



March 20, 2020

SPECIAL EDITION - 2



---

This last week, we have all experienced unique and unprecedented challenges as individuals, families, a community, a state, and a nation as we face the realities of working to contain the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). My office has received hundreds of emails with questions, comments, and concerns, While the volume of communication from local, state, and federal levels of government is incredible, we need to remain calm, maintain good self-awareness, and support our neighbors.

This week, Governor Abbott issues a statewide [disaster proclamation](#) that allows the Governor to take emergency actions to temporarily suspend state laws that may impede the state's emergency response. Dr. Hellerstedt, Commissioner of the Department of State Health Services, issued a [statewide public health disaster](#) this week which allows the state and local governments to work in coordination during the COVID-19 threat. News and developments relating to the COVID-19 are occurring rapidly, and I urge patience and cooperation during this very unique time.

In this newsletter, I will provide a quick overview of the latest news from our federal, state, and local communities. I will provide additional timely newsletter updates with information on the latest state and federal response to COVID-19. I welcome your feedback, and I also want to thank you for all you are doing to help stop the spread of COVID-19 in Texas.



This special edition relating to the Coronavirus includes the following:

- COVID-19 STATS
- Federal Updates
  - The Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act
  - Families First Coronavirus Response Act
  - Federal Tax Filing Extension
  - Travel Restrictions
  - Social Distancing and Other Guidelines to Stop the Spread of COVID-19
  - Medicare Telehealth Services
  - Approval of Anti-Malaria Drug in Testing to Potentially Treat Patients that Test Positive with COVID-19
- State of Texas Updates
  - State of Texas Disaster Declaration
  - Small Business Administration Updates in Texas
  - 2020 Local Elections
  - Texas Driver License Office
  - Beware of Scams
- Education Update
- TWC Updates for Employers and Information for Workers Seeking Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA)
  - FAQ for Employers
  - Disaster Unemployment Assistance
- Collin County Updates
- Dallas County Updates

## COVID-19 STATS IN TEXAS

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is tracking COVID-19 cases and updates its site with the latest information each day by noon (CST).

- Texas has 194 confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- There are 12 confirmed cases of COVID-19 involving Collin County residents, and

- There are 22 confirmed cases of COVID-19 involving Dallas County residents.

For the most up-to-date information on COVID-19 in Texas, please visit <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/news/updates.shtm>.

## FEDERAL UPDATES

### [The Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act](#)

was signed into law on March 6, 2019. The legislation provided \$8.3 billion in supplemental appropriations for the following:

- The United States Food and Drug Administration;
- The United States Centers for Disease Control;
- The United States Small Business Administration;
- Developing, manufacturing, and procuring vaccines and other medical supplies;
- Grants for state, local, and tribal public health agencies and organizations; and
- Loans for affected small businesses.

[Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) was signed into law by President Trump on March 18, 2020. This bill includes the following:

- Limited paid sick and family leave for individuals impacted by the COVID-19 virus.
- Provides free COVID-19 testing.
  - Expands food assistance benefits.
  - Expands unemployment benefits.
  - Requires employers to provide additional protections for health care workers.

**Federal Tax Payment Deadline Extended** - The United States Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service are automatically extending income tax payment deadlines up to \$1 million for 2019 taxes due for individual returns and up to \$10 million for 2019 taxes due for C Corporations to July 15, 2020. The filing deadline for tax returns remains April 15, 2020.

### **Travel Restrictions**

- The United States has agreed with Mexico to limit nonessential travel across the respective international borders.
- The United States and Canada have temporarily closed the international border.
- President Trump has also placed travel restrictions from Europe, China, and Iran to the United States.

### **Social Distancing and Other Guidelines to Slow the Spread of COVID-19**

- If you feel sick or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, stay home.
- Avoid social gatherings of more than 10 people.
- Use drive-thru, pickup, or deliver options and avoid eating and drinking at public establishments.
- Limit shopping trips.
- Avoid social visits.
- Practice good hygiene.

**The Small Business Administration** has included all counties in Texas in its Economic Injury Disaster Declaration and granted access to its Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program, which will provide long-term, low-interest loans to qualifying businesses across the state. To view eligibility requirements and apply directly for assistance, go to [www.sba.gov/disaster](http://www.sba.gov/disaster).

[Medicare Telehealth Services](#) access has been broadened so that beneficiaries can receive a wider range of medical services without physically visiting a healthcare facility.

**U.S. Food and Drug Administration approves anti-malaria medication,** hydroxychloroquine, for testing to potentially treat patients with the Coronavirus.

## STATE OF TEXAS UPDATES

[State of Texas Disaster Declaration](#) was made by Governor Greg Abbott and includes the following actions to help stop the spread of COVID-19 in our state:

- [Fast-tracking temporary licensing](#) for certain out-of-state medical professionals to assist with in-person telemedicine services.
- Distributing our state's allotment of medical supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile, which includes surgical masks, respirators, and face shields.
- [Waiving certain trucking regulations](#) to streamline the delivery of goods to grocery stores and retail establishments across Texas.
- [Waiving regulations relating to student work-study programs](#) to ensure students continue to receive critical funding as campuses close in response to COVID-19.
- In addition, Governor Abbott waived the [STAAR testing requirements](#) for the 2019-2020 school year.

Additionally, Governor Abbott issued an [executive order](#) to prohibit public gatherings of more than 10 people effective immediately on March 19, 2020 through April 3, 2020. As a result, people shall avoid the following:

- Dining in at restaurants, bars, and food courts;
- Gyms;

- Massage parlors;
- Nursing homes; and
- Retirement facilities.

Restaurants shall make drive-through or delivery options available. Governor Abbott has [waived regulations to allow delivery of alcohol from restaurants](#) to support the hospitality industry.

[2020 Local Elections](#) may be delayed until the November General Election, as a result of a proclamation issued by Governor Greg Abbott suspending provisions of the Texas Election Code to allow political subdivisions to make a choice regarding their local elections.

[Texas Driver Licenses Offices](#) have been temporarily closed as of Wednesday, March 18, 2020. Governor Abbott has suspended certain provision of the Texas Transportation Code to delay the expiration date for driver licenses, commercial drive licenses, and other identification documents.

[Beware of Scams](#) and protect yourself against price gouging, deceptive trade practices, and cyber scams. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton offered precautions that are consistent with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and include the following tips:

- Avoid clicking on links in unsolicited emails and be wary of email attachments.
- Use trusted sources, such as legitimate government websites, for up-to-date, fact-based information about COVID-19.
- Do not reveal personal or financial information in email, and do not respond to email solicitations for this information.
- Verify a charity's authenticity before making donations.

## EDUCATION UPDATES

Governor Greg Abbott issued an executive order on March 19, 2020 to temporarily close all schools. [Click here](#) for more information from the Governor's office.

## TWC UPDATES FOR EMPLOYERS AND INFORMATION FOR WORKERS SEEKING DISASTER UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE (DUA)

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) offers employers and job seekers impacted by COVID-19 information and resources. [Click here](#) to sign-up for these updates.

[Texas Workforce Commission FAQ for Employers](#) was recently released to help answer questions relating to COVID-19.

[The Texas Workforce Commission's Disaster Unemployment Assistance \(DUA\)](#) provides **unemployment benefits** for individuals who lost their jobs or self-employment or who are no longer working as a direct result of a major disaster for which a disaster assistance period is declared, and who applied but are not eligible for regular unemployment benefits.

If you are eligible for regular benefits, TWC must pay those benefits before taking a DUA application. You may be eligible for DUA if one of the following occurred as a direct result of the disaster:

- You lost your job, which was more than 50% of your total income.
- You live in, work in, or travel through the disaster area.
- Your place of employment was damaged or closed.
- You were scheduled to start work, but the job no longer exists or you can no longer reach the new job.
- You suffered injury or incapacitation.
- You became the breadwinner or major support of the household due to the death of the head of household.

## COLLIN COUNTY UPDATES

- Collin County Judge Chris Hill issued a [formal disaster declaration](#) for Collin County on Monday, March 16, 2020.
- All non-essential court operations in Collin County have been postponed until April 1, 2020.
- Other county offices are open at this time and operating during normal business hours.
- The Commissioners Court will not cancel meetings at this time.
- Inmate visitation and inmate programs at the Collin County Detention Facility have been cancelled until further notice.

For the most recent news and information relating to Collin County operations and updates on the COVID-19, please [click here](#).

## DALLAS COUNTY UPDATES

Dallas County amended the [order](#) issued by County Judge Clay Jenkins to include the following:

Prohibit public OR private recreational gatherings and community gatherings in Dallas County.

- Prohibit restaurants with or without drive-in or drive-through services and microbreweries, micro-distilleries, or wineries to only provide take out, delivery, or drive-through services as allowed by law;
- Close all bars, lounges, taverns, private clubs, arcades, and gyms; and
- Close the Dallas County Tax Offices and passport offices for in-person visits.

For the most recent news and information relating to Dallas County operations and updates on the COVID-19, please [click here](#).