



SENATE POLICY PODS

COVID-19

SENATE DEM CAUCUS

Per the COVID-19 Senate Action Plan sent to Senate Chiefs of Staff on Friday, March 20, 2020, the Policy Pods (PODS) have developed a comprehensive information document to help your offices answer constituent questions. This document contains information on every major policy area and we hope it will help your offices with constituent services. The PODS have aggregated all relevant information into a question and answer format. Some of this information has already been included in Senate Communications Daily COVID-19 emails. However, we have put prior and new information in one place for easy reference. There will likely be new information daily and please continue to watch for the Senate Communications Daily COVID-19 emails, as that will be your best source for breaking information. We plan to update the PODS document weekly.

As reference, after each policy section, is the contact information of the appropriate Pro Tem Policy Staff person, including email and phone number. As most of the staff are working remotely, please email first. The Pro Tem Policy Staff member is the lead of each POD and he or she works in collaboration with the appropriate Senate Committee and Senate Office of Research staff.

If you have specific constituent questions that are not addressed in this document, please feel free to continue emailing me at Kimberly.Rodriguez@sen.ca.gov and our office will assist you.

Senator Atkins, President pro Tempore of the Senate has pledged to all Senators that our office is here to assist you in your informational needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

Thank you,
Kimberly Rodriguez

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Agriculture

Is California's food supply at risk from COVID-19?

California's food supply is not at heightened risk of contamination or a significant transmission risk for COVID-19. The [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#) (USDA) and the [European Food Safety Authority](#) have each found no evidence that food is a source or transmission route for the corona virus.

Existing federal law, including the Food Safety Modernization Act, requires stringent hygiene practices for food growers, handlers and processors to minimize health risks to the food supply posed by microbial hazards, including bacteria, viruses, protozoa and parasites.

Agricultural industry associations such as the [California Farm Bureau Federation](#), [Western Growers Association](#) and [California Citrus Mutual](#) report implementing heightened preventative measures for workforce health and sanitation, including social distancing, gloves where appropriate, illness reporting mandates, workplace access restrictions and training based on guidance from the CDC and the World Health Organization (WHO).

While the overall availability of food is not at risk, there are several possible sources of disruption across the agricultural supply chain, including:

- Labor shortages resulting from federal H2-A visa restrictions related to corona virus.
- In 2019, more than 77,000 H2A visas were certified in March and April – nearly 28% of all H2A visas that year, according to data from the U.S. Department of Labor.
- Current visa processing restrictions allow only returning guest workers, who make up roughly 40% of annual H2-A permits. 50-60% of guest workers each year are considered new applicants.
- The USDA and US Department of Labor have announced an information sharing partnership to facilitate the potential renewal of expiring contracts for up to 20,000 H2-A and H2-B positions currently in the United States.

<https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/03/19/usda-and-dol-announce-information-sharing-assist-h-2a-employers>

- There will be workers leaving these positions who could be available to transfer to a different employer's labor certification. The data, available on www.farmers.gov/manage/h2a, includes the number of certified worker positions, the current employer name and contact, attorney/agent name and contact, and the worksite address. This information will be a resource to H-2A employers whose workforce has been delayed because of travel restrictions or visa processing limitations. Employers should be aware that all statutory and regulatory requirements continue to apply.

Is agriculture considered an essential operation under state and local emergency shelter-in-place directives?

The [CDC and White House Coronavirus Task Force in the Coronavirus Guidelines for America](#), state that the food supply chain is a critical infrastructure industry that should maintain a normal work schedule while workers follow CDC guidance to protect their health at work.

On March 19, 2020, [the Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\) issued a guidance with additional details](#) regarding the food supply chain as critical infrastructure.

On March 19, 2020, California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Secretary Karen Ross reinforced the importance of the food supply chain as critical infrastructure and released the following guidance regarding COVID-19 and the Food Supply in California.

Please visit the CDFA Coronavirus website for additional information about agricultural operations, health and safety guidance, best practices, and more:

<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/coronavirus/>

Are farmers markets considered essential operations?

While the state of California considers Certified Farmers' Markets (CFMs) an essential service in the critical food supply chain that allows consumers to purchase nutritious, California-grown agriculture straight from farmers, all markets must also work with local authorities to ensure compliance with local restrictions. The guidance is also for grocery stores, restaurants, food trucks, charitable food distribution sites, and beverage service venues including wineries and breweries.

For more information please read the CDFA's guidance for Retail Food, Beverage, and Other Related Service Venues:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Coronavirus%20Disease%202019%20and%20Food%20Beverage%20Other%20Services%20-%20AOL.pdf>

A worker in my food processing facility/farm has tested positive for COVID-19. What steps do I need to take to ensure that the foods I produce are safe?

According to the [Food and Drug Administration](#): Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Currently, there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 by food. Unlike foodborne gastrointestinal (GI) viruses like norovirus and hepatitis A that often make people ill through contaminated food, SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, is a virus that causes respiratory illness. Foodborne exposure to this virus is not known to be a route of transmission.

If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality. Sick employees should follow the CDC's [What to do if you are sick with coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#). Employers should consult with the local health department for additional guidance.

While the primary responsibility in this instance is to take appropriate actions to protect other workers and people who might have come in contact with the ill employee, facilities should re-double their cleaning and sanitation efforts to control any risks that might be associated with workers who are ill regardless of the type of virus or bacteria. For example, facilities are required to maintain clean and sanitized facilities and food contact surfaces.

How do I access personal protection equipment and sanitation supplies needed to comply with food safety regulations?

Please contact your County Office of Emergency Services (OES) branch to coordinate the procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) and related items, including sanitation and janitorial supplies for your food production or processing business. We will update this page as additional guidance and resources become available.

Is my child still eligible for free or reduced price breakfast and lunch while schools are closed?

On March 13, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order N-26-20, ensuring that even if schools close temporarily because of COVID-19, schools can continue to receive state funding, including for free meals for pick-up for children under the age of 18. Read more [here](#).

Many local governments and school districts are providing free meals for pick-up at school sites, for any child under the age of 18. Check with your county office of education or school district website to see if free meals are available where you live. Free meal programs for children are currently available in San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose, Sacramento, Los Angeles, San Diego, and many more.

Where can I go for more detailed information about Coronavirus in the agricultural industry?

The California Department of Food and Agriculture has built a new [website](#) to answer as many questions as possible for members of the agriculture industry. The USFDA has also compiled a detailed question and answer page available [here](#).

For additional information and FAQs please visit:

https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf

<https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-issues/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-frequently-asked-questions>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

<https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>

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Banking & Finances

Credit Reporting

How can I correct an error on my credit report?

If you find an error on your credit report, you may dispute it using the procedures and resources available here <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/ask-cfpb/how-do-i-dispute-an-error-on-my-credit-report-en-314/>

Mortgages

What relief did the FHA (Federal Housing Administration) and FHFA (Federal Housing and Finance Agency) and HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development) announcement on March 18, 2020 provide to homeowners?

Many homeowners who cannot afford to pay their mortgages will not have to worry about being foreclosed upon or evicted from their homes for at least 60 days, starting March 18, 2020. This suspension of foreclosures and evictions applies to homeowners whose mortgage is guaranteed by Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac or is backed by the FHA or HUD. This relief includes reverse mortgages covered under the Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) Program.

In their letter, the agencies also reminded servicers that they are able to grant forbearance to homeowners who request it.

<https://www.fhfa.gov/Media/PublicAffairs/Pages/FHFA-Suspends-Foreclosures-and-Evictions-for-Enterprise-Backed-Mortgages.aspx>

https://www.hud.gov/press/press_releases_media_advisories/HUD_No_20_042

What should homeowners do to see if they qualify for this relief?

If you are not sure whether you qualify for this relief, call your mortgage servicer (the company to which you make your mortgage payments). Call center wait times may be long, so you may choose to reach out to your mortgage servicer electronically. Be sure to have your loan number with you when you contact your mortgage servicer and include your loan number on any written correspondence. They will need that to check into the type of relief for which you are eligible.

What about homeowners who are not eligible for this relief? What other type of relief is available to homeowners?

A wide variety of relief may be available to homeowners struggling to afford their mortgage payments, but homeowners will need to contact the company to which they send their payments to ask about relief for which they may be eligible.

Carefully review the types of relief you are offered. If your income has dropped to near \$0, a mortgage loan modification (reduced payments) may not provide enough relief. Do not agree to a loan modification if you will be unable to pay the reduced amount.

If you have lost your job or have severely reduced income, forbearance (i.e., a pause on required payments) may be the best option available to you. Forbearance generally allows homeowners to stop paying their mortgages for an agreed-upon period of time with no penalty; skipped payments are added on to the back of the mortgage, which has the effect of lengthening the mortgage to reflect the length of time forbearance is in place. Homeowners seeking forbearance must contact their mortgage servicers to request it and should get any offer of forbearance in writing. **DO NOT STOP PAYING YOUR MORTGAGE UNTIL YOU RECEIVE APPROVAL OF YOUR FORBEARANCE IN WRITING.** If you are on an approved forbearance plan, be sure to check your credit report approximately 45 days after your first missed payment to make sure that your mortgage servicer is not reporting your missed payments as delinquent. A free copy of your credit report may be obtained at <https://www.annualcreditreport.com/index.action>. Remember, you are eligible for up to three free credit reports per year. Be wary of websites that claim you must pay to receive your credit report.

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Business & Professions

Consumer Affairs

I need to complete continuing education but all providers are currently closed. What do I do?

Please visit the licensing board that regulates your license for more information about the status of continuing education, renewals, and fees. While many of the rules are currently still in place, different boards have different protocols in place.

For more information, please visit https://www.dca.ca.gov/about_us/entities.shtml

Small Business

What assistance is available to a small business right now?

The Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz) has several programs available – including state loan programs – many of which are available through a local/regional small business development center and through GO-Biz iBank, including the Disaster Relief Loan Guarantee Program, and the Jump Start Loan Program. GO-Biz created the following fact sheet for small businesses during this pandemic which includes resources and options: <https://static.business.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FAQ-for-California-Small-Businesses.pdf>

GO-Biz also created a landing page for COVID-19 response which is attached here: <https://business.ca.gov/coronavirus-2019/>

Additionally, on the federal level, Small Business Administration is offering low-interest federal disaster loans for California small businesses suffering substantial economic injury as a result of the COVID-19. Generally, these loans offer an interest rate of 3.75 percent for small businesses and 2.75 percent for private non-profit organizations.

Eligibility for Economic Injury Disaster Loans is based on the financial impact of COVID-19 pandemic, and for businesses located in counties that have demonstrated economic injury. Currently, the eligible jurisdictions include: Alameda, Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Contra Costa, Del Norte, El Dorado, Fresno, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Kings, Lake, Lassen, Los Angeles, Madera, Marin, Mariposa, Mendocino, Merced, Mono, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Orange, Placer, Plumas, Riverside, Sacramento, San Benito, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Solano, Sonoma, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Tulare, Tuolumne, Ventura, Yolo, and Yuba.

While the California Department of Emergency Services (CalOES) continues to work with all remaining California jurisdictions on their economic injury declarations, eligible small businesses may visit <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela> for additional information and application details.

Is my business considered an essential service during the Governor's order?

Generally, an essential service includes: gas stations, pharmacies; grocery stores; farmers markets; food banks; convenience stores; take-out and delivery restaurants; banks, and laundromats/laundry services. Additionally, essential state and local government functions will also remain open, including law enforcement and offices that provide government programs and services.

Recently, the Governor's Office has provided additional guidance on what is an essential service, available here:

<https://covid19.ca.gov/img/EssentialCriticalInfrastructureWorkers.pdf>

If you do not believe your business is appropriately captured by this guidance and have suggestions, please contact our office.

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CalPERS and CalSTRS

Will I still receive my pension benefits during the COVID-19 crisis?

Yes. The payment of pension allowances to beneficiaries is an essential function. Both CalPERS and CalSTRS are maintaining essential functions while adopting changes to adjust to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines for combatting COVID-19.

I need to make an appointment or have an appointment next week with CalPERS to discuss my benefits or file my retirement application. Is CalPERS closed? Will my appointment be cancelled?

CalPERS has closed its Field Offices but staff are still working. CalPERS is shifting all in-person appointments to telephone appointments effective March 17, 2020 at least through the end of March. CalPERS representatives will contact persons who have already scheduled in-person appointments within 15 minutes of the appointment to conduct telephone appointments. If you need to make an appointment, please call during business hours at 888 CalPERS (or 888-225-7377).

You can also access CalPERS' website, myCalPERS,

<https://www.calpers.ca.gov/page/active-members/health-benefits/plans-and-rates/coronavirus>

How can I find out about my health coverage and COVID-19?

CalPERS has asked the health plans to provide information regarding COVID-19 testing and treatment on their websites. Visit your plan's website for the latest information and protocols. All CalPERS' plans have complied with this request. CalPERS has ensured that CalPERS members will not have to pay anything out of pocket for screening and testing of COVID-19. This applies to members in both the Health Maintenance Organization and Preferred Provider Organization plans.

<https://www.calpers.ca.gov/page/active-members/health-benefits/plans-and-rates/coronavirus>

I cannot reach the CalSTRS call center. Is CalSTRS closed?

The various 'shelter in place' orders in the community have required CalSTRS to temporarily close its Contact Center while CalSTRS transitions to working remotely. Starting on Thursday, March 19 CalSTRS will not be available by phone until Monday, March 23. CalSTRS encourages customers to use secure messaging through myCalSTRS or its secure online form or utilize CalSTRS.com to find answers to frequently asked questions. CalSTRS will be responding to secured messages as soon as possible. Updates will be posted on the CalSTRS website.

<https://www.calstrs.com/post/updates-calstrs-coronavirus>

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Census

Will the census be extended to give people more time to complete it?

The completion date for data collection for the 2020 Census has officially been extended to August 14, 2020 (previously July 31, 2020). The U.S. Census Bureau (USCB) will continue to monitor the situation and response rates and will make any necessary adjustments in order to achieve a complete and accurate count.

Some key dates are set by law and cannot be changed without an act of Congress and signature of the president: Census Day, April 1, 2020; the deadline to deliver congressional apportionment counts to the President, December 31, 2020; and the deadline to deliver redistricting data to states, March 31, 2021.

Other internal delays that have already gone into effect are:

- On 3/18, census field operations were suspended for two weeks until April 1, 2020. However, the bulk of the field operations, the Non-Response Follow Up period, is still scheduled to occur beginning in late May.
- On 3/20, the Non-Response Follow Up Period was shifted from May 28 to August 14. It was previously from May 13 to July 31. Self-responses through the web, phone or mail will continue to be accepted through the end of the census, August 14.
- On 3/18, the census homeless count was been delayed one month to April 29 – May 1. This consists of getting an enumeration of those serviced by service providers (emergency and transitional shelters, soup kitchens and regularly scheduled mobile food vans) as well as a count of people outdoors without shelter. This 3 day operation was previously scheduled for March 30 – April 1.

For the latest updates, visit: <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases.html>

How will college students be counted now that colleges have closed and with some students required to move out of their dorms?

When possible, students should be counted at their school residence, even if they are temporarily elsewhere due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some schools have opted to hand over their records of students directly to the US Census Bureau (USCB) to make things easier. Conversations continue regarding alternatives for counting students with no school addresses.

How will UCSB protect their census workers? Will they still be sent out to knock on people's doors if they don't fill out the census?

UCSB has stated that most of their workforce is working remotely and that they will hold trainings over the web or over the phone for new workers they are on-boarding.

As of today, they still plan to do their door-knocking operation, also called Non-Response Follow-Up for households that don't self-respond to the census starting late May. This operation is scheduled to last until the end of the census count, currently scheduled for July 31, 2020. According to the USCB, these timelines may change.

How will seniors living in nursing homes be counted? Will they also be contacted by a census worker in person if they don't self-respond?

Nursing homes, college dorms, prisons and other institutional living facilities are offered several ways to respond by the USCB, one of which is having the facility report information on all people housed there directly to the USCB. The USCB is in the process of contacting all institutional living facilities who have requested in-person visits and asking them to consider eResponse or other ways to minimize contact with census staff.

How will the homeless be counted?

The homeless census count consists of a 3-day operation in which the USCB gathers information in person or through administrative records from people staying or being serviced at homeless shelters, soup kitchens and other service providers; in addition to going to outdoor locations where homeless people live & gather and getting in-person responses.

The USCB has been working with local governments and service providers for several months to prepare for this 3 day operation. It was initially scheduled for March 30-April 1, but was postponed on 3/18 to April 29–May 1 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information, visit: <https://2020census.gov/en/conducting-the-count/gq/sbe.html>

How will COVID-19 affect the census count/funding for CA?

It is unclear at this time. The USCB will release daily response rate figures starting March 20, 2020, and we will be able to track which districts, cities, and census tracts are underperforming. At the moment, it is key to encourage people to respond now. They can do so in 13 languages online or over the phone.

Per the USCB, the key message right now for anyone with questions about how COVID-19 will affect the 2020 Census: *It has never been easier to respond on your own, whether online, over the phone or by mail—all without having to meet a Census taker.*

How is COVID-19 affecting the \$187 million California census outreach campaign?

Most of those funds went to local governments and community-based organizations for outreach customized to their specific regions or hard-to-count communities. Many of these state partners focused on in-person outreach through canvassing, in-person questionnaire assistance centers, and in-person events. These state partners are now shifting their efforts to digital organizing, phone banking, texting, mail, paid & earned media, and other means with no in-person contact.

What will happen to all the people who applied for enumerator jobs? Is the USCB still hiring?

Of the 2.6 million applicants for census jobs, 600,000 were offered and have accepted enumerator jobs so far. However, the formal on-boarding process (fingerprinting, signing paperwork) for almost all of them has been delayed until April 1. Any additional hiring and training has also been suspended until April 1.

The USCB believes they'll need more applicants than initially thought due to possible dropouts. As a result, the hiring website will continue to operate and they will continue recruiting. They received about 8,000 new applicants just today.

Staff Contact: Edson.Perez@sen.ca.gov; 916-651-4039

Education

K-12 Education

Will schools continue to receive funding?

Yes. The Governor's March 13, 2020 Executive Order streamlined the existing process for school closures in response to COVID-19. In addition, the Governor signed SB 117, Chapter 3, Statutes of 2020, on March 17, 2020, which ensures schools will not lose funding due to loss of attendance.

For more information: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/pa/covidfaqs.asp>

Will school employees continue to be paid?

Yes, employees will continue to receive compensation. However, due to the changing circumstances, employees may be asked to alter how they deliver instructional and support services.

Will schools have to make up the days they miss?

No. SB 117, Chapter 3, Statutes of 2020 waived the instructional day and minute requirements for schools closed due to COVID-19.

Will students be able to access meals?

Many school districts that have closed are still providing school meals. The California Department of Education (CDE) has received a special waiver called CA COVID-19 from the United States Department of Agriculture that enables a school district that has previously been approved to operate the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) or Seamless Summer Option (SSO) to provide meals to students during a coronavirus-related closure.

SFSP and SSO are both federally funded and state-administered programs that serve free meals to children eighteen and younger when school is not in session and in communities where 50 percent or more of the students qualify for free and reduced-priced meals.

Under the waiver, meals can be served at school and non-school sites. The federal government is requiring that children must be present to receive these meals, but students will not be required to remain on-site to consume the meal and can take the meal and go.

What if a school does not currently participate in the summer meal program?

School districts can apply today. CDE has committed to get approvals out within 24-36 hours of a request. For more information see:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sn/ssfoins.asp>.

What if schools miss mandated state and federal tests?

President Trump announced on March 20, 2020 that the US Department of Education would waive all testing requirements for states impacted by COVID-19.

The Governor issued an Executive Order on March 18, 2020 that waived all state standardized testing requirements and is requesting the federal government waive their testing requirements. The Executive Order can be found here: <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/3.13.20-EO-N-26-20-Schools.pdf>.

Can charter schools who have closed due to COVID-19 offer distance learning if it is not specified in their charter?

Yes. SB 117, Chapter 3, Statutes of 2020, specifically allows charter schools to offer distance learning without having to go back to their chartering authority for approval in the event of a school closure due to COVID-19.

Will After School Education and Safety programs lose funding if they have reduced attendance or must close due to COVID-19?

No. SB 117, Chapter 3, Statutes of 2020, protects ASES program funding. Programs will receive their average annual attendance funding.

Do all the same federal laws still apply to special education?

Yes, at this time, the federal government has not waived the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The United States Department of Education (US ED) Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) issued guidance explaining how these obligations operate in the context of school closures in response to COVID-19:

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/qa-covid-19-03-12-2020.pdf>.

CDE has released the following guidance:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/specialedcovid19guidance.asp>

Are substitute teachers eligible for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits?

Yes, according to CDE, substitute teachers qualify for UI under the federal Disaster Unemployment Assistance. Please use this link for more information:

https://www.edd.ca.gov/pdf_pub_ctr/de8714dua.pdf

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Higher Education

What are colleges doing in response to COVID-19?

The vast majority of public and private colleges and universities have stopped in person instruction and moved classes online. For specific information on individual campuses, see contact information below:

University of California:

- Student and Academic Affairs—Campus closures, remote learning: Tyler Aguilar Tyler.aguilar@ucop.edu
- Business and Operations—Workforce planning, administrative policies, research, labor: Michael Bedard Michael.bedard@ucop.edu
- UC Health—Testing capacity, hospital preparedness: Sarah Huchel Sarah.huchel@ucop.edu
- UC Office of the President Operations: Kathleen.fullerton@ucop.edu

California State University:

- Nichole Nmunoz-Murillo, Nmunoz-murillo@calstate.edu
- Juan Herrera, JHerrera@calstate.edu

California Community Colleges:

- Lizette Navarette, Lnavarette@cccco.edu

Private Colleges and Universities:

- Alex Graves, Alex.graves@aicc.edu

What if people are unable to pay their student loans?

President Trump announced on March 20, 2020 that the federal government would temporarily suspend the interest it collects on student loans during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that federal lenders will let borrowers suspend their student loans and loan payments without penalty for the next 60 days.

Staff Contact: Megan.Baier@sen.ca.gov; 916-651-4170

Elections

Do governments going through the process of changing from at-large to district-based elections still have to hold public hearings during this pandemic?

On March 20, 2020, the Governor issued an Executive Order that suspended the timeframes for conducting the public hearings required when a political subdivision changes from an at-large method of election to a district-based election until neither state nor local public health officials recommend or impose social distancing measures in the relevant subdivision.

How will the Congressional District 25, Senate District 28 and Westminster special elections be conducted?

The March 20, 2020 Executive Order mandated that the following elections be held as all-mail ballot elections:

- The May 12, 2020, Special General Election to be held within the 25th Congressional District of the State
- The May 12, 2020, Special General Election to be held within the 28th Senate District of the State
- The April 7, 2020, Special Recall Election to be held in the City of Westminster

Elections officials were also authorized, and encouraged, to make in-person voting opportunities available on or before Election Day for each of these elections in a manner consistent with public health and safety, to maximize voter accessibility.

In addition, all deadlines associated with completing, auditing, and reporting on the official canvass of these 3 elections were extended by 21 days.

Are the regular deadlines for counting ballots from the March 3 primary still in place?

The March 20, 2020 Executive Order extended by 21 days all deadlines associated with completing, auditing, and reporting on the official canvass of the March 3, 2020, Presidential Primary Election.

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Energy, Environment & Water

Hazardous Waste Permitting

I'm a small business owner whose business generates hazardous waste regulated by the State of California. I'm told that the Department of Toxic Substances Control has shut its regional offices and is not issuing permits to handle hazardous waste. What are my options?

- Due to DTSC regional office and library closures owing to COVID 19, up to 11 DTSC hazardous waste permitting decisions will be delayed.
- By law, the DTSC is required to make draft permitting documents available for public review for a minimum of 45 days before finalizing any decisions. These documents are typically made available to the public via the DTSC's website, regional offices, and public libraries in the impacted communities.
- Because the DTSC's regional offices and public libraries are now closed due to COVID 19, the Department is concerned that posting such documents on its website alone won't allow for adequate public input.
- Therefore, the Department has decided to delay finalizing up to 11 hazardous waste permit decisions until the public has had the opportunity for a full 45 day review.

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Tap Water Safety

Bottled water has been disappearing from store shelves as fast as toilet paper.

Can COVID-19 get into my tap water? Is it safer to drink bottled water?

- The COVID-19 virus has not been detected in drinking-water supplies. Based on current evidence, the risk to water supplies is low. Americans can continue to use and drink water from their tap as usual.
<https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-drinking-water-and-wastewater>
- COVID-19 is transmitted person to person, not through water, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).
- All public water systems in California are routinely monitored for bacteria to ensure that water delivered to customers is free of disease-causing agents. The treatment process must destroy at least 99.99% of viruses.
https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/publications_forms/publications/factsheets/docs/covid-19/covid19_drinking_water_factsheet_english.pdf

Staff Contact: Kip.lipper@sen.ca.gov; 916-651-4151

Utility Shut Off Service

I am a telecommunications customer and am concerned about paying my monthly bill and not having my utility shut off the power while my family and I are at home practicing social distancing. What are my options?

Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-28-20, issued on March 16, 2020, identified that many utility providers, both public and private, have voluntarily announced moratoriums on service disconnections and late fees for non-payment in response to COVID-19.

If you are served by a telecommunications, you can find information regarding late billing payments and shut offs on the website of the utility in your region of the state. Click the COVID 19 or Billing links for further information:

- WWW.PGE.com
- WWW.SCE.com
- WWW.SDGE.com

If you are served by a public municipal utility you can find information at the following website: <https://www.cmua.org/cmua-members-suspending-shutoffs> (CA Municipal Utilities Assn represents all public power agencies in CA. This link will take you to your individual municipal utility (e.g. Los Angeles Department for Water and Power, Sacramento Municipal Utility District, Alameda)

If you are a customer of a community choice aggregator (CCA) you can find information at the following website: <https://cal-cca.org/ccas-and-covid-19/>

If you are a gas utility customer of Southern California Gas Company (SoCal Gas), you can find information at the following website: <https://www.socalgas.com/coronavirus>

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Governance & Finance

Local Government

Can I still participate in local government meetings?

On March 12, Governor Gavin Newsom issued an executive order announcing that he has suspended meeting requirements of the Brown Act and Bagley-Keene Act in response to the increasing threat posed by the Coronavirus.

<https://cnpa.com/governor-suspends-meeting-safeguards-in-brown-and-bagley-keene-acts-in-response-to-coronavirus-crisis/>

What are the regular notice requirements for local agency public meetings?

The Brown Act requires public notice for regular meetings 72 hours before it occurs, 24 hours before special meetings, and when available for emergency meetings.

Does the Governor's executive order change these public notice requirements?

The Executive Order (<https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/3.17.20-N-29-20-EO.pdf>) still requires local agencies to provide public notice according to existing Brown Act requirements, unless the order changes the manner the public will access to meeting, in which case notice is required using the most rapid means of communication available.

Can a majority of a legislative body come together to discuss coronavirus without making the meeting public?

The Executive Order does not change the Brown Act's definition of a public meeting. Whenever a majority of the legislative body hears, discusses, deliberates, or takes action on any item within its subject matter jurisdiction, it is a public meeting subject to the Brown Act. The Brown Act does allow a local agency to meet in closed session in an emergency with 2/3 vote of the legislative body, but public notice is still required.

Can staff convey information to members of a legislative body without having a public meeting?

The Brown Act allows staff to convey information to members of a legislatively body without having a public meeting, but cannot communicate to members the comments or position of any other member.

What are the regular requirements for teleconferencing public meetings?

The Brown Act permits teleconference meetings provided that locations are publicly accessible. Additionally, local agencies must: (1) take votes by rollcall, (2) notice each teleconference location, (3) make all teleconference locations accessible, (4) not take action by secret ballot, (5) must publicly report all actions; and (6) have a quorum of members participate from within local jurisdiction unless otherwise specified.

How does the Executive order change these teleconferencing requirements?

The Executive Order: (1) suspends provisions requiring physical presence of members, staff, or the public; (2) suspends requirement to notice each teleconferencing location, make each teleconferencing location publicly accessible, and post agendas at all locations; and (3) suspends requirement to have quorum of members participate from locations within local body's jurisdiction.

What level of public access does the Executive Order require for public meetings?

The Executive Order requires the legislative body to allow members to observe and address the meeting via telephone or other electronic method. No physical location needs to be made available. The legislative body must implement a procedure to make reasonable ADA accommodations.

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Taxes

Business Taxes

When is the usual deadline for taxpayers to submit returns and pay taxes due to the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration (CDTFA)?

For quarterly filers, the last day of the calendar month following the close of the calendar quarter. The deadline for taxpayers to submit returns and pay taxes for the first quarter of 2020 is April 30, 2020. Some sales and use taxpayers report on a calendar or fiscal year basis, as such their returns are due either January 31st or July 31st. Additionally, there are various return due dates for special tax and fee payers. For example, quarterly returns and payments for California Tire Fee, Alcoholic Beverage Tax, and Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax are due by April 15th. Returns and payments for Cigarette and Tobacco Products Tax are due monthly by the 25th of each month.

What happens normally if taxpayers fail to file a return or pay tax by the deadline for submitting a return and paying tax by April 30?

State law imposes a penalty equal to 10% of the amount due for failing to pay or submit a return, plus monthly simple interest.

What happens if the failure to pay or file a return is due to the effects of the COVID-19 virus?

Pursuant to Governor Newsom's March 12, 2020, Executive Order, taxpayers have 60 days from the date of the Order to request an extension for filing their return. The extension gives them two additional months from the date their return is due. Impacted taxpayers may also request relief from penalties and interest incurred as a result of late filing or payments due during this time.

How can taxpayers obtain relief from filing deadlines, interest, and penalties because of the effects of the COVID-19 virus?

CDTFA allows taxpayers to request extensions and relief from interest and penalties using its online services, by email, by phone or in writing. More information is also available here: <https://www.cdtfa.ca.gov/services/covid19.htm>.

What taxes and fees are eligible for relief?

Sales and Use tax, Energy Resources Surcharge, Integrated Waste Management Fee, Underground Storage Tank Maintenance Fee, California Tire Fee, Oil Spill Response, Prevention and Administration Fee, Diesel Fuel Tax, Underground Storage Tank Maintenance Fee, Natural Gas Surcharge, Water Rights Fee, Electronic Waste Recycling Fee, State Responsibility Area Fire Fee, Lumber Products Assessment, the Local Prepaid Mobile Telephony Surcharge, and the Lead Acid Battery Fee, among others.

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Income Taxes

What types of due dates and payments have been postponed?

FTB (Franchise Tax Bureau) is postponing, until July 15, 2020, the filing and payment deadlines for all individuals and business entities for:

- 2019 tax returns
- 2019 tax return payments
- 2020 1st and 2nd quarter estimate payments
- 2020 LLC taxes and fees
- 2020 Non-wage withholding payments
- Personal Income Taxpayers (individuals)

When is the usual deadline for individuals to submit returns and pay taxes due to FTB?

The usual deadline for taxpayers to submit returns and pay taxes for the 2019 taxable year is April 15, 2020

When is the newly extended due date for individuals to submit returns and pay taxes?

The new due date because of the COVID-19 pandemic is July 15, 2020.

Many taxpayers file for an income tax extension. Has this due date changed?

No. The extended due date has remained unchanged at October 15, 2020. Taxpayers filing for extensions still must pay any taxes due, even if an extension delays the date to file the return.

Have estimated tax payment due dates been extended too?

Yes. For personal income taxpayers, the new due dates are:

- 1st Quarter Due date: July 15, 2020
- 2nd Quarter due date: July 15, 2020
- 3rd Quarter due date: N/A
- 4th Quarter due date: January 15, 2021

When is the usual deadline for business entities to submit returns and pay taxes due to the FTB?

The due date depends the type business entity. Generally, due dates for business entity returns are due the 15th day of the 3rd, 4th, or 6th month after the close of the tax year.

What is the newly extended due date for business entities to submit returns and pay taxes due to the FTB?

The due date will depend on when the whether the business entity is a calendar or fiscal-year filer. Generally, the extended due date will be no earlier than July 15, 2020. For a chart of due dates and extensions, please visit the FTB website here:

<https://www.ftb.ca.gov/about-ftb/newsroom/covid-19/extensions-to-file-pay.html>

Have estimated tax payment due dates for business entities also been extended?

Yes. For business entities with an estimated tax payment that is due on or between March 15, 2020 and April 15, 2020, the new due date is July 15, 2020.

What extension has the federal Internal Revenue Service (IRS) allowed?

As of March 19, 2020, the IRS has not modified the due date for tax return filings and individuals and businesses must file their returns by April 15, 2020, or applicable due date. **However, the IRS has issued IRS notice 2020-20, which allows individuals to defer their federal income tax payments (including any self-employment tax) for the 2019 tax year from the normal April 15, 2020 deadline until July 15, 2020.** That means you can put off paying what you still owe for last year until July 15 without incurring any interest or penalties, but ***you still have to file a return***. Individuals can only defer up to a combined \$1 million of the tax payments until July 15, 2020. The \$1 million ceiling applies the same regardless of whether they file jointly, as heads of households, or as single or married filing separate. For more information on business entities and the most up to date information, please visit the www.irs.gov.

If the IRS extends its due date again or makes any changes, will California automatically allow a similar extension?

The state will not automatically follow an IRS extension. The FTB will be updating its website with the most up to date information here: www.ftb.ca.gov

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Property Taxes

When are property taxes usually due?

Taxes are due in two installments: November 1, and February 1, with delinquency for the second installment occurring on April 10. Many taxpayers are concerned about their ability to pay taxes by the April 10th deadline due to the effects of the COVID-19 virus.

What happens if taxpayers do not pay property taxes by the April 10th deadline?

Generally, state law requires county tax collectors to begin imposing penalties for nonpayment of property taxes of 10% of each amount due, plus administrative charges, once taxes become delinquent. However, state law also allows tax collectors to relieve taxpayers from penalties in some cases.

How can taxpayers avoid penalties and charges if they cannot go to the tax collector's office?

Tax collectors in most counties accept property tax payments electronically, over the phone, or by mailed check. The website for the tax collector in each county should have payment option information. Please use this link to find the website for the tax collector in each county.

<https://www.cactc.org/assets/documents/cactc%20covid%2019%20statement.pdf>

Many banks can also arrange for electronic property tax payments.

What if I do not have access to online banking services, and must pay in cash in person?

If the Tax Collector's office is closed in a county by resolution of the board of supervisors on April 10, state law treats every day the office is closed as a legal holiday. As a result, tax collectors must treat payments made the first day the office is open as paid on time. However, some county boards of supervisors have approved resolutions closing offices, while others have not, so the deadline extension will vary from county to county. Taxpayers should call their tax collector's office to find out whether it's open or closed.

What if I am unable to pay because of quarantine or illness?

State law allows each tax collector to waive penalties and other charges when failing to pay is due to reasonable cause and where there is no willful neglect. The tax collector in each county makes this determination for any specific taxpayer. Reasonable cause usually applies to circumstances outside the taxpayer's control, such as illness, but generally does not apply when the taxpayer lacks funds to pay taxes. In these cases, tax collectors can accept partial payments and place taxpayers on installment plans.

What are the challenges with the state moving the deadline?

Counties rely on property tax payments to fund vital operations, such as police, fire protection, and public health. Moving the deadline for all payments would jeopardize counties' ability to provide these services. Additionally, many counties borrow cash earlier in the year to fund county services, which is repaid when property tax payments arrive in April, and moving the deadline may prevent those counties from repaying those loans.

I pay property taxes as part of my mortgage payment. Should I worry?

Most mortgage servicers use an intermediary called a CORTAC, which electronically pay property tax bills for homeowners who impounded their taxes as part of their mortgages. CORTACs are responsible for paying theses taxes on time.

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Governmental Organization

Alcohol and Beverage Control (ABC)

Governor Newsom recently directed certain alcohol licensees to close to the public and others to follow specific guideline. What licensees were asked to close and what guidelines should the other licensees follow?

The licensees that have the authority to sell alcohol for consumption on the premises. This includes bars, wineries, and breweries. This does not apply to the manufacturing or distribution of alcohol. Restaurants were asked to follow the CDPH guidelines, which can be viewed at the link. <https://www.abc.ca.gov/guidance-to-licensees-on-limitations-of-on-sale-privileges/>

Which ABC offices have closed? How can folks contact the department?

Currently the Fresno, Oakland, Sacramento, Salinas, San Francisco, San Jose, and Santa Rosa offices are closed. They can be reached via phone and email at the corresponding contact information below.

- <https://www.abc.ca.gov/office-closures/>
- <https://www.abc.ca.gov/notice-of-regulatory-relief/>

Are employees still required to complete their server training?

A - As of now all server training has been cancelled. You can contact leadinfo@abc.ca.gov with any questions.

Where can I apply for a daily license?

A - Right now the department is not accepting, processing, or approving any daily licenses, catering authorizations, and event authorizations.

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Gambling

Which cardrooms have closed?

It's unclear how many of the 80+ cardrooms in the state have closed. As of a couple of days ago, it was reported that some of the major cardrooms had closed, including the Commerce Casino, Gardens Casino, the Bicycle Casino, and Hollywood Park Casino.

Are horse races still happening?

Santa Anita Racetrack is currently in their winter meet; however, as of March 18 races at Santa Anita have been temporarily suspended.

<https://www.santaanita.com/blog/covid-19-health-safety-update/#.XnO3vD9KiUk>

Can the Governor require Tribal Casinos to close?

No. Tribal Casinos operate on tribal land and are not required to follow the Governor's Executive Orders. However, some Tribal Casinos have voluntarily decided to close their doors, including the Pechanga Resort and Casino in Temecula, the San Manuel Casino in Highland, and Thunder Valley in Lincoln. Other casinos will likely close as well.

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Health Care

What if a hospital needs more N-95 masks?

Resource requests for health facilities are handled through local public health departments and then to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). The requests are submitted to the Regional Disaster Medical Health Coordinator (RDMHC) which are then sent to the CDPH Medical and Health Coordination Center (MHCC). This way all equipment requests can be tracked and prioritized appropriately. The local health facilities know this process well and have been properly submitting requests.

The California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) responded as follows: "We know these requests are very urgent, which is why the MHCC is working closely with the State Operations Center (SOC). Emergency Medical Services Agency (EMSA) is also embedded in the SOC to facilitate those requests."

When the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) arrives in the state, the state will continue to use the existing process for ordering up supplies with one exception: Los Angeles County, due to their size, gets direct supplies through the SNS.

The RDHMCs can be found here: <https://ems.ca.gov/regional-disaster-medical-health-coordinators-and-specialists/>

What is the definition of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers?

Here are some resources with examples:

<https://covid19.ca.gov/img/EssentialCriticalInfrastructureWorkers.pdf>

www.insurance.ca.gov/0250-insurers/0300-insurers/0200-bulletins/bulletin-notices-commiss-opinion/upload/CDI-Essential-Services-Notice-Final.pdf

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Health Insurance

What if I need health insurance?

<http://www.dmhc.ca.gov/?referral=healthhelp.ca.gov>

Covered California has announced a new Special Enrollment Period (SEP) effective immediately. Anyone uninsured and eligible to enroll in health care coverage through Covered California can sign up through the end of June.

- People who sign up through Covered California will have access to private health insurance plans with monthly premiums that may be lowered due to federal and new state financial help that became effective in 2020. After selecting a plan, their coverage would begin on the first of the following month — meaning individuals losing job-based coverage will not face a gap in coverage.
- <https://www.coveredca.com/>
- The Department of Health Care Services has announced new steps to help those eligible for Medi-Cal sign up easily and get immediate coverage.
- In addition, consumers who sign up through CoveredCA.com may find out that they are eligible for no-cost or low-cost coverage through Medi-Cal, which they can enroll in online. Those eligible for Medi-Cal can have coverage that is immediately effective.
- All medically necessary screening and testing for COVID-19 are free of charge, and all health plans available through Medi-Cal and Covered California offer telehealth options.
- California has put a 90-day hold on Medi-Cal renewal reviews, ensuring those already enrolled can continue their coverage and freeing up resources to quickly process the expected new enrollments.
- The Department of Health Services is also seeking expanded authority to expedite enrollment for seniors and other vulnerable populations, expand the use of telehealth, and take other steps to make care easier to access.

What if I don't have health insurance and I need screening or treatment for COVID-19?

- Check with your local [community health center](#) or hospital to see if fees for testing can be waived
- See if you're eligible for [Medi-Cal](#)
- See if you're eligible for [Covered California](#)

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Telehealth

Will health care providers be paid for visits by telephone or other telehealth technology?

The Department of Managed Health Care has sent out a letter to all health plans with the following guidance:

- Health plans shall reimburse providers at the same rate, whether a service is provided in-person or through telehealth, if the service is the same regardless of the modality of delivery, as determined by the provider's description of the service on the claim.
- For example, if a health plan reimburses a mental health provider \$100 for a 50-minute therapy session conducted in-person, the health plan shall reimburse the provider \$100 for a 50-minute therapy session done via telehealth
- For services provided via telehealth, a health plan may not subject enrollees to cost-sharing greater than the same cost-sharing if the service were provided in-person.
- Health plans shall provide the same amount of reimbursement for a service rendered via telephone as they would if the service is rendered via video, provided the modality by which the service is rendered (telephone versus video) is medically appropriate for the enrollee. March 18, 2020

Medi-Cal. Managed Health Care Plans and telehealth. A memo was sent to all Medi-Cal Managed Health Care Plans on March 16, 2020 reminding plans they are required to:

- Cover all medically necessary emergency care without prior authorization, whether that care is provided by an in-network or out-of-network provider.
- Waive prior authorization requests for services, including screening and testing, related to COVID-19.
- Ensure provider networks are adequate to handle an increase in the need for services, including offering access to out-of-network services where appropriate and required, as more COVID-19 cases emerge in California.
- In addition to existing Medi-Cal telehealth policies, DHCS also allows reimbursement for virtual communication, and in the case of COVID-19, a patient who cannot or should not be physically present (face-to-face).
- Ensure members have 24-hour access to a plan representative with the authority to authorize services.

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Behavioral Health and Telehealth

Please see response to questions received to date. Please note, the answers to these questions are based on today's information. DHCS asked for additional flexibility in a federal 1135 waiver, and will share new developments as they unfold.

Our county system is not set up with Drug-Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS) telehealth billing codes.

DMC-ODS uses the same billing code for services, whether in-person, via telephone, or via telehealth. DMC-ODS opt-in counties should allow providers to bill for telephone and telehealth services without requiring changes in billing practices.

Our county only allows licensed providers to provide telehealth services.

You do not need to be a licensed clinician to provide reimbursable services through telehealth in Specialty Mental Health Services (SMHS) and DMC-ODS opt-in counties. To prevent COVID-19 spread and ensure patients get needed treatment, DHCS encourages counties and providers to deliver all possible services by telehealth and telephone. DMC-ODS and SMHS services provided by either licensed or non-licensed staff are reimbursable services. If a service is within the scope of practice for a non-licensed staff person to do in-person, it is allowable by telephone or telehealth. Due to expected workforce shortages, DHCS encourages providers to deploy all staff (licensed and non-licensed) to meet patient need.

My county requires us to set up detailed policies and procedures and an authorization form before we can provide services by telephone or telehealth.

We are in a public state of emergency. DHCS encourages counties and providers to move quickly to allow all possible services to be provided by telephone and telehealth to minimize spread of COVID-19. The situation is changing daily, and we encourage counties and providers to streamline administrative processes and respond quickly to the changing situation. DHCS considers in-person, telephone, and telehealth services equivalent. The standard of care is the same, no matter how the service is delivered.

We are hearing that DHCS will not allow group visits by telehealth. Is this true?

For SMHS and DMC-ODS, group visits are allowable through telephone and telehealth as long as providers are compliant with HIPAA and 42 CFR Part 2. In BHIN 20-009, on page 3, it states: "Any DMC-ODS service that is clinically appropriate by telephone is currently reimbursable in all DMC-ODS counties." State Plan DMC counties (which are counties that have not opted into DMC-ODS) cannot provide telephone and telehealth services at this point; DHCS is seeking an 1135 waiver to allow State Plan DMC counties to provide services via telehealth.

We are concerned about treatment capacity – many of our community-based providers are struggling financially and some are already preparing to close.

DHCS is open to hearing ideas and solutions for how to help providers stay open and provide services. Quickly moving to telephone and telehealth is a way for providers to continue to serve beneficiaries and seek reimbursement. Social isolation, chronic stress, and financial instability due to the COVID-19 emergency will likely increase rates

of mental health conditions over time, leading to increasing demands for services. We will need a robust provider network to continue to serve our beneficiaries. We count on providers and counties to work together to quickly identify solutions.

Many of our providers have never done telehealth and don't have equipment that is HIPAA compliant. What apps can be used to provide services?

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Civil Rights (OCR) provided clarification that they will use enforcement discretion regarding HIPAA violations when providers use telehealth in good faith. The OCR website also provides detailed guidance about which common tablet and phone apps are appropriate for telehealth, and which public-facing apps cannot be used.

Can a provider do an intake by telephone?

Yes. An intake can be done by telephone for SMHS and DMC-ODS. At this point, in DMC-ODS, the initial clinical diagnostic assessment must be done by video or in-person; subsequent services can be done by telephone or telehealth. SMHS allows assessments, including mental status exams, to be done by telephone or telehealth. ASAM re-assessments can be done by telephone or telehealth.

Some providers are refusing new patients until further notice. Can we deploy our county staff to see patients and claim for the services?

SMHS, DMC-ODS, and State Plan DMC services can be provided anywhere in the community by county staff.

Our staff doesn't have time right now to prepare for audits. Can we get some relief?

DHCS Audits and Investigations is pausing all audit activity (MHP, MHSA, DMC, medical compliance) until April 17. We are discussing next steps internally, should the emergency continue and further deferrals are needed. Guidance will be released soon regarding the EQRO.

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Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorder Programs

Can telemedicine now be used for controlled substances?

Yes. While a prescription for a controlled substance issued by means of the Internet (including telemedicine) must generally be predicated on an in-person medical evaluation, the Controlled Substances Act contains certain exceptions to this requirement. One such exception occurs when the federal Secretary of Health and Human Services has declared a public health emergency. Secretary Azar declared such a public health emergency with regard to COVID-19 on January 31, 2020.

(<https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2020/01/31/secretary-azar-declares-public-health-emergency-us-2019-novel-coronavirus.html>).

For as long as the Secretary's designation of a public health emergency remains in effect, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)-registered practitioners may issue prescriptions for controlled substances to patients for whom they have not conducted an in-person medical evaluation, provided all of the following conditions are met:

- The prescription is issued for a legitimate medical purpose by a practitioner acting in the usual course of his/her professional practice
- The telemedicine communication is conducted using an audio-visual, real-time, two-way interactive communication system.
- The practitioner is acting in accordance with applicable Federal and State law.

Provided the practitioner satisfies the above requirements, the practitioner may issue the prescription using any of the methods of prescribing currently available and in the manner set forth in the DEA regulations. Thus, the practitioner may issue a prescription either electronically (for federal drug schedules II-V) or by calling in an emergency schedule II prescription to the pharmacy, or by calling in a schedule III-V prescription to the pharmacy.

Important note: *If the prescribing practitioner has previously conducted an in-person medical evaluation of the patient, the practitioner may issue a prescription for a controlled substance after having communicated with the patient via telemedicine, or any other means, regardless of whether a public health emergency has been declared by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, so long as the prescription is issued for a legitimate medical purpose and the practitioner is acting in the usual course of his/her professional practice. In addition, for the prescription to be valid, the practitioner must comply with any applicable State laws.*

For more information go to

<https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/coronavirus.html>

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Housing

Homelessness

What is the state doing to protect homeless people from COVID-19?

- 1) Of the \$500 million authorized by the Legislature to combat COVID-19 before they recessed, \$150 million is dedicated to local homelessness efforts:
 - \$100 million will be allocated directly to local governments (regional continuums of care, counties, and the largest 13 cities) to provide emergency shelter and housing.
 - \$50 million will be used to purchase over 1,000 travel trailers and lease rooms in local hotel/motels. These will be used to provide homeless individuals who have confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 with a safe place to self-isolate.
Source [here](#).
- 2) The Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency released interim guidance for homeless assistance providers on best practices to prevent spread of Covid-19 within shelters and other emergency housing. Source [here](#).
- 3) Governor Newsom signed Exec. Order N-32-20, which
 - a) Waives any restrictions on homeless funding provided to local entities over the last two years (\$1.15 billion total) so that they can provide hygiene services, implement social distancing, and carry out best practices.
 - b) Suspends the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for any shelter or housing project using homeless funding provided by the state. Source [here](#).
- 4) The Department of General Services has developed a list of hotels/motels that may be available to enter into leases with local governments to house homeless individuals, and has shared that list with each county. The Department is also offering technical assistance to contact hotel/motels and negotiate leases on behalf of counties who request that assistance.

My city is interested in accessing these services. Whom should they contact?

The \$100 million emergency homeless funds are allocated by formula to the state's thirteen largest cities (as well as the counties and continuums of care). Those cities already have a process in place to receive those funds. Other cities should contact their county or their HUD-designated regional continuum of care (lists [here](#)).

All other funding and services are being coordinated through the counties, so cities should contact their county representatives for more information. The interim guidance for homeless providers document [here](#) has a list of each county's emergency management offices.

What are the exact allocations of the \$100 million?

<https://www.bcsb.ca.gov/hcfc/coronavirus19/allocations.pdf>

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Human Services

CalWORKs and CalFresh

I need to apply to CalFresh or CalWORKs, but the county welfare office is closed. What do I do?

Most benefit applications and information are online, including:

- CalFresh nutrition benefits: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/food-nutrition/calfresh>
- CalWORKs cash aid: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/calworks>
- County Social Service agency contact information:
<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/county-offices>

I am a CalWORKs participant, but I am unable to complete required activities due to shelter in place requirements, will I lose my benefits?

The Department of Social Services is allowing counties to waive various requirements of the program temporarily. These include:

- Providing good-cause exemptions for an inability to participate in work requirements.
- Encouraging counties to eliminate in-person requirements for applying or renewing benefits, including online or video interviews, when possible.
- Waiving time limits on homeless assistance benefits.
- Using alternative methods of verifying identity and other qualifying information, as appropriate and necessary
- Suspending required reviews for renewing eligibility in all benefit programs until June 30, 2020.

The Department of Social Services guidance for COVID19 responses are here:

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/>

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Child Care

I need to expand my existing child care center's capacity or establish a new child care center to accommodate unexpected children needing care during the COVID-19 crisis. Is that allowable?

On March 16, the Department of Social Services (DSS) issued a statewide emergency waiver so child care services are available for working families whose regular daytime care is unavailable due to school closures or other reasons. In all cases, the applicant must contact the local community care licensing office to apply for the waiver. The waiver allows:

- An employer to immediately provide temporary employer sponsored child care.
- A family child care home, day care center, school-age childcare center or infant care center to waive adult-to-child ratios so long as the health and safety of children is not compromised.
- A child care facility to waive capacity requirements if there is an immediate need for care due to school closures.

Source: PIN 20-04-CCP <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/child-care-licensing>

What do I do if a child in my care or employee of my center exhibits symptoms of COVID 19?

Teachers and staff with any fever and/or respiratory infection symptoms should not come to work. Screen teachers and staff for respiratory infection symptoms each morning before they interact with children. If one or more child, family member, staff member or visitor tests positive, the provider must immediately contact the childcare licensing regional office and the local public health department for instructions.

Source: PIN 20-04-CCP / Local licensing offices at bottom of the page:
<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/child-care-licensing>

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Developmental Services

What flexibilities exist for providing services to individuals with Developmental Disabilities during this crisis?

The Department of Developmental Services has issued waivers of several key requirements, including:

- Permission to provide day services and other supports in alternative locations or through video conferencing.
- Authority for additional health and safety waiver funding, available through Regional Center Executive Directors, to enhance protections for vulnerable individuals.

This and other directives are available on the DDS Coronavirus webpage:

<https://www.dds.ca.gov/corona-virus-information-and-resources/>

Foster Youth in College

I am a foster youth and a college student and all of my classes have gone online, but I don't have the technology to access them. Is there anybody who can help?

College students who are foster and former foster youth whose classes have gone online only can get assistance with technology through iFoster. The nonprofit can help with smartphone access, headsets and a limited number of free laptops. Details on eligibility and application information is available through iFoster: 1-855-936-7837 or phone@ifoster.org

In Home Supportive Services

What guidance is being given to IHSS providers in caring for their clients, who are often aged and disabled?

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is encouraging providers who are healthy and have not been exposed to the virus to continue providing services for their clients. CDSS has advised counties that they may allow flexibility in work schedules for IHSS providers, and notified counties the state will remove any overtime violations for providers who work above the authorized time due to COVID-19. The state also suspended the requirement to conduct in-person reassessments until June 30, 2020. Federal rules require an in-person initial assessment, but the state has advised counties to obtain as much information as possible prior to meeting with the applicant to minimize exposure time. The Department of Social Services guidance for COVID19 responses are here: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/>

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Immigration

Will Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) continue to do raids or detain immigrants during the COVID-19 pandemic?

On March 19, Acting Deputy Director for the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Ken Cuccinelli appeared to walk back this policy change (see below) when he tweeted that the administration's enforcement priorities had not changed, and "during the current public health situation, removals will be done in such a way as to minimize the exposure of our agents and of the removable aliens we are encountering."

On 3/18 ICE stated that they will focus enforcement on public safety risks and individuals subject to mandatory detention based on criminal grounds. For those individuals who do not fall into those categories, ICE will exercise discretion to delay enforcement actions until after the crisis or utilize alternatives to detention, as appropriate.

In addition, ICE stated they will not carry out enforcement operations at or near health care facilities, such as hospitals, doctors' offices, accredited health clinics, and emergent or urgent care facilities, except in the most extraordinary of circumstances.

When will the borders close and who will be affected?

On March 20, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that border closures to nonessential travelers from Mexico and Canada would go into effect at midnight on Saturday 3/21/20.

The Administration has said that trucks and trains will continue to be allowed to cross the border to deliver goods.

Under the new rules, the Border Patrol will begin returning all undocumented immigrants directly to Mexico or Canada when they are apprehended at the border, rather than detaining them in the U.S.

How is travel out of and in to the US being affected?

The Department of State advises U.S. citizens to avoid all international travel at this time due to the global impact of COVID-19. Many areas throughout the world are now experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks and taking action that may limit traveler mobility, including quarantines and border restrictions. Even countries, jurisdictions, or areas where cases have not been reported may restrict travel without notice.

U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents will be permitted to return from countries with active bans (China, Iran, several European countries) and other countries.

Any U.S. citizen returning to the United States who has been in China after January 17 may be subject to up to 14 days of quarantine.

Effective March 18, the State Department cancelled routine immigrant and nonimmigrant visa appointments, effectively prohibiting new authorizations to travel to the United States. Only emergency appointments will be allowed.

More information on travel:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/ea/passport-covid-19.html>

Will COVID-19 testing or treatment be considered in a public charge determination?

No. USCIS will neither consider testing, treatment, nor preventative care (including vaccines, if a vaccine becomes available) related to COVID-19 as part of a public charge inadmissibility determination even if such treatment is provided or paid for by one or more public benefits, as defined in the rule (e.g. federally funded Medicaid).

For more information, visit <https://www.uscis.gov/greencard/public-charge>

Will immigration courts still hold hearings?

At the Department of Justice, immigration hearings for non-detained immigrants are largely on hold as immigration courts restrict their dockets, postponing the deportation process for many cases.

For now, hearings for detained immigrants will continue in person. DHS, the Citizenship and Immigration Service is closing all field offices to in-person interviews.

Will visas for seasonal workers continue to be processed?

On March 19, the State Department said it would keep processing H-2 visas for seasonal workers, after earlier saying it would suspend routine visa services in most countries indefinitely. Seasonal workers account for as much as 10 percent of the workforce for farmers.

How are refugees and asylum seekers being affected?

Effective March 19, all refugee resettlement pauses until at least April 6, 2020.

All undocumented immigrants will be returned directly to Mexico or Canada by Border Patrol when they are apprehended at the border, rather than detaining them in the U.S.

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Insurance

Auto Insurance

My driver's license is expiring soon or has expired, but I am unable to get it renewed. Can my insurer cancel my policy?

Insurers may choose to refuse to issue or renew a policy on a vehicle where the owner fails to meet California's licensing requirements. Beginning March 16, 2020, DMV has asked law enforcement officials to exercise discretion when citing individuals driving with an expired license or registration for the next 60 days (source here). Additionally, the Insurance Commissioner has asked insurers to temporarily refrain taking adverse actions against a policyholder whose driver's licenses or vehicle registration has recently expired (source here). However, insurers are not required by law to follow the commissioner's request and you should check with your insurer. Insurers are required to provide at least a 20-day notice before a cancellation is effective. (Only a 10-day notice is required for nonpayment of premium.)

My insurer cancelled my policy. Where can I go to get replacement coverage?

You may wish to ask your current company to reconsider or you may wish to shop around to find replacement coverage. You may contact insurers directly (a list of insurers is here) or contact an insurer agent or broker (an agent and broker finder is here). Some insurers, use only "captive agents" who exclusively sell policies from one insurer. Other insurers, use "independent agents" that work with several insurers. An insurance broker will also be familiar with several insurance companies, but they represent you. The Department of Insurance publishes other useful information on its website as well (here) to help you find the best coverage.

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Travel Insurance

I purchased travel insurance, but I'm in a vulnerable population and was instructed not to go on my trip because of COVID-19. My travel insurance refuses to pay the claim. Is there anything I can do?

Travel insurance typically covers the costs related to cancelled trips, medical treatment while away from home, and other issues related to the trip. Cancellation and interruption coverage may only apply under specified circumstances, such as if you develop a qualifying condition that makes you unfit to travel, or on the occurrence of a covered event such as a disaster. However, known epidemics and pandemics are often excluded under the policy terms. An insurer might deny coverage if the cancellation was related to COVID-19. You should check your policy terms very carefully, identify the conditions that qualify for coverage, and submit available supporting documentation to the insurer. For example, if the policy only excludes "known events" and you purchased the policy before the spread of COVID-19 was publicly considered a health crisis, you might be covered if you provide proper documentation that you meet the qualifying conditions. You should specifically check to see if you purchased a "cancel for any reason" option that could provide the coverage despite the exclusion.

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Judiciary

The Governor issued an Executive Order on evictions. Does this mean I can't be evicted?

Eviction is a local issue. While there are discussions at the State about imposing a moratorium on evictions for tenants and commercial businesses, you should check to see if your local jurisdiction has imposed a moratorium on evictions.

Even if your jurisdiction has not imposed a moratorium on evictions, it is possible that eviction notices may not be enforced during this time. Each county court has implemented different rules on what cases are essential right now. You can check whether your court is hearing unlawful detainer cases (i.e., eviction cases) by checking: https://www.courts.ca.gov/find-my-court.htm?query=browse_courts

If you receive an eviction notice, you should consult an attorney. If you cannot afford one, consult your local legal aid.

What does the Governor's Executive Order on evictions do?

Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order N-28-20 to provide relief to tenants, businesses, and homeowners unable to keep up with rents or mortgages as a result of economic loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Generally, the Executive Order does the following:

Provides that tenancy protections available under California's price-gouging law is operative until at least May 31, 2020;

Clarifies that local governments are not preempted from enacting a moratorium on evictions when the evictions are due to a tenant's decrease in income due to COVID-19 pandemic;

Extends deadlines for housing assistance applicants and recipients;

Imposes a moratorium on home and commercial foreclosures arising from loss of income due to COVID-19 pandemic; and

Clarifies that nothing in the order relieves the tenant from paying rent past due.

Are courts open right now?

Each county court has implemented different protocols on what cases are essential right now. To check on whether your local court is open, please visit:

https://www.courts.ca.gov/find-my-court.htm?query=browse_courts

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Labor

What is the definition of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers?

Here are some resources with examples:

<https://covid19.ca.gov/img/EssentialCriticalInfrastructureWorkers.pdf>

www.insurance.ca.gov/0250-insurers/0300-insurers/0200-bulletins/bulletin-notices-commiss-opinion/upload/CDI-Essential-Services-Notice-Final.pdf

Private Sector Employment:

Employers

I am an employer. What can I do to ensure my workers are safe from COVID-19 in the workplace?

The Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) has put out both industry-specific and general guidance on how employers can work to keep their workplaces safe and in compliance with the law.

That guidance is here: www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/coronavirus/Health-Care-General-Industry.html

For additional employer specific resources and information, please refer to the "employer" section of this link: www.edd.ca.gov/about_edd/coronavirus-2019.htm

NOTE: Also, refer to the Small Business Association website for additional resources and information. www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources

I'm a small business owner and I'm concerned about the costs of providing Paid Sick Leave or Family Leave to my employees.

The FFCRA grants the Secretary of Labor the authority to exempt businesses of less than 50 employees from its requirements (both paid family leave and paid sick leave) if complying would jeopardize the viability of the business. A business who believes they qualify may apply for this exemption with the Department of Labor.

Furthermore, employers with less than 25 employees may have access to an exception to the requirement to restore an employee to the job they held before their Family Leave, if the employee's job no longer exists due to the coronavirus pandemic. If this occurs, the employer is required to make reasonable efforts to restore the employee to an equivalent position over a one-year period.

For more information and assistance, visit the U.S. Small Business Administration: www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources.

As a business owner, are there any rebates available to offset my Paid Family and Paid Sick Leave costs?

The FFCRA provides for a series of refundable tax credits for employers providing paid emergency sick leave or paid family leave:

- A refundable tax credit for employers equal to 100 percent of qualified family leave wages required to be paid by the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act that are paid by an employer for each calendar quarter. The tax credit is allowed against the tax imposed by the employer portion of Social Security taxes. The amount of qualified family leave wages taken into account for each employee is capped at \$200 per day and \$10,000 for all calendar quarters.
- A refundable tax credit for employers equal to 100 percent of qualified paid sick leave wages required to be paid by the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act that are paid by an employer for each calendar quarter. The tax credit is allowed to be used against the tax imposed by the employer portion of Social Security taxes.

I am an employer and because of COVID-19 I must temporarily close my doors and lay off my workers, what can I do?

Employers who must close their business or planning major layoffs due to coronavirus can get help through the Rapid Response program through the Employment Development Department. Rapid Response staff will work with you to discuss your needs as well as assist your workers facing job losses.

For more information, refer to the following fact sheet:www.edd.ca.gov/pdf_pub_ctr/de8714rrb.pdf

For additional employer specific resources and information, please refer to the "employer" section of this link: www.edd.ca.gov/about_edd/coronavirus-2019.htm

NOTE: Also, refer to the Small Business Association website for additional resources and information.www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources

Has the enactment and enforcement of Assembly Bill 5 been suspended?

While the Governor has suspended some labor laws related to mass layoffs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, AB 5 is not among them. As of today, AB 5 is still in effect.

For more information, refer to www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/faq_independentcontractor.htm

I have a pending wage/workers' compensation claim. How does COVID-19 impact my claim?

Both the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement (DLSE) and the Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC) have implemented social distancing policies to ensure that claims can be managed and proceed in a safe and orderly manner.

For more information on the DLSE policies:

www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/2019-Novel-Coronavirus.htm

www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/Spanish/2019-Novel-Coronavirus.htm (En Espanol)

For more information on the DWC's policies:

Hearing Calendars and Filings: www.dir.ca.gov/DIRNews/2020/2020-18.html

Medical Evaluations: www.dir.ca.gov/DIRNews/2020/2020-21.html

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Workers

What programs and benefits are available to help me through this crisis?

The following questions and answers below provide general information to help guide you as well as links to the relevant programs and departments.

For additional resources and information, please refer to the Labor and Workforce Development Agency website below: <https://www.labor.ca.gov/coronavirus2019/>

As a California worker, can I take time off work due to COVID-19?

Under current state law, all employers must offer their employees paid sick time, accrued at 1 hour per 30 hours worked up to a total of 24 hours. This leave must be paid out at the employee's hourly wage.

Sick leave may be used for the diagnosis, care or treatment of an existing health condition of, or preventative care for, an employee or an employee's family member, including COVID-19. Employees begin to accrue sick time after 30 days of employment and may begin to use their accrued sick time on their 90th day of employment.

Please refer to www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/paid_sick_leave.htm for more information on California's Paid Sick Leave provisions.

What benefits are available if I am sick and cannot work?

If you are unable to work because you have or were exposed to COVID-19 and are in quarantine, you may be able to apply for State Disability Insurance (SDI) through the Employment Development Department (if you have been contributing to the program through tax deductions). NOTE that for this benefit program you will need a doctor to certify your condition. SDI benefits provide short-term benefit payments for non-work related illnesses, injuries, or pregnancy. The SDI program provides a wage replacement of about 60 to 70 percent (depending on income) for a maximum of 52 weeks.

For more information and to apply for SDI, please go to:

www.edd.ca.gov/Disability/Disability_Insurance.htm

www.edd.ca.gov/claims-espanol.htm (En Espanol)

What if I am not sick, but a member of my family is and I can't go to work because I need to take care of them?

If you cannot work because you are caring for an ill or quarantined family member with COVID-19, you may be eligible for Paid Family Leave (PFL) benefits. PFL provides eligible employees (those paying into SDI) with up to 6 weeks of wage replacement benefits to care for a seriously ill child, spouse or registered domestic partner, parent, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, and parents-in-laws. PFL provides a wage replacement of approximately 60 to 70 percent of their weekly salary, with a maximum of \$1,300 per week.

Note: Citizenship and immigration status do not affect eligibility for PFL.

For more information and to apply for PFL, please go to:

www.edd.ca.gov/Disability/Paid_Family_Leave.htm

www.edd.ca.gov/claims-espanol.htm (En Espanol)

What if I am not sick and not caring for a family member, but have had hours reduced at work or laid off because of COVID-19?

If you are unemployed or have had work hours reduced due to COVID-19, you can apply for Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits. UI provides partial wage replacement benefits to workers who lose their job or have hours reduced, through no fault of their own. UI benefits range from \$40-\$450 per week, depending on income, and can be received for up to 26 weeks. You may also be eligible for UI if you choose to stay home from work due to underlying health conditions and concerns about exposure to the virus. The Employment Development Department will seek details from you to determine eligibility.

To more information and to apply for UI benefits, please go to:

www.edd.ca.gov/Unemployment/

www.edd.ca.gov/Unemployment/default_espanol.htm (EnEspanol)

What if my child's school or daycare has closed due to COVID-19 and I can't work because I must care for my children, can I receive UI benefits?

You may be eligible for UI benefits. The Employment Development Department will determine eligibility on a case-by-case basis by scheduling a phone interview with you. UI provides partial wage replacement benefits to workers who lose their job or have hours reduced, through **no fault of their own**. UI benefits range from \$40-\$450 per week, depending on income, and can be received for up to 26 weeks.

To more information and to apply for UI benefits please go to:

www.edd.ca.gov/Unemployment/

www.edd.ca.gov/Unemployment/default_espanol.htm (EnEspanol)

What additional benefits am I entitled to under the recently passed federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)? (NOTE FOR US: Trump needs to sign)

Outside of the Paid Sick Leave outlined above, under the new federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), you may be entitled to job-protected leave:

- To self-isolate because of a diagnosis of COVID-19, or to comply with a recommendation or order to quarantine due to exposure or exhibition of symptoms;
- To obtain a medical diagnosis or care if the employee is experiencing symptoms;
- To care for a family member who is self-isolating due to a diagnosis of coronavirus, experiencing symptoms of coronavirus and needs to obtain medical diagnosis or care, or quarantining due to exposure or exhibition of symptoms;

- To care for a child whose school has closed or childcare provider is unavailable, due to the coronavirus.
- Employers must compensate employees for any time they take off, up to 80 hours for these reasons at their regular rates of pay, capped at \$511 per day.

Who is eligible for PFL under the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)?

To qualify for Paid Family Leave, an employee must be utilizing the leave to care for their child if that child's school or place of care has been closed, or the childcare provider is unavailable, due to the coronavirus. The employee also must work for an employer with less than 500 employees and have been on the employer's payroll for at least 30 days.

For these individuals, the FFCRA supplements the 12 weeks of job-protected leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act by requiring that at least 10 of those weeks be paid at a rate of at least 2/3 an employee's original rate of pay. These benefits are capped at \$200 per day and expire at the end of the year.

What if I'm a Part-Time Worker?

California's Paid Sick Leave law applies to all full-time **and** part-time employees, as long as they work 30 days within a calendar year.

For the FFCRA, Part-time employees are also covered, and are entitled to the number of hours of paid sick time equal to the number of hours they work, on average, over a 2-week period.

If I am self-employed, and I am sick or caring for a sick family member, can I apply for benefits?

If you are self-employed and unable to work, or have had your hours reduced, you may be eligible for UI benefits if 1) you chose to contribute to UI Elective Coverage and paid the required contributions; 2) your past employer made contributions on your behalf over the past 5-18 months; or 3) you were misclassified as an independent contractor instead of an employee. Please see the AB 5 section below.

To more information and to apply for UI benefits, please go to:

www.edd.ca.gov/Unemployment/

www.edd.ca.gov/Unemployment/default_espanol.htm (EnEspanol)

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State Employees

Do I have to report to work during the COVID-19 pandemic?

State Departments have been directed to establish a staff management plan that will identify essential government functions and which employees are eligible for telework with the objective of moving as many employees as possible to telework. Where employees are required to report to job sites in order to maintain essential government functions, departments will follow Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines for addressing the COVID-19 virus.

CalHR has advised that State Departments should do the following:

1. Determine which critical employees cannot telework and need to continue to report to the office and establish appropriate social distancing protocols to keep them safe in the office.
2. Establish a telework schedule for all other employees who are eligible for telework.
3. For anyone whose job duties are not immediately critical to the continuity of operations, and are not viable for telework, a review should be conducted to determine if the employee can be redirected to other work that is either critical (#1) or eligible for telework (#2).
4. As a last resort, for anyone who is not eligible for telework and cannot be redirected, Administrative Time Off (ATO) will be provided, regardless of available leave balances. Departments should report all staff on ATO to CalHR for possible redirection to appropriate work in another department. All staff on ATO should be provided with directions on how to stay in contact with management for assignment of duties.

In establishing telework schedules, departments should prioritize those employees who are considered at greatest risk and employees who are impacted by school closures.

For employees 65 and older and those with chronic health conditions, departments should consider all available options for telework and flexible work schedules. Those employees not eligible for these options and subject to a local stay-at-home directive shall be provided ATO.

This does not include people in essential classifications who are needed to protect our most vulnerable residents, such as hospital and health care workers, pharmacists, peace officers, firefighters, etc.

Rotational Telework Program

All departments should review their ability to implement a rotational telework program where a number of support staff need to be physically present in the office. Support staff can be pooled to cover departmental needs on a rotational basis. For example, each day two staff will be scheduled to report to work, and two will be scheduled as back-ups. The support staff not scheduled to report to work are expected to be teleworking.

It is the public policy of the state to continue to operate effectively during this emergency. This approach will keep as many employees as possible engaged and will allow departments to deploy state staff to critical functions as absenteeism due to illness increases.

- <https://www.calhr.ca.gov/Pages/covid-19-updates-for-state-workers.aspx>

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National Guard & California Military

What does the Governor mean by putting the California National Guard (CalGuard) “on alert?”

The alert is NOT a mobilization order. The alert is a notification that allows our Guard members to prepare for an activation, such as notifying their workplace of their potential activation, making plans with their families, and readying their personal equipment. The Governor often uses the CalGuard during declared State of Emergencies (fires, mudslides, floods, etc.), so this is part of the process. CalGuard members are not to report to their unit unless instructed by their unit leadership. As of 19 March 2019, the Governor has not mobilized the CalGuard.

What is the process for tasking the Cal Guard?

Upon activation/mobilization by the Governor, the Cal Guard only acts when officially tasked by the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES).

Deployment Update: As of March 23, 2020, Cal Guard will be assisting in humanitarian effort at food banks in Alameda, Sacramento, Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, Monterey and Riverside Counties.

How should requests for state assistance be routed?

All requests for state assistance should be routed through individual County Offices of Emergency Services to CalOES.

How many Governors have mobilized their National Guards to address COVID-19?

Governors in 23 states have mobilized components of the Army and Air National Guard to assist in their state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 2,000 guardsmen have been called up to state active-duty status, with more states expected to activate additional Guard resources as the novel coronavirus continues to spread. All 50 states have issued emergency declarations, a critical step before mobilizing National Guard resources.

Arkansas, California*, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Montana, New Jersey, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin have all activated Guard components. Puerto Rico is the first and only U.S. territory to also activate guardsmen thus far.

**California Air National Guard activated a 10-person “medical augmentation team” from the 144th Fighter Wing of the California Air National Guard “to provide emergency pre-hospital stabilization response for up to 24 patients per 24-hour operation.”*

Will current CalGuard Armories that are currently being used to house homeless individuals around the state still be available during this time?

CalGuard does not anticipate that military operations conducted in support of the COVID 19 emergency will interrupt the availability of the armories for use as homeless shelters. Currently, the Winter Shelter Program is not officially part of the State's response to the COVID 19 emergency. Therefore, Counties should request any shelter needs related to the COVID 19 emergency that are not related to the Winter Shelter Program through their County Office of Emergency Services to CalOES.

This will enable the state to track all support requests related to the emergency and officially task the Military Department to provide armory space, as necessary.

Why isn't the Department of Defense (DOD) federalizing the National Guard or fully activating the Reserve components?

Secretary of Defense Esper said he needs to have more conversations with governors — and that he wants the state officials to tell them what they need so that DOD officials can determine how best to help. The concern is that activating Military Reserve medical personnel could potentially take them away from their civilian jobs at local hospitals. In addition, the thinking is that Governors have a better sense of where military assets would be better utilized within their state.

What will the US Navy Ship (USNS) Mercy be used and what is its capacity?

The intent is to use the ship for non-coronavirus patients, which is what staffs are best assigned and organized to do. Upon activation, the USNS Mercy is boarded by U.S. Navy medical personnel and loaded with medical supplies and equipment. At full strength, the ship has a crew of 71 and up to 1,200 doctors, nurses, and other medical specialists. The process typically takes five days. Services include 12 fully equipped operating rooms, a 1,000-bed hospital facility, digital radiological services, a medical laboratory, a pharmacy, an optometry lab, a CAT-scan and two oxygen-producing plants. The USNS Mercy has a helicopter landing pad and can take on patients by small boats and other watercraft. USNS Mercy will be docked off the coast of Los Angeles.

What kind of medical assistance DOD currently providing?

DOD will provide the Department of Health and Human Services up to 5 million respirator masks and up to 2,000 deployable ventilators to assist with the response to the coronavirus.

How will COVID-19 effect student veterans who depend on GI benefits, who are shifting to online learning (an option not covered by current Veterans Affairs (VA) education benefits)?

The US Senate is working on emergency legislation to aid students who depend on GI bill benefits. Updated language gives the Veteran Affairs Secretary authority to continue GI Bill payments uninterrupted in the event of national emergencies, the bill passed the US Senate without objection and is awaiting action by the US House of Representatives. VA officials are already beginning to process GI Bill payments for April 2020 and dealing with the legal issues surrounding the school changes.

What changes is the Navy making to the service's Child and Youth Program (CYP) operations?

New measures waive the need for criminal background checks for "supplemental staffing" employees imported from other military programs for "increased cleaning/sanitation" designed to combat COVID-19 infection. Supplemental staff will be "always in line of sight supervision of 'blue smock' CYP employee and not in ratio. The latest move will cancel or postpone all programs and services that are not full-time childcare (newborns to age 12) until further notice. That means all hourly childcare is ending unless it's deemed "emergency/mission essential."

No new childcare enrollees will be accepted into Navy-operated programs unless they are determined to be "emergency/mission essential."

Have San Diego Military bases changed their gate ID procedures?

Beginning March 16, 202, all personnel entering U.S. Naval bases in San Diego, including Naval Base San Diego, were asked to change the way they routinely show their identification cards at base gates and entry points. The new method is a "no-touch" ID scanning plan that keeps the guards from touching a service member's ID card. Instead, military personnel must now show their IDs at arms-length. Personnel must hold the ID card with the front side facing the sentry, which will enable the person's name, date, and affiliation to be easily seen. Cardholders will then be asked to flip the card over so the barcode can be scanned.

How many U.S. service members based in San Diego County tested positive for COVID-19.

As of Monday, March 16, there were four such cases:

- A U.S. Navy sailor assigned to USS Boxer, who tested positive for COVID-19 on March 13. This was the first positive case involving a sailor aboard a Navy ship.
- Two U.S. Marines stationed at MCAS Miramar. The U.S. Marine Corps said the two Marines did not come into contact with one another.
- A U.S. Navy sailor stationed at Naval Base San Diego, who tested presumptive positive for the coronavirus.

Will visitors still have access to Commissaries?

No. Beginning March 18, commissaries will require ID checks at store doors and block all non-authorized shoppers from entering. Guests are not authorized to make commissary purchases, and authorized shoppers are not permitted to make commissary purchases for their guest. Authorized shoppers include anyone holding a Defense Department ID card, including active-duty family members and retirees, and shoppers known as "authorized agents," typically given a long-term pass by the base so that they can shop on behalf of a sick or elderly family member; including those with a Department of Veterans Affairs Health ID Card. Meanwhile, base officials nationwide are making their own changes to shopping rules at their local commissary.

Is California utilizing the medical assets within the Army Reserves?

To remind everyone, the Army Reserves is a component of the U.S. Army and is separate from the California National Guard. Currently, the Army Reserves has not been activated to assist with current efforts related to COVID-19.

If you have specific questions related to Army Reserve medical assets in your district, please email questions to the Army Reserve Watch Team:

- MAJ Michael Colangeli at michael.e.colangeli.mil@mail.mil
- MSG Pedrojuan Parrilla-Soto at pedrojuan.p.soto@mail.mil
- General inbox usarmy.usarc.usarc-hq.mbx.ar-ops-center@mail.mil.

Make sure to CC:

- LTC LTC Erik Verhoef (erik.h.verhoef.mil@mail.mil)
- Mr. Robert Stabb (robert.e.stabb.civ@mail.mil)
- LTC Gregory Cassat (gregory.a.cassat.mil@mail.mil)

Staff Contact: Charles.Wright@sen.ca.gov; 916-651-4170

Public Safety

California Department of Corrections (CDCR)

How can I get the most up-to-date COVID-19 information from CDCR?

CDCR has developed a “COVID-19 Preparedness” page with information and resources at <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/covid19/>. The website is updated frequently. Questions from the public can also be emailed to covid19@cdcr.ca.gov

Is CDCR testing for COVID-19?

CDCR/CA Correctional Healthcare Services (CCHCS) are using their external laboratory provider for COVID-19 testing and using testing protocols based on guidance from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The current turn-around for test results is 48-72 hours. CDCR will provide updates on statewide testing efforts on the website when they are available.

What happens if someone tests positive?

Priority testing is given to symptomatic individuals who are older than age 65, have a chronic medical condition, or are otherwise immunocompromised. If there is a positive COVID-19 case within the system, department executives will immediately work with necessary external partners to ensure appropriate care is provided. Due to the unique factors of each institution and the population each houses, the CDCR will respond based on the factors and risk related to that case. CDCR says they will follow CDC guidelines, including isolation and quarantine, to respond to any cases of COVID-19.

Have any inmates tested positive for COVID-19?

On March 22, 2020, news reports indicated one inmate has tested positive at California State Prison, Los Angeles. We will update this portion of the document as more information becomes available.

Have any staff or inmates tested positive for COVID-19?

As of March 20, 2020, two staff have tested positive - one at California State Prison-Sacramento and one at San Quentin.

Is visiting allowed?

All inmate visiting has been canceled statewide until further notice, based on CDPH guidance for mass gatherings. This includes overnight family visits and the Division of Juvenile Justice.

Is mail being delivered in prisons?

There are currently no changes to mail services. As they receive direction from government and public health officials, CDCR will modify operations to ensure they are following the most appropriate safety protocols at each facility.

Are there enough supplies to protect inmates and staff?

CDCR and CCHCS have been actively monitoring and assessing institutions to ensure staff have an adequate supply of personal protective equipment to immediately address any potential COVID-19 exposures, and to protect staff and incarcerated people.

Are there changes being made to parole?

Given the increased risk associated with the use of mass/public transportation and those under parole supervision deemed a high-risk population (older adults and those with known serious chronic medical conditions), the Division of Adult Parole Operations (DAPO) will make some operational changes to support both staff and the individuals under their care and supervision, including limiting office visits and work-related travel.

How is CDCR protecting staff and inmates?

Any non-CDCR/CCHCS/CALPIA staff will not be permitted to enter state prison until further notice. This includes people who enter state prison as volunteers, or to facilitate rehabilitative programs. Paid union representatives and Inmate Ward Labor (IWL) staff will be permitted.

No rehabilitative programs, group events, or in-person educational classes will take place until further notice. The Office of Correctional Education is working with institution principals, library staff, and teachers to provide in-cell assignments where possible.

Chaplains will conduct individual religious counseling as appropriate while maintaining social distancing, and CDCR is working to provide televised religious services to the population.

Contract staff not affiliated with inmate programming are permitted in prisons on a case-by-case basis at the direction of institution leadership.

All tours and events have been postponed, and no new tours are being scheduled.

CDCR and CCHCS are working to support teleworking where possible and appropriate. Staff who do come to work must verbally confirm that they do not have new or worsening symptoms of a respiratory illness. These questions are asked at all institutions and offices.

How are CDCR and CCHCS preparing for a COVID-19 exposure?

CDCR and CCHCS are prepared to address exposure to COVID-19 through infection control practices already in place to prevent the spread of any communicable disease. Based on guidance from the CDC, they are building upon the robust influenza infection control guidelines already in place at each institution.

Those guidelines define procedures for prevention of transmission, management of suspected and confirmed cases including isolation and quarantine protocols, surveillance of patients, and routine cleaning and disinfection procedures. If there is a suspected case of COVID-19, CDCR will follow the policies and procedures already in place for modified programming for any affected housing units and institutions.

Executives and staff at CDCR and CCHCS are working closely with infectious disease control experts to prepare for a scenario where COVID-19 could significantly affect operations. The multidisciplinary workgroup includes health care executives, public health nurses, custody and prison operations executives, occupational safety experts and department planners responsible for business continuity.

What precautions or screenings are in place for inmates arriving or leaving from state prison?

CDCR and CCHCS screen and take the temperatures of inmates entering or exiting state prison. Licensed health care staff conduct a health care assessment as part of the initial intake process for each inmate newly committed to CDCR custody. This assessment, includes:

- A face-to-face interview to review medical records, take a brief health history, and review medication history.
- A physical examination addressing any items identified during the interview.
- Vital signs, including temperature, blood pressure, pulse, and respirations.

Inmate's vitals, including temperature, are taken the day before an inmate leaves the prison for any reason, including court appearances and institution transfers. At the same time, the inmates are asked a series of questions about their state of health, and any concerns will be addressed through the triage process. The same readings/questions are performed immediately upon arrival back to the institution. Patients with emergent medical needs will be referred and transported to the Triage and Treatment Area (TTA), for further evaluation, and to determine the appropriate level of care.

Can incarcerated people make phone calls?

Those previously able to use the inmate telephone network will continue to be able to use it. CDCR has implemented staggered dining and out-of-cell time to limit the size of the groups that are out at one time not only to help with phone access and showers, but also to clean and disinfect phones and housing units between groups.

Global TelLink has provided two free days of telephone calls, March 19 and 26. CDCR's electronic messaging provider JPay is providing all JPay registered inmates two free stamps per week including indigent inmates.

Will CDCR be releasing inmates early?

CDCR is evaluating and implementing proactive measures to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and keep the CDCR population and the community-at-large safe. Additional measures will continue to be developed based on the rapidly-evolving situation.

Is canteen running?

There are currently no changes to canteen services. However, if a situation arises where a housing unit must implement modified programming there could be restriction to obtaining canteen items. CDCR is actively working to identify options to provide the incarcerated population with canteen services if modified programming must happen for an extended period of time. This will occur on a case-by-case basis based on the institution's overall safety and security operations.

Staff Contact: Amy.Alley@sen.ca.gov; 916-651-4170

Telecommunications

Broadband and Shut Off Service

I am a telecommunications (cell phone, broadband, cable, or satellite service) customer and am concerned about paying my monthly bill and not having my TELCO shut off service while my family and I are at home practicing social distancing. **What are my options?**

Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-28-20, issued on March 16, 2020, identified that many utility providers, both public and private, have voluntarily announced moratoriums on service disconnections and late fees for non-payment in response to COVID-19. Check with your individual service provider for how they are implementing this Order.

Federal and State Actions

- Most communications providers in California have signed a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) pledge to provide certain benefits during the COVID-19 emergency. This pledge requires companies to keep providing service to people unable to pay their bills due to the COVID-19 pandemic, waiving certain fees, and easing data restrictions to allow consumers to freely use data during the emergency.
- The FCC also delayed enrollment certification requirements for subscribers on the low-income Lifeline communications program, allowing them to stay on the program without going through an annual re-enrollment process.
- Governor Newsom's executive order directs utilities and other telecoms to provide relief and requiring the CPUC to monitor the companies to ensure that they comply with their commitments and other consumer relief orders. The CPUC has affirmed its authority to require certain consumer relief measures in response to the Governor's Executive order and is collecting data from the communications providers to monitor their compliance with the order and obtain publicly reportable information about the emergency relief options each company is providing.
- The CPUC issued a letter to communications companies shortly after the Executive Order was issued. Below are links to all the documents regarding these relief measures.
 - FCC Pledge: <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-363033A1.pdf>
 - Governor's Executive Order Press release with link to Order: <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/03/16/governor-newsom-issues-executive-order-to-protect-renters-and-homeowners-during-covid-19-pandemic/>

- CPUC Letter on Enforcing Utility Disaster Relief for Covid-19: <http://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/PublishedDocs/Published/G000/M329/K673/329673725.PDF>
- FCC Press Release Delaying Lifeline Enrollment Certification Requirements: <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-363104A1.pdf>

Telecommunication Companies Actions:

- Some companies are taking additional actions that are specific to their company. Since telecommunications companies offer different technologies in different locations in the state, the best way for constituents to find out about specific options available to them is to contact providers that serve their area.
- The CPUC has established a webpage for utility-related COVID-19 efforts, and this webpage lists all the communications providers: <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/covid/>. This website also has other helpful links for COVID-19 relief, including a link to the Small Business Administration's emergency loan program and the State of California's official COVID-19 webpage.
- Many large internet service providers (including AT&T, Comcast Xfinity, Charter/Spectrum) have agreed to allow free usage of their public Wi-Fi hotspot network – regardless of whether you are their customer.
- Each company has a map of these hotspots on their webpage so you can see if one is near. Several wireless companies are also offering free hotspot data that provides broadband via a wireless connection (Wireless may be accessible where fixed broadband is not available).
 - For example, Sprint is offering 20 GB of hotspot data for 60 days for free. This wouldn't enough to stream a lot of video, but it would be enough to download homework, do email, and watch short videos. Several companies are continuing to roll out additional relief efforts on a daily basis. Several companies operate a low-income internet plan that charges very low fees (e.g. \$10/month) for internet services for people enrolled in other public support programs. AT&T recently expanded its low-income internet plan, Access from AT&T, to households participating in the National School Lunch Program and Head Start and it is offering new Access from AT&T customers two months of free service.

Additional Consumer Information

If a consumer is having issues with their communications service and cannot resolve it with the provider:

1. The CPUC is the regulatory agency conducting oversight for communications companies. The CPUC's Consumer Affairs Branch manages consumer issues related to these companies and can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/cab/> or through phone Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm at the following number: 1-800-649-7570.

Staff Contact: Kip.Lipper@sen.ca.gov; 916-651-4151

Transportation

When and where will temporary cashless tolling on Bay Area toll bridges occur?

Effective beginning 12:01AM Saturday March 21, 2020, Caltrans is suspending cash toll collection at seven Bay Area bridges through the COVID-19 emergency. This will keep our workers and the public safer by lowering their exposure to COVID-19. This means that all toll booths at all Bay Area toll plazas will be unstaffed.

Which bridges will temporarily switch to all-electronic and cash free tolling?

This switch will affect those on the Bay Area's seven state-owned toll bridges: Antioch, Benicia-Martinez, Carquinez, Dumbarton, Richmond-San Rafael, San Francisco-Oakland Bay, and San Mateo-Hayward.

What if I do not own a FasTrak and can only pay with cash?

Toll bridge patrons who normally stop at a toll booth to pay cash should continue through the toll plaza without stopping. Automated, high-speed cameras will capture images of customers' license plates, and the FasTrak customer service center will process the images and then mail a toll invoice to the address at which the vehicle is registered with the DMV.

Will I be penalized for having cash and simply “driving through” the toll plaza?

No. While invoices will include a heading that reads “Toll Violation Notice,” these transactions will not be considered violations and the amount due on each notice will be for the toll amount only (i.e., no additional fines).

Will toll violation penalties be waived during the period in which cash toll collection is suspended?

Yes. The FasTrak customer service center will waive all toll violation penalties during the period in which cash toll collection is suspended, and also will suspend the escalation of penalties for previous unpaid toll crossings.

If I have a violation notice for unpaid tolls, how will this affect my vehicle registration?

This will include a temporary halt to referrals to DMV for a hold on vehicle registration after a second toll violation notice has gone unpaid.

If I don't have a FasTrak account, how do I obtain one?

While a FasTrak account is not required, you may open an account online at www.bayareafastrak.org or by phone at 1-877-229-8655. Customers can also obtain a FasTrak toll tag at Costco or Walgreens stores and then activate their new accounts online.

When will cash toll collection resume?

All Electronic Tolling will remain in place until the regional shelter in place effort is lifted and risk of exposure is minimized.

Is Southern California effected by this?

There are no toll bridges in Southern California. Toll roads are operated by local agencies and use electronic tolling only.

Staff Contact: Stephanie.Park@sen.ca.gov; 916-651-4039

Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

Is DMV still open?

Beginning March 19, DMV field offices will be available on an appointment-only basis exclusively for transactions that require an in-person visit. DMV will be moving all other transactions to their “virtual field office” online.

They are also cancelling behind-the-wheel driving tests for the next 30 days (which they are in the process of rescheduling) and temporarily suspending extended field office and Saturday hours.

You can request an in-person appointment, complete transactions virtually, or find other DMV service options (self-service kiosks and business partners) at dmv.ca.gov.

Full announcement [here](#).

What transactions require an (appointment-only) in-person visit?

Driver's license applications that meet the following requirements:

- REAL ID license
- New driver license (not an annual renewal)
- Renewal where last in-person visit was 15+ years ago (new photo required)
- Drivers 70 years or older, who are required to take a knowledge test
- Individuals subject to vision testing
- Individuals with a complex driving history

Vehicle registration renewals that meet the following requirements:

- Outdated insurance information
- Registration has been expired for 90+ days
- Smog issues
- Recent transfer

Is fill-in-the-blank transaction something I can complete online?

Customers will be able to complete the most popular DMV services online, such as renewing driver licenses (including commercial licenses), title transfers, replacement sticker or registration card, name or gender change, and changing endorsements.

You can access the full list of services [here](#).

I am applying for a commercial driver's license – am I also affected by the suspension of driving tests?

Renewals of existing commercial licenses are not affected by this measure. However, all behind-the-wheel tests have been canceled, including commercial drive tests.

DMV will place a priority on commercial drive tests when behind-the-wheel tests resume. They are also exploring ways to extend instructional permits and pending applications to limit the impact. Commercial driver's licenses involve federal regulations as well as state, so DMV is working with federal partners to see if their proposed alternatives are allowable.

My driver's license or vehicle registration is expiring soon/has expired and requires an in-person visit, but I have underlying health issues that make me vulnerable to COVID-19.

Beginning March 16, 2020, DMV has asked law enforcement officials to exercise discretion when citing individuals driving with an expired license or registration for the next 60 days (source [here](#)).

This measure is specifically meant to capture individuals who may be required to renew their license or registration in person due to age, health issues, or complex driving or insurance records, but may not be advised to visit a DMV field office in person at this time. Additionally, the Insurance Commissioner has called on auto insurers to maintain auto insurance coverage for existing policyholders for the next 60 days, regardless of the status of their driver's license or vehicle registration (source [here](#)).

My driver's license is expiring soon/has expired, but I am not able to renew it before an upcoming flight.

Travelers with a state driver's license that expired beginning March 1, 2020, and who are not able to renew at their state driver's license agency may still use it as acceptable identification at the checkpoint.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) will accept expired driver's licenses a year after the expiration date, plus 60 days after the duration of the COVID-19 national emergency (source [here](#)).

How will COVID-19 impact the federal REAL ID requirement?

REAL ID is a federal requirement that will go into effect October 1, 2020. At that time, adults will need a REAL ID-compliant drivers' license or ID card in order to fly domestically or enter secure federal facilities. You must visit a DMV field office in person and provide necessary documentation in order to obtain a REAL ID.

You can find more information about REAL ID and the process to obtain one [here](#).

As of today, the federal government has made no announcement regarding a postponement or extension of the REAL ID October 1, 2020 deadline.

A REAL ID may not be necessary if

- 1) You have another valid form of federally-accepted identification (US passport or passport card, military ID, etc.), or
- 2) You do not plan to fly domestically and do not need to enter secure federal facilities.

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