



Harris County, Texas
Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Resource and Information Guide
Prepared by the Office of Precinct One, Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Last Updated: 3/26/2020 11:20 AM

GENERAL INFORMATION

[Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China. The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

As the number of positive cases of COVID-19 in this region climbs, the Harris County Public Health's **[Novel Coronavirus page](#)** is the best resource for the most up-to-date information and data.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, or **[the CARES Act](#)** that passed in the Senate on March 25, is part of the U.S. response to the coronavirus pandemic. The House Ways and Means Committee has provided summaries for the different provisions of the act.

- **[CLICK HERE](#)** to learn about the Senate CARES bill tax provisions.
- **[CLICK HERE](#)** to learn about the Senate CARES bill unemployment provisions.
- **[CLICK HERE](#)** to learn about the Senate CARES bill small business provisions.
- **[CLICK HERE](#)** to learn about the Senate CARES bill distressed industries provisions.

It is crucial that everyone abides by the recommendations and guidelines to protect not only ourselves, but those who are at a **[higher risk](#)** of contracting the virus including pregnant women, older adults and those with underlying health conditions.

In times like this, it is paramount that we band together as a community and not further false or hateful information. Coronavirus doesn't recognize race, nationality, or ethnicity. We must all show compassion and support for those most impacted.

COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

Stay Home, Work Safe.

Judge Hidalgo, in coordination with Mayor Turner and the City of Houston, has issued a Stay-At-Home Order beginning on March 24, at 11:59 pm and expiring on April 3. It is imperative that we mitigate the spread of Coronavirus and COVID-19 in our community and support our elected officials and health professionals with flattening the curve of person-to-person related infections. **[See all the details of the order here.](#)**

Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers are exempt from the Stay Home, Work Safe Order and the list can be found **[here.](#)** People working from home do not have to shelter in place but may leave their residence only to perform "Essential Activities." Groceries stores, pharmacies, gas station, parks and other areas will remain open.



Harris County, Texas
Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Resource and Information Guide
Prepared by the Office of Precinct One, Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Last Updated: 3/26/2020 11:20 AM

[Governor Abbott Executive Order Relating to COVID-19 Preparedness and Mitigation- Issued March 19, 2020](#) Limits social gatherings to 10 people, prohibits eating and drinking at restaurants and bars while still allowing takeout, close gyms, ban people from visiting nursing homes except for critical care and temporarily close schools. (Effective midnight Friday March 20th through midnight April 3)

[Social distancing](#) is for everyone, not just those with risk factors (examples of high risk individuals include those who have had contact with an individual who has tested positive, have a compromised immune system, or are age 60+) Stay home if you're sick, but also, work from home as much as is possible for your situation.

Minimal physical contact—we should all avoid places and situations where you cannot stay 6 feet away, or at least arm's length, from other people. **[Wash your hands](#)** for at least 20 seconds and avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. Wipe down frequently touched surfaces (like your phone).

Even if you do not feel symptoms, or are a younger person who is less at risk, everyone should all assume they are carriers of the virus and act accordingly to protect our neighbors.
We're all in this together!

RELIABLE RESOURCES

CALL CENTERS

Ask My Nurse: 713-634-1110

Harris County Residents: 832-927-7575

Texas DSHS Hotline: 1-800-570-9779

COVID19 Mental Health Support Line: 833-251-7544

INFORMATION

[City of Houston: Mayor Sylvester Turner](#)

[Harris County Public Health](#)

[Harris Health](#)

[Houston Emergency Operations Center](#)

[Houston Health Department](#)

[Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management](#)

[ASL Resources](#)



Harris County, Texas
Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Resource and Information Guide
Prepared by the Office of Precinct One, Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Last Updated: 3/26/2020 11:20 AM

TRANSPORTATION

METRO Changes: While the community is trying to limit the amount of people traveling, it is understood that there are still people who must leave their house to either go to work or to the store, etc. METRO service will still be running but many routes will be limited or reduced.

Beginning on Monday 3/23, METRO is temporarily suspending fare collection.

METRO also asks that in compliance with social distancing protocols, passengers must use the rear door when boarding and exiting a local bus, (unless they are a passenger with mobility issues). Local busses will be operating on a schedule similar to Saturday service during the week.

Park and Ride Bus routes to the Texas Medical Center will continue to operate normally. Service will be reduced on all other Park and Ride routes.

METRO Rail will operate on normal schedule.

HCTRA Changes: By order of Commissioners Court, tolls are waived on HCTRA roadways to assist those who must travel throughout Harris County during the Stay Home, Work Safe Order. (This order does not include tolls charged on toll roads not governed by Harris County)

HEALTH CARE

Texas Department of State Health Services

If you need help finding a doctor or accessing medical care, dial 2-1-1, then choose Option 6 or call toll-free at 877-541-7905 or visit www.211texas.org. Hours: 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., 7 days per week.

If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever and symptoms, such as cough or difficulty breathing, call your healthcare provider for medical advice.

If you are sick with COVID-19 or think you might have it, stay home except to get medical care. If you have a regular primary care physician, call and see if you can set up a virtual appointment or e-visit. If you do not have a regular primary care doctor, you can still find a clinic that is offering these no-contact visits. (see the trusted resources section of this guide)

If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19 get medical attention immediately. Emergency warning signs include, but are not limited to, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion or inability to arouse, bluish lips or face. Call 911 if you have a medical emergency.



Harris County, Texas
Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Resource and Information Guide
Prepared by the Office of Precinct One, Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Last Updated: 3/26/2020 11:20 AM

The CDC has launched a [COVID-19 symptom self-checker](#). The purpose of the self-checker is to help make decisions about seeking appropriate medical care. But the system is not meant to diagnose or provide treatment options for COVID-19 or other conditions.

TESTING

The CDC has launched a [COVID-19 symptom self-checker](#). The purpose of the self-checker is to help make decisions about seeking appropriate medical care. But the system is not meant to diagnose or provide treatment options for COVID-19 or other conditions.

Harris County now has open testing sites! In order to receive a test at one of these sites, you must complete [this self-assessment](#) to see whether further assessment or testing is necessary. Sites will only accept people with a unique ID code obtained through the screening process.

[Here is where you can get tested](#) in Houston. This list includes private medical providers that may require insurance.

MENTAL HEALTH

Taking care of your emotional health during an emergency will help your long-term healing. It is natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief and worry during and after disease outbreaks. The CDC has put together this [resource guide](#) to help people cope with and manage their stress during this time. The Disaster Distress Line offers free counseling 24/7, just call 1-800-985-5990. If you or someone you know shows signs of stress for several days or weeks, get help by accessing Harris County's COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line at 832-251-7544.

If you are a Parent or Caregiver, here is a [guide created by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) with tips and strategies for helping your children cope during these stressful times.

Social distancing doesn't mean social isolation. Technology gives us the opportunity to stay connected even when we are physically separated. [The Neighborhood Project](#) is a service that helps facilitate conversations that people can engage with online while under quarantine and can help people feel less alone during these times.

Working from home brings new challenges. Everyday Health offers [Your Work-From-Home Survival Guide for Self-Care](#). It has tips to stay productive and healthy while working from home and coping with all the stress this situation brings.



Harris County, Texas
Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Resource and Information Guide
Prepared by the Office of Precinct One, Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Last Updated: 3/26/2020 11:20 AM

IMMIGRANTS

No one should be afraid to get the medical help they need. [US Citizenship and Immigration Services announced](#) that any testing, treatment or services relating to COVID-19 will NOT be used against immigrants in their public charge evaluation.

VETERANS

All Veterans should call first before going to any of our VA facilities, especially if you have symptoms of fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Calling first helps us protect you, medical staff, and other patients. Ask your VA health care team about the option of care by phone or video instead of an in-person visit.

If you have flu-like symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath, call us at 713-794-8985, before you visit your Houston VA or CBOC. Clinical staff are available to provide 24/7 virtual care and support, including nurse advice and triage.

The [Veteran Services Office](#) is closed until further notice. Please access their website for assistance.

COUNTY DEPARTMENT CLOSURES

[Harris County Animal Shelter](#) is accepting animal surrenders only on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Visit the County Pets website for additional information about changes to availability of services and facilities.

Courts: In compliance with the regulations and guidelines, all jury trials and jury duty will be postponed. Effective Monday, March 23, 2020 the following hours of operation shall apply to following buildings:

Criminal Justice Center (1201 Franklin St.)

Juvenile Justice Center (1200 Congress St.)

Civil Courthouse (201 Caroline St.)

Hours of Operation:

Monday-Thursday: 7am-6pm

Friday-Sunday: Closed



Harris County, Texas
Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Resource and Information Guide

Prepared by the Office of Precinct One, Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Last Updated: 3/26/2020 11:20 AM

The Harris [County Law Library](#) is closed until further notice. Due to public health concerns, in-person services will be temporarily suspended. To continue providing valuable services to patrons, the Law Library will expand virtual and remote services.

For the health and safety of staff and visitors, [Harris County Public Library](#) building will not be open until April 1st, or later.

Following government guidance and protocols, [Harris County Clerk's](#) main office and annexes will be closed to the public starting March 18. Employees will continue serving the public by email and phone, and resident can still access most services online.

Although the [Tax Office](#) is closed to the public, it is not closed. Property owners can still make property tax payments in person by using a Tax Office drop box, mailing a check or money order, or online by credit card.

[Harris County Treasurer's Office](#) has reduced office hours until further notice. The office will be open from 9am to 2pm in an attempt to limit employee exposure to the general public. Staff will be in the office until 4:30 pm to assist with internal transfers and wires. The office is committed to meeting its statutory requirements and customer expectations, but it is also committed to employees' well-being.

[Household Hazardous Waste Facility](#) and events at 6900 Hahl Rd at U.S. 290 and Gessner will be closed to the public. Also, all mobile events scheduled through May have been canceled.

[Precinct One Community Centers](#) are closed to the public in adherence to the guidelines on gatherings and social distancing recommendations. We will keep our residents informed on when we will reopen.

Visitors will no longer be allowed to attend [Commissioners Court](#). Residents can watch the meeting on the county's live stream. A system for receiving public input during the meeting will be announced.



Harris County, Texas
Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Resource and Information Guide
Prepared by the Office of Precinct One, Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Last Updated: 3/26/2020 11:20 AM

OTHER CLOSURES

Bars/Clubs/Restaurants: In order to protect everyone, Governor Abbott has closed all bars and clubs. Restaurants must operate as delivery/take-out/drive-thru only until April 3rd or until the issue is reevaluated.

Harris Health System is closing five eligibility centers to visitors in response to COVID19.

Locations closed until further notice:

- **Acres Homes Eligibility Center**
- **East Mount Houston Center**
- **Strawberry Health Center**

Locations closed to public but accepting drop-offs:

- **Lols J. Moore Eligibility Center**
- **Southeast Eligibility Center**

To reduce the risk of transmission and enhance patient and employee safety, Harris Health facilities is implementing a new visitor access policy:

Visitor access to Harris Health hospitals and clinics is no longer permitted, with exceptions for:

- Parents visiting her/his baby
- Visitors helping patients with personal mobility
- Visitors of end-of-life patients
- Individuals serving as surrogate decision makers for a patient.

All visitors will be subject to the screening process.

The May 26 primary election runoffs will be delayed until July in response to the growing outbreak of the new coronavirus in Texas under an [order](#) signed Friday by Gov. Greg Abbott.

The elections are now scheduled for July 14; early voting will begin July 6.



Harris County, Texas
Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Resource and Information Guide
Prepared by the Office of Precinct One, Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Last Updated: 3/26/2020 11:20 AM

HOW TO GET HELP

In response to the current conditions, Harris Health System is extending its [financial assistance program](#) plans 90 days for current patients who have been approved for financial assistance.

[Evictions have been halted in Harris County](#). The Texas Supreme Court has suspended eviction hearings (with certain exceptions) until April 19.

Because of the current pandemic, [U.S. tax filing deadline](#) has been extended to July 15.

Harris County will always stand up for its residents. If you witness an instance of [price gouging](#), report it to the Harris County Attorney's Office so that we can hold them accountable. They can be contacted at ConsumerHelp@cao.hctx.net or 832-839-6941.

If your income or job has been affected by the coronavirus, WIC is here to help. Call your local [Texas WIC office](#) or start your [application online](#) today. WIC benefits include healthy food and the application only takes a few minutes.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Houston ISD has cancelled its food distribution sites for the remainder of the week while it re-evaluates its process for safely delivering this service to students and families. You can see their full statement [here](#). The City of Houston is operating a curbside meal program at [47 community centers](#) around the city Monday through Friday from 1 to 3 pm.

SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

Harris County is dedicated to our hard working Small Business Owners that help make our area and economy great. Harris County and the State of Texas are working to qualify for Small Business Administration Economic Injury Loan Disaster. To complete an EIDL worksheet, business owners can go [here](#). This is NOT a loan application but will help qualify Texas for inclusion in the program. For more information on what is needed to determine the eligibility and application process [click here](#).



Harris County, Texas
Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Resource and Information Guide
Prepared by the Office of Precinct One, Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Last Updated: 3/26/2020 11:20 AM

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

[The Marshall Project](#) is a nonprofit journalism organization that focuses on criminal justice. It has a curated collection of articles on the coronavirus and is a good resource for information.

HOMELESSNESS

For those experiencing homelessness, the following agencies are working to assist those who are overcoming homelessness.

Harris County Public Health, Office of Emergency Management, Coalition for the Homeless/The Way Home and the region's Continuum of Care. Please see the Coalition's COVID-19 response [here](#).

EDUCATION

The majority of Houston-area school districts will remain closed through April 10. Colleges and universities are switching to online instruction from March 23 to the end of the semester. [Please check](#) with your specific school or district for exact dates.

On Monday, March 23, HISD will launch HISD @H.O.M.E (Home-based Online Mobile Education). Students and parents will be able to access the website on your school's main landing page or visiting the site [directly](#). We understand that some families may not have access to internet or devices so beginning the week of March 23, teachers will reach out to families to determine each student's needs regarding access. You can also fill out the online H.O.M.E survey [here](#).

In response to the uncertainty and extended school closures, Governor Greg Abbott has [waived the STAAR Testing](#) requirements for the 2019-2020 school year.



Harris County, Texas
Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Resource and Information Guide
Prepared by the Office of Precinct One, Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Last Updated: 3/26/2020 11:20 AM

FOOD AND SHOPPING

Grocery stores will continue to operate, there is no need to rush to the store. Stores are restocking every day. Practice social distancing at the stores and be sensitive to the needs of others. Curbside pick-up and delivery are good options too, some stores are also offering those services for free during this time.

[Grocery stores are hiring!](#)

Stores will have varied hours to provide time to restock.

HEB: 8am-8pm

Kroger: 7am-10pm

Walmart: 6am-11pm

Randalls: 7am-9pm

In order to help protect our more vulnerable population, certain stores will be opening to seniors only for part of their business days. Please see a list below and check with your local stores for specific hours.

- **Whole Foods Market will service customers over the age of 60 one hour before opening to the public**
- **Food Town will open their doors from 7am-8am to allow those aged 65 and older to shop in a less crowded environment (ID required)**
- **Dollar General will allow seniors to shop from 8am-9am.**

Shopping Malls may also be operating on limited schedules.

Baybrook, Deerbrook, First Colony, Memorial City, Willowbrook and The Woodlands malls will operate Monday through Saturday between noon and 7PM.

Galleria, Houston Premium Outlets and Katy Mills will operate between 11 am and 7 pm



Harris County, Texas Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resource and Information Guide

Prepared by the Office of Precinct One, Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Last Updated: 3/26/2020 11:20 AM

HOW TO HELP

During these times we all must work together to get through. There are a lot of [opportunities for Houston residents to give back](#).

The Houston Food Bank is working dilligently to get food to our community [but they need your help](#).

Due to this outbreak closing blood drives, The American Red Cross is experiencing a historic shortage. Click [here](#) to see how you can help out.

[Houston Animal Shelters](#) are in desperate need of fosters. Having a furry friend at home during these stressful times can be mutually beneficial.

Residents and business owners, we encourage you to print and post visual reminders that will help you, your family and customers remember basic steps that everyone can take to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Feel free to print, post and share these flyers for your homes and businesses. Using your home printer, you can easily print these on regular 8.5" x 11" paper.



- Flyer: [Did you wash your hands?](#)
- Flyer: [Handshake-free Zone](#)
- Flyer: [Keep Your Distance](#)



Harris County, Texas
Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Resource and Information Guide
Prepared by the Office of Precinct One, Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Last Updated: 3/26/2020 11:20 AM

TRUSTED COVID-19 RESEARCH

[NIH LitCOVID](#)

[WHO COVID Research](#)

[NEJM, Lancet, Wiley, JAMA](#)

[IDSA COVID19 Resource Center](#)

[CORD-19 COVID19 Open Research Dataset](#)