

Social Distancing: Staying home saves lives

Situation/overall

- It is important that people understand the seriousness of this situation. In just a week's time, we went from zero positive cases of COVID-19 to more than 100 cases. This is one of the highest per capita rates of COVID-19 cases in the entire country, and it is expected to continue unless we each change our behaviors.
- Right now, everyone is urged to take aggressive measures to contain this virus. We all have a role to play in protecting not just ourselves but our neighbors, friends and everyone else we interact with.

What is social distancing and how does it work?

- When we look at what has worked in stopping the spread of COVID-19 in other countries, it's protective measures to encourage **"social distance."**
 - Social distancing is a public health practice that aims to prevent sick people from coming into close contact with healthy people in order to reduce opportunities for disease transmission.
 - Social distancing can include large-scale measures like closing schools and bars, as well as individual decisions such as avoiding crowds and minimizing non-essential travel.
- With COVID-19, the goal of social distancing is to slow down the outbreak to reduce the chance of infection among high-risk populations and to reduce the burden on our health care system and workers. Experts call this **"flattening the curve"** – successful social distancing can prevent surges in illness that could overwhelm our health care systems.
- Social distancing can help lower the pace and extent of spread of COVID-19. If we do this right, we can reduce the number of people with disease and reduce the number of people needing hospitalization and ventilators at any one time.
- **Social distancing and flattening the curve are not about stopping transmission; they're about slowing it down so that we can deliver health care. So that we can take care of you, your family members, classmates and colleagues get sick.**
- **In Louisiana, social distancing goes against the fiber of our beings. But we must put our and our own and our neighbors' safety and wellbeing first.**

State action and individual action

- This is why the State has taken aggressive action to create social distance – because we know it works to slow the spread of COVID-19. Protective measures the State has taken include:
 - Calling for the closure of K-12 schools
 - Restricting non-essential visitors to nursing homes and health care facilities
 - Closing bars, casinos and movie theaters
 - Limiting restaurants to delivery, take out and drive-through only
 - Limiting the size of gatherings to fewer than 50 people
- Community-wide measures are important, but individual behavior change is even more critical. Closing schools and restricting large events will not work if we simply find other places to congregate. We can't stop going to class, then all head to the nearest mall or library. We can't skip a parade but head to the nearest bar.
- Louisiana residents are asked to come together and do their part to slow the spread of coronavirus—to flatten the curve—and help keep everyone safe.
- The single most important thing we can each do is to stay home when we are sick. And now that we have identified significant community spread in New Orleans and many cases across the State, even if we are not sick, we ALL need to find ways to stay inside more. When we are out in public, we could all use some personal space. The CDC says six feet minimum. No handshakes, no hugs.
- You'll be doing social distancing right once you're planning your week and routines around COVID-19. **Put COVID on your calendar.** Think about your week.

Low-risk people are also important to stopping community spread

- This also includes people who are young and healthy. While those who are older and those who have underlying chronic medical conditions – meaning lung disease, heart disease and diabetes – are at the greatest risk, everyone can be become exposed to and spread COVID-19 to our friends, our family and our communities. We must all be vigilant. **Don't be a spreader. You can carry the virus and spread it to others.**

- 60% of all Americans have at least one chronic health condition such as high blood pressure, diabetes and cancer. Roughly 40% have more than one condition. While the complications following infection with the coronavirus are more prevalent with older people, they are also commonly found in younger people as well.

It's not just New Orleans – we are prepared for this to become a statewide problem

- And is not just about New Orleans. The virus is there today, but it can spread throughout the state very quickly. Because it takes up to two weeks for symptoms to appear, we all must recognize this can become a statewide problem quickly, and take steps to do our part to limit or prevent this from happening.
- Just because your Parish does not have positive cases yet does not mean COVID-19 is not present. And it doesn't mean that people in your Parish haven't been tested.