April 1st. This excludes schools, daycares and businesses at this time. Of course, we are aware that many of the schools are closed with the last few closing by the end of the week. Daycares and businesses have the option of closing, if they feel it is their best interest. Food establishments can remain open, but need to limit the number of clientele in the business at any time. We are recommending take out or using drive thru windows if available should you want food you didn't cook. There will need to be some creativity as we all learn how to deal with this. The CDC website will have the most up-to-date information for general information on COVID-19 for you to refer to and you may also call the State COVID hotline number for specific questions you might have. The number is 1-877-435-8411. If you have questions that were not answered by checking the CDC site or by calling the hotline number THEN call the health department. It should be noted that this office will not be discussing personal health information so please do not call to ask. Should we have a positive test, the public would be alerted. Remember that influenza is still making lots of people ill and the COVID-19 symptoms can be very similar to the flu. Also please remember that 96% of all results from COVID-19 testing have been negative in the country and state so far.

We are asking those folks over 60 to limit their time out in public to lower their risk of exposure. This would also apply to persons with chronic medical conditions or who have weakened immune systems. The schools are setting up school lunch programs for pick up or delivery and will be sending specific details out for their school families. The food pantry will be open and serving those who need services with some modifications to their process. Many events were already postponed to lessen potential exposure to the community, even before today out of concerns for general well-being.

For businesses having trouble finding hand sanitizer, please call our office for updates on where to find it if you can't access it in person or online. We have asked all the retailers to keep us updated. There are significant shortages in all of the stores, without a doubt. Shelves will be restocked in stores as shipments come in. If you don't see something you need on the shelf, ask. Due to hoarding, some stores are keeping certain supplies in the back. Remember, this is not forever!

Please check on your neighbors and family and friends to see how they are doing. When you are used to being around other people frequently and all of a sudden you aren't, it can certainly be stressful and depressing. Little acts of kindness will go especially far right now. A stranger paid for my coffee this morning. This has really kept me going today. I plan to pay it forward and provide a kindness to at least 1 other person yet today. Despite the rumors, it is okay to sit outside in your yard and it is okay to have your windows open if the weather is nice. It's also okay to do something nice for yourself.

Many health care provider offices are trying to minimize exposure for the staff and for their patients. They will let you know how they can best protect you during this time when you call them. This goes for mental health services, too. Many physical and mental health services are being provided via phone. If you feel you need to be seen for something, call your provider and they will determine how best to care for you. Again, we ask that no one just show up at a provider's office or in the emergency room with respiratory symptoms without having called first. If you are calling 911, be very specific as to symptoms. They will ask questions to clarify if they need. This is all so that we are not exposing our health care providers to COVID-19 or anything else. We need to keep them and all of our first responders healthy so they can continue to do their jobs to help others.

I have asked all of our social service programs to prepare for a surge in needs. We realize that some people will not be able to work whether due to illness or their work is temporarily closed. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you need some help. Most people are not used to doing this, but these are extraordinary times. You can pay it forward someday for someone else in a time of need.

I will continue to update with any significant changes. Please be kind to each other and please be patient. This disease is not personal against anyone! Not even against my 16 y/o grandson who is going to be delayed in getting his driver's license due to his mom's reluctance to be out in public!