

**ELLIS COUNTY****ORDER OF ELLIS COUNTY JUDGE TODD LITTLE**

DATE ORDER ISSUED: March 17th, 2020

Summary: The virus that causes 2019 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) is easily transmitted through person to person contact, especially in group settings, and it is essential that the spread of the virus be slowed to protect the ability of public and private health care providers to handle the influx of new patients and safeguard public health and safety. Because of the risk of the rapid spread of the virus, and the need to protect the most vulnerable members of the community, this Order prohibits community gatherings of 50 persons or more anywhere in Ellis County beginning at 2:00 p.m. on March 17, 2020, and continuing through 2:00 p.m. on March 24, 2020. For purposes of this Order, community gatherings are defined in Section 2, below. For all other gatherings, the Offices of the Ellis County Judge and the Local Health Authority strongly recommend following the social distancing protocols attached to this Order, including canceling, rescheduling, or not attending events that anticipate having 50 or more people in attendance. Additionally, the Offices of the Ellis County Judge and the Local Health Authority urge in the strongest terms possible high-risk individuals, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to cancel, reschedule, or not attend any gathering or event.

**UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE****SECTION 418.108, ELLIS COUNTY JUDGE TODD LITTLE ORDERS:**

1. Effective as of 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 17, 2020, and continuing until 2:00 p.m. on March 24, 2020:
  - (a) public or private community gatherings, as defined in Section 2 below are prohibited anywhere in Ellis County.

In addition, the Office of the Ellis County Judge strongly urges organizations that serve high-risk populations to cancel all gatherings until further notice. The Office of the Ellis County Judge recommendations are based on the social distancing practices attached to this Order as well as the "Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission" issued by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC"). To help slow down the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the offices of the Ellis County Judge and the Local Health Authority urge people to avoid non-essential gatherings during the duration of this Order.

**2. Definitions:**

- (a) For purposes of this Order, a community gathering is any indoor or outdoor event or convening, subject to the exceptions and clarifications below, that



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brings together or is likely to bring together fifty (50) or more persons at the same time in a single room or other single confined or enclosed space, such as an auditorium, theatre, stadium (indoor or outdoor), arena or event center, gym, meeting hall, conference center, large cafeteria, or any other confined indoor or confined outdoor space.

- (b) An outdoor community gathering under this Order is limited to events in confined outdoor spaces, which means an outdoor space that (i) is enclosed by a fence, physical barrier, or other structure and (ii) where people are present and they are within six feet of one another for extended periods.
- (c) For purposes of clarity, a community gathering *does not* include the following so long as visitors are generally not within six feet of one another for extended periods:
  - i. spaces where 50 or more persons may be in transit or waiting for transit such as airports, bus stations or terminals; (ii) office space, schools, or residential buildings; (iii) grocery stores, shopping malls, or other retail establishments, not including restaurants with and without drive-in or drive-through services, microbreweries, micro-distilleries or wineries, bars, lounges, or taverns, and private clubs, where large numbers of people are present but it is unusual for them to be within six feet of one another for extended periods; and (iv) hospitals and medical facilities. In all such settings, the Offices of the Ellis County Judge, Emergency Management, and the Local Health Authority recommend following the attached Social Distancing Recommendations. Personal hygiene measures such as hand sanitizer and tissues should be provided when possible.
  - ii. Restaurants with or without drive-in or drive-through services and microbreweries, micro-distilleries, bars, lounges, taverns, arcades, private clubs, and wineries.

3. This Order does not apply to any business operations or “essential services”.

- (a) “essential services” means services, by whomsoever rendered, and whether rendered to the Government or to any other person, the interruption of which would endanger the life, health or personal safety of the whole or part of the population;”



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(b) Any conflict with this Order will be resolved by the Office of the Ellis County Judge.

4. If someone in a household has tested positive for coronavirus, the household is ordered to isolate at home. Members of the household cannot go to work, school, or any other community function.
5. Nursing homes, retirement, and long-term care facilities are instructed to prohibit non-essential visitors from accessing their facilities unless to provide critical assistance or for end-of-life visitation.
6. Public and private schools and institutions of higher education shall notify the Office of the Ellis County Judge of any change in their operational status. Further, schools are urged to submit a safety plan to the Ellis County Office of Emergency Management before students return to classroom settings.
7. Additionally, the Offices of the Ellis County Judge and the Local Health Authority instruct all Ellis County employees to remain at home if sick and follow the instruction provided in the Ellis County Communicable Disease policy.
8. This Order shall be effective until 2:00 p.m. on March 24, 2020, or until it is either rescinded, superseded, or amended pursuant to applicable law.
9. The County of Ellis must promptly provide copies of this Order by posting on the Ellis County website. In addition, the owner, manager, or operator of any facility that is likely to be impacted by this Order is strongly encouraged to post a copy of this Order onsite and to provide a copy to any member of the public asking for a copy. If any subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, or word of this Order, or any application of it to any person, structure, gathering, or circumstance is held to be invalid or unconstitutional by a decision of a court of competent jurisdiction, then such decision will not affect the validity of the remaining portions or applications of this Order.

**TODD LITTLE**  
**ELLIS COUNTY JUDGE**



**Attest:**

**Krystal Valdez**  
**Ellis County Clerk**



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### Social Distancing Recommendations

#### 1) Vulnerable Populations: Limit Outings

- Vulnerable populations include people who are:
  - 60 years old and older.
  - People with certain health conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, kidney disease and weakened immune systems.
- For vulnerable populations, don't go to gatherings unless it is essential. If you can telecommute, you should. Avoid people who are sick.

#### 2) Workplace and Businesses: Minimize Exposure

- Suspend nonessential employee travel.
- Minimize the number of employees working within six feet of one another, including minimizing or canceling large in-person meetings and conferences.
- Urge employees to stay home when they are sick and maximize flexibility in sick leave benefits.
- Do not require a doctor's note for employees who are sick.
- Consider use of telecommuting options.
- Some people need to be at work to provide essential services of great benefit to the community. They can take steps in their workplace to minimize risk.

#### 3) Cancel Non-essential Events

- Cancel non-essential events.
- Do not attend any events or gatherings if sick.
- For events that aren't cancelled, we recommend:
  - Having hand washing capabilities, hand sanitizers and tissues available.
  - Frequently cleaning high touch surface areas like counter tops and hand rails.
  - Finding ways to create physical space to minimize close contact as much as possible.

#### 4) Schools: Safety First

- Do not have your child attend school if sick.
- If you have a child with chronic health conditions, consult the child's doctor about school attendance.
- Schools should equip all classrooms with hand sanitizers and tissues.
- Recommend rescheduling or cancelling events that are not essential.
- Explore remote teaching and online options to continue learning.
- Schools should develop a plan for citywide school closures, and families should prepare for potential closures.

#### 5) Transit: Cleaning and Protection

- Increase cleaning of vehicles and high touch surface areas.
- Provide hand washing/hand sanitizers and tissues in stations and on vehicles.



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### 6) Health Care Settings: Avoid as possible, protect the vulnerable

- Long-term care facilities should have a COVID-19 plan in accordance with CDC or state guidelines.
- Long-term care facilities should restrict all visitation except for certain compassionate care situations, such as end of life situations.
- The general public should avoid going to medical settings such as hospitals, nursing homes and long-term care facilities, even if you are not ill.
- If you are ill, call your health care provider ahead of time, and you may be able to be served by phone.
- Do not visit emergency rooms unless it is essential.
- Follow guidance and directions of all facilities.

### 7) Everyone: Do your part

The best way for all Ellis County residents to reduce their risk of getting sick, as with seasonal colds or the flu, still applies to prevent COVID-19:

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue. Throw the tissue in the trash.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Try alternatives to shaking hands, like an elbow bump or wave.
- If you have recently returned from a country, state or region with ongoing COVID-19 infections, monitor your health and follow the instructions of public health officials and CDC guidance.
- There is no recommendation to wear masks at this time to prevent yourself from getting sick.

You can also prepare for the possible disruption caused by an outbreak. Preparedness actions include:

- Prepare to work from home if that is possible for your job, and your employer.
- Make sure you have a supply of all essential medications for your family.
- Prepare a child care plan if you or a caregiver are sick.
- Make arrangements about how your family will manage a school closure.
- Plan for how you can care for a sick family member without getting sick yourself.
- Take care of each other and check in by phone with friends, family and neighbors that are vulnerable to serious illness or death if they get COVID-19.
- Keep common spaces clean to help maintain a healthy environment for you and others. Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned regularly with disinfecting sprays, wipes or common household cleaning products.

**PROCLAMATION DECLARING A LOCAL STATE OF DISASTER**

**WHEREAS**, in December 2019, a novel coronavirus, now designated as COVID-19, began to spread throughout the world and now has been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization; and

**WHEREAS**, the Ellis County Emergency Operations Plan defines a disaster as the occurrence or imminent threat of widespread or severe damage, injury, or loss of life or property resulting from any natural cause or man-made cause; and

**WHEREAS**, a declaration of local disaster allows the County Judge to take measures to reduce the possibility of exposure to disease, mitigate risk, and promote the health and safety of the residents of Ellis County; and

**WHEREAS**, extraordinary measures must be taken to contain COVID-19 in an attempt to prevent its spread throughout Ellis County, potentially requiring individuals, groups of individuals, or property to undergo additional measures that prevent or control the spread of disease; and

**WHEREAS**, to protect the lives and health of Ellis County citizens, in accordance with President Trump and Governor Abbott's emergency declarations, Ellis County will follow suit to mitigate and reduce risks of exposure to COVID-19 in our communities; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED BY THE COUNTY JUDGE OF ELLIS COUNTY, TEXAS:**

1. A local state of disaster for public health emergency is hereby declared for Ellis County, Texas, pursuant to section 418.108 (a) of the Texas Government Code.
2. Pursuant to section 418.108 (b) of the Texas Government Code, the state of disaster for public health emergency shall continue for a period of not more than seven (7) days from the date of this declaration unless continued or renewed by the Commissioners' Court of Ellis County, Texas.
3. Pursuant to section 418.108 (c) of the Texas Government Code, this declaration of the local state of disaster for public health emergency shall be given prompt and general publicity and shall be filed promptly with the County Clerk.
4. Pursuant to section 418.108 (d) of the Texas Government Code, this declaration of a local state of disaster activates the Ellis County Emergency Management Plan.
5. Pursuant to the Texas Government Code, the Ellis County Judge, Office of Emergency Management, and Local Health Authority strongly urge compliance with the following: For the next eight (8) weeks following the date of this proclamation, all gatherings should adhere to the most current recommendations promulgated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Organizers (whether groups or individuals) are urged to cancel or postpone in-person events that expect a gathering of fifty (50) or more people.
6. This proclamation shall take effect immediately.

DECLARED this 17<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020, at 2:00 p.m.



*Todd Little*  
Todd Little, Ellis County Judge

Attest:

*Krystal Valdez*  
Krystal Valdez  
Ellis County Clerk