



**Alameda County Health Care Services Agency
Public Health Department**

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Please share with your networks

Dear Alameda County Leaders and Partners,

In light of recent news regarding possible local transmission of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Northern California, we are providing the following update on our activities and sharing initial guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on how you may want prepare your organization. Please note we have no confirmed cases in Alameda County at this time. The health risk from novel coronavirus to the general public remains low, and while COVID-19 has a high transmission rate, it has a low mortality rate.

Alameda County continues to monitor the community for possible cases, and it is likely that there will be more cases identified in the Bay Area, and person-to-person spread could occur. Widespread transmission of COVID-19 in the United States would translate to large numbers of people needing medical care at the same time. Schools, childcare centers, workplaces, and other places for mass gatherings may experience more absenteeism.

We are taking the necessary steps to prepare for the emergence of COVID-19 in our community:

- The Health Care Services Agency activated its Emergency Department Operations Center in mid-January to initiate our response and we have been working with hospitals, EMS, health care providers, and community partners;
- We are preparing for an increase in disease investigation, monitoring, mitigation, and community outreach and education activities; and
- We recently expanded emergency operations to accelerate planning, guidance, and coordination efforts, to prepare for a potential surge in patients, and to provide information to schools, businesses, and other community partners to ensure readiness for disruptions caused by COVID-19 cases.

Our Public Health Department has an established history of response to disease outbreaks and expertise with protocols for mitigating communicable disease. We are strengthened by ongoing coordination with public health entities at the regional, state, and federal level.

Regarding an emergency declaration, we are balancing considerations of timing, overall spread of disease, and the impact on resource availability. We will be in touch with new guidance for health care

providers, schools, and other populations as it becomes available. From our experience with previous outbreaks, curbing the spread of disease is a community effort and we will need broad partnership.

What you can do now to prepare for a possible COVID-19 outbreak

Hospitals, government entities, school districts and employers should plan now for how best to decrease the spread of illness and lower the impact of COVID-19 in the United States. It's important to identify objectives, which may include one or more of the following:

- planning for ways to reduce contact between people if Alameda County public health officials call for social distancing,
- planning for the possibility of school closures and cancellations of mass gatherings,
- protecting people who are at higher risk for complications of illness,
- maintaining operations, and
- minimizing adverse effects on other entities.

To assist you with your planning, please see the attached document for a summary of the CDC's guidance for consideration with your decision-making process.

We welcome questions and suggestions for helping to safeguard our communities. Please direct inquiries to the Public Health Department COVID-19 website page for additional information and resources <http://www.acphd.org/2019-ncov.aspx>. You may also share the following email for questions that may not be addressed on our website nCov@acgov.org.

Sincerely,



Colleen Chawla, Director
Health Care Services Agency



Erica Pan, MD, MPH, Health Officer
Public Health Department
Health Care Services Agency

Attachment: CDC: Key considerations for planning and making decisions

Provided by the CDC: Key considerations for planning and making decisions¹:

- Prepare for possible increased numbers of absences from increases in sick staff, those who stay home to care for sick family members, and those who must stay home to watch their children if dismissed from school:
 - Employers should plan to monitor and respond to absenteeism at the workplace. Implement plans to continue your essential functions in case you experience higher than usual absenteeism.
 - Cross-train personnel to perform essential functions so that the workplace could operate even if key staff members are absent.
 - Assess your essential functions and the reliance that others and the community have on your services. Be prepared to change your practices if needed to maintain critical operations.
- In some communities, early childhood programs and K-12 schools may be dismissed, particularly if COVID-19 worsens.
- Explore whether you can establish policies and practices, such as flexible worksites (e.g., telecommuting) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts), to increase the physical distance among staff and between staff and others if state and local health authorities recommend the use of social distancing strategies. For staff who can telework, supervisors should encourage it instead of coming into the workplace until symptoms are completely resolved.
- Set up authorities, triggers, and procedures for activating and terminating infectious disease outbreak response plan, altering operations, and transferring knowledge to key staff. Alameda County health officials will provide recommendations to identify these triggers.
- Plan to minimize exposure between staff and between staff and the public, if Alameda County public health officials call for social distancing.
- Establish a process to communicate information to staff and your community on your COVID-19 response plans and the latest COVID-19 information. Anticipate anxiety, rumors, and misinformation, and plan communications accordingly.
- If there is evidence of a COVID-19 outbreak in the US, consider canceling non-essential business travel to additional countries per [travel guidance](#) on the CDC website. Consider cancelling large work-related meetings or events.

For the general public, we continue to recommend everyday good hygiene and handwashing technique, and staying informed using verified sources for updates, like our website <http://www.acphd.org/2019-ncov/resources.aspx>.

For questions regarding COVID-19, please call 510-268-2101 or email nCov@acgov.org

¹ Sources: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/preparing-individuals-communities.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html>