THE CITY OF
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MAYOR JOE HOGSETT
★
EST. 1821

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Mayor Joe Hogsett, Marion County Public Health Department Announce School Closures, New Policies in Response to COVID-19

INDIANAPOLIS -- Following Governor Eric Holcomb's announcement this afternoon, Dr. Virginia Caine of the Marion County Health Department joined Mayor Joe Hogsett for a press conference announcing the closure of all Marion County public schools and the suspension of non-essential large gatherings in the city.

"Since last Friday we have remained in constant communication with the CDC and the Indiana State Department of Health anticipating that guidance could change as to how we can best protect the residents of Marion County from this emerging and evolving public threat," Mayor Hogsett said. "Today we have received new guidance and we are prepared to act with immediate effect."

Mayor Hogsett announced that he has directed the Marion County Public Health Department to close all public schools within Marion County. The Health Department will work with all thirteen school systems within Marion County -- as well as mayoral-sponsored charter schools -- to close public schools effective next Monday, March 16. This closure, coupled with previously-planned Spring Break periods, will allow all Marion County schools to remain closed through April 5th.

"This decision is made in conversation with all public-school superintendents in Marion County, who agree it's time to take this necessary step out of an abundance of caution," said Virginia A. Caine, M.D. director and chief medical officer of the Marion County Public Health Department. "We must take every opportunity to protect our children from any potential exposure to COVID-19 and reduce the possibility of further spread in our community."

In addition, Mayor Hogsett announced that, in keeping with today's announcement by the Indiana State Department of Health, he has directed the Marion County Public Health Department to implement local restrictions on all non-essential gatherings of more than 250 individuals in Indianapolis. This restriction will be in effect for 30 days, although the situation will continue to be monitored daily.

"I want to be clear that these restrictions will have serious impacts on commerce, social events, and functions planned long in advance or held every year," added Mayor Hogsett. "To those who argue these policies will be disruptive, my answer is simple: they better be. This virus and the threat it poses to our city, state, and country is massive. Left unchecked, it has the potential to wreak untold damage on our families and the very social safety net that protects our most vulnerable residents."

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Today's announcement also included the following updates from City of Indianapolis leadership and the Marion County Health Department:

- City-County Government will work with service providers and school districts to help ensure that meals continue to be available throughout this school closure period.
- After conversations with the Marion County courts, Mayor Hogsett has directed IMPD to issue summonses in lieu of outright arrests for non-violent misdemeanors, subject to officer discretion if they believe an arrest is the only appropriate avenue to protect public safety.
- City-County Government will begin implementing operational changes designed to protect employees and the public while maintaining basic service. These changes include a ban on non-essential travel by city employees, the transition to work-from-home for employees able to take advantage of city technology, and a push for residents to use online services when possible.
- The Parks Department has suspended all senior programming and is evaluating other Parks programming.
- The City-County Council will be developing new tools for online engagement to ensure continued access and engagement for public meetings.

As a reminder, human coronaviruses most commonly spread from an infected person to others through:
- Respiratory droplets released into the air by coughing and sneezing;
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands;
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands; and
- Rarely, fecal contamination.

The best way to protect yourself from any respiratory illness, including the flu, is to:
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a 60% OR HIGHER alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

The CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. You should wear a mask only if a healthcare professional recommends it. A facemask should be used by people who have COVID-19 and are showing symptoms to protect others from the risk of infection.

This is an ongoing situation and is evolving rapidly. For more information, including a list of frequently asked questions, visit https://on.in.gov/COVID19.

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