

## Important Information Related to COVID19 for Missouri Social Workers

*We are continuing to monitor the current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic very closely. We care deeply about the health and well-being of our members and the clients and communities you serve. As more details emerge and recommendations for health and safety change, NASW-MO is committed to providing information and resources that are relevant and useful for you during this uncertain time.*

### National Updates and Resources

Please visit the NASW National website for current information by clicking on

<https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Infectious-Diseases/Coronavirus>

UPDATE: Due to high demand for this content, registration for the March 23 webinar is now closed. Details for related #COVID19 online courses will be posted soon.

### Social Work in This Unprecedented Time

Social Work in This Unprecedented Time <https://buff.ly/33z99pH> The three largest #socialwork organizations in the US, The Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB), the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), and NASW are calling #socialwork practitioners, students, faculty, employers, regulators, policy makers, and all interested parties to action. We acknowledge that we are all living in a very tumultuous time. Clear thinking is essential but can be made more difficult because of overwhelming emotions – our own and those around us. ASWB, CSWE and NASW encourage everyone to take the time necessary for self-care and to prioritize the needs of your own health, the health of your families, and the safety of our communities. Please click and read, too, how the supply chain for the next generation of social workers entering the field has been disrupted and will remain so for the foreseeable future -- and what we can all do about it. Thank you and please everyone, be safe. <https://buff.ly/33z99pH>

### Social Work License Regulations

State-by-state regulatory provisions for social work emergency responders and COVID-19 policy actions as of 3.20.2020 is now available on the ASWB website: <https://www.aswb.org/regulatory-provisions>

### Missouri Specific Information

The following updates have been provided to NASW-MO by our contract lobbying firm, Winton Policy Group.

We wanted to provide some additional information regarding the operations of state government in light of COVID-19. As you are aware this situation continues to be very fluid, but at the moment we know:

- Governor Parson declared a state of emergency on Friday, March 13. On Sunday, March 15, Parson provided further guidance encouraging local governments to follow CDC recommendations for curtailing and prohibiting non-essential public gatherings of more than 50 individuals.
- Several large political subdivisions, including St. Louis County and City, have also issued state of emergency declarations, curtailed public gatherings, and closed schools.
- Several entities in state government are engaged on this issue, but the lead is the Department of Health and Senior Services. DHSS is currently in the process of working with the Missouri Hospital Association and other stakeholders to submit the proper waiver requests to the federal government for healthcare providers to help them address the coming strain on healthcare systems.

- As of March 19, all 555 Missouri school districts/ charter schools [reported](#) closures. These decisions were made by school districts and not a statewide directive to close.
- Governor Parson announced on March 20 that an order is forthcoming to limit gatherings of over 10 people. More details will be released soon, but it will not apply to hospitals, pharmacies, grocery stores, or state government. He emphasized this is not meant to shut down businesses.
- The State Legislature has modified its schedule in response to the pandemic. The Senate adjourned March 12 and will be out until at least March 30 for the scheduled spring break. The House modified its schedule and largely focused on passing the supplemental budget this week, and they will be out next week for spring break. There are ongoing discussions about further curtailing the session as other states have either limited their sessions to only budget matters or adjourned completely.

The general focus of the state government is on healthcare issues relating to the pandemic. However, it is quite clear there are a host of issues you will be faced with in the delivery of services as the crisis unfolds. Therefore, we want to ensure you have a resource and conduit to state government to help mitigate unintended consequences related to school closures, reductions in state workforce, and other issues as much as possible. We know there may be rules/regulations as well as interim funding and other challenges you will face in the coming months. Therefore, as you plan how to continue delivering services, we want to encourage you to communicate with us whenever there is a question related to state resources, rules, or statutes.

As patients are encouraged to stay home and healthcare systems are generally overloaded, Mo HealthNet and CMS have released guidance easing restrictions on the use of telehealth. The situation is continually evolving, but below are several resources that may be specifically of interest:

- **Behavioral Health:** During this event, Mo HealthNet is allowing behavioral health telehealth services to be provided to MHD participants, while at home, using their telephone. The guidance on telehealth for behavioral health providers is [here](#).
- **General Telehealth:** This updated [guidance](#) from Mo HealthNet includes information on modified regulations for providing services via telehealth to Medicaid patients.
- **CMS Guidance:** Earlier this week, CMS released a [fact sheet](#) on Medicare telemedicine. Significantly, they announced HHS would exercise enforcement discretion and waive penalties for HIPAA violations against health care providers that serve patients in good faith through everyday communications technologies, such as FaceTime or Skype, during the public health emergency.

We are sure you are receiving information on COVID-19 from a variety of sources. We would encourage you to utilize the resources below in obtaining information for you and the individuals you serve.

- **CDC:** The CDC's updated situation summary is [here](#), and guidance for providers is [here](#).
- **Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services:** The DHSS [COVID-19 page](#) includes the latest information on the outbreak in Missouri as well as a consolidated list of related news from Missouri agencies.
- **Mo HealthNet:** You can find a full list of COVID-19 related guidance for Missouri Medicaid [here](#). Provider bulletins, both COVID-19 related and general updates, are available [here](#).
- **Department of Social Services:** This [site](#) includes COVID-19 updates from DSS. For example, the Family Support Division is waiving all work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents for 90 days. Additionally, Child Care Subsidy program will work on a case-by-case basis to approve additional hours of care for families affected by COVID-19.

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## House Passes Supplemental Budget in the Midst of COVID-19

*Supplemental Budget Includes \$33 Million in Federal Funds  
to Respond to the Pandemic*

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Missouri House convened this week and passed the FY 2020 supplemental budget, which is additional funds needed for state operations until the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2020).

The House's stated plan at the start of the week was to pass the supplemental budget as well as the FY 2021 operating budget before leaving for spring break, which was scheduled to begin March 20. The budget is the Legislature's one constitutional duty each session, and the bills are due to the Governor's desk on May 8. The House Budget Committee convened Sunday to amend and vote out the FY 2021 operating budget bills. The expectation was the full House would come in Wednesday to vote on them. However, on Tuesday, Majority Floor Leader Rob Vescovo (R-Arnold) announced that due to uncertainty around revenues and future needs, as well as to prioritize member safety, the House would work on the full budget after they return from spring break.

The full House met on Wednesday and approved the FY 2020 supplemental budget as well as HB 2456, sponsored by Representative Cody Smith (R-Carthage), to extend the provider taxes that are critical to funding the state's Medicaid program. Budget Chair Smith offered an amendment to the supplemental budget, which was adopted, to add \$33 million of federal spending authority for coronavirus preparation and response. He said this number was based on conversations with Governor Parson's administration and their best estimate of how much money Missouri would receive for COVID-19. The original request from the Governor's office was \$13 million, but they increased this by \$20 million for flexibility in the event of additional federal funding. Smith said the Senate could also add in additional spending authority if needed when they take up the supplemental budget bill. Since the Governor declared a state of emergency, the state can also access \$7 million in emergency state funds to respond to the pandemic. However, these are also the funds Missouri would draw on for other emergencies, such as flooding.

Several Democrat members offered amendments, which were defeated, to include additional money for COVID-19. Significant time was spent debating an amendment from Representative Jon Carpenter (D-Kansas City) to include \$86 million for healthcare infrastructure. The amendment was voted down 47 to 100.

The House adjourned upon completion of the supplemental budget for the Legislature's scheduled spring break, which is set to end March 30. Speaker Elijah Haahr (R-Springfield) said it is unlikely the House will meet the week of March 30. The Senate did not meet this week out of caution for members, staff, and guests, and Senate Majority Floor Leader Caleb Rowden (R-Columbia) sent out an email that their schedule after spring break is still in flux.

On Wednesday, Governor Mike Parson issued an Executive Order providing departments broad authority to waive statutory or regulatory requirements, with the Governor's approval, in response to COVID-19. Specifically, the order waived statutes requiring an in-person assessment before physicians can prescribe via the phone and requiring an existing physician-patient relationship before the use of telehealth. This is in an effort to remove barriers to the use of telemedicine as patients are urged to stay home and to reduce pressure on healthcare systems. The order also waived a statute on hours of service for commercial trucks as well as certain requirements around hours of clinical experience for teacher certification.

Agencies across state government have issued announcements about their responses to COVID-19. The situation is continually evolving, but below is a sample of the measures recently implemented.

- Governor Parson announced on March 20 that an order is forthcoming to limit gatherings of over 10 people. More details will be released tomorrow but it will not apply to hospitals, pharmacies, grocery stores, or state government. He emphasized this is not meant to shut down businesses.
- The Governor announced he directed the Missouri State Emergency Management Agency and the Missouri Department of Economic Development to seek assistance for Missouri businesses through the U.S. Small Business Administration's Economic Injury Disaster Loan program.
- Missouri's April 7 municipal elections have been postponed until June 2, per an Executive Order. This change was also requested by Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft.
- As of March 19, all 555 Missouri school districts/ charter schools reported closures.
- Mo HealthNet has eased restrictions on providing services via telephone to reduce the need for face-to-face interaction with patients.
- The Department of Corrections has suspended visits to state prisons as well as face-to-face office visits for Probation and Parole Officers.
- The Department of Social Services announced the waiver of all work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents for 90 days.

## **Governor Directs Health Department to Order Social Distancing Statewide**

### *Stay-at-Home Orders Begin Monday in St. Louis City and County*

At a press conference yesterday, Governor Mike Parson announced he was directing the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) to require social distancing statewide. Today, the Governor issued a release that DHSS is ordering the following as part of this effort:

1. "In accordance with the guidelines from the President and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, every person in the State of Missouri shall avoid social gatherings of more than ten (10) people. For purposes of this Order, "social gatherings" shall mean any planned or spontaneous event or convening that would bring together more than ten (10) people in a single space at the same time.
2. In accordance with the guidelines from the President and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, every person in the State of Missouri shall avoid eating or drinking at restaurants, bars, or food courts; provided, however, that the use of drive-thru, pickup, or delivery options is allowed throughout the

duration of this Order.

3. In accordance with the guidelines from the President and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, people shall not visit nursing homes, long-term care facilities, retirement homes, or assisted living homes unless to provide critical assistance.
4. In accordance with the guidelines from the President and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, schools shall remain closed. This Order does not prohibit schools from providing child care and Food and Nutritional Services for those children that qualify. Teachers and staff may enter the building as long as they follow the directives set forth in this Order."

This does not prohibit individuals from going to grocery stores, parks, gas stations, or banks. Workplaces that remain open are encouraged to have employees work from home when possible. This order takes effect March 23 and will last until April 6, unless extended. You can read the full press release on the order [here](#).

The Governor also issued a [press release](#) on state agencies' responses to help individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes:

- During the public health emergency, eligibility for Medicaid participants will not be terminated unless the individual requests a voluntary termination or moves out of state.
- The tax filing deadline remains the same, but the payment deadline for individual state income taxes is extended to July 15.
- Vehicle owners with registrations or license plates expiring in March and April are granted an automatic two-month extension.

St. Louis County Executive Sam Page and St. Louis City Major Lyda Krewson [announced](#) their jurisdictions will be adopting stay-at-home orders starting Monday. The orders will direct residents to stay at home when possible. However, they will not prevent individuals from obtaining essential goods and services or from going to work, if their business/industry is permitted to remain open under the orders.

You can view the St. Louis County Department of Public Health Stay at Home Order [here](#). The St. Louis City Health Commissioner's Order is online [here](#). Both begin March 23 and extend until April 22.