



# JEFFERSON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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**Mark E. Wilson, MD**  
Health Officer

February 28, 2020

The 2019 novel coronavirus causes a potentially severe respiratory disease called COVID-19. This virus, first identified in China, has now been detected worldwide. On February 26, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicated that further spread in the United States is likely. To date, there are no known cases in the State of Alabama. However, now is the time to conduct planning for the possibility of widespread person-to-person transmission of COVID-19.

The CDC recently published detailed guidance for businesses (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html>), and the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) also published guidance as well (<http://alabamapublichealth.gov/infectiousdiseases/assets/cov-business-guidance.pdf>).

Highlights of the guidance include:

1. Encourage and empower employees to stay at home when ill. Additionally, employees should not return to work until their temperature is 100.4° F or less without the use of fever-lowering medications.
2. Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.
3. Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work, as healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
4. Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay at home to care for a sick family member, and they should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.
5. Employees who appear to be ill should be separated from well employees and sent home immediately.
6. Emphasize respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees through provision of alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60-95% alcohol, and encourage good hand washing for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, including backs of hands and between fingers.
7. Perform routine environmental cleaning of frequently used personal and communal workspaces such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs.
8. Advise employees, before traveling, to check the CDC's Travelers' Health website at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel> to stay abreast of the latest alerts and bulletins.

## Planning Considerations in the Event of a Major Outbreak of COVID-19

1. Planning efforts within a business should focus on (1) reducing transmission among staff, (2) protecting people who are higher risk for adverse health complications, (3) maintaining business operations, and (4) minimizing adverse effects on other entities in their supply chains.
2. Businesses should prepare for increased numbers of employee absences due to illness in their employees and their families.
3. Cross-training of personnel to perform essential business functions so that the work place is able to operate even if key staff members are absent.
4. Create an Infectious Disease Outbreak Response Plan to have a plan in place in the event of widespread disease. Information on this can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/emres/business.html>.

Please review the links provided in the second paragraph of this letter for detailed explanations of how to enact preparedness plans.

The Jefferson County Department of Health will continue to monitor the situation locally in conjunction with the Alabama Department of Public Health and the CDC. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "ME Wilson MD". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mark E. Wilson, MD  
Health Officer