



COVID-19 FAQs for Baton Rouge



Office of Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome, through her Healthy City Initiative (Healthy BR), local area hospitals, Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), Louisiana 211 and the Louisiana Association of United Ways to ensure citizens can access to the most current information available for COVID-19.

Baton Rouge citizens can dial 211, 24/7 to reach a live 211 specialist to discuss available help and get steps to see a medical professional.

Citizens can also text the keyword “LACOVID” to 898-211 to have instant access to the most current information available in our state.

The most up-to-date Baton Rouge information is available at brla.gov/coronavirus

As of Monday, March 16, 2020 at 9:30am

ABOUT COVID-19

Q: What is coronavirus or COVID-19?

Coronavirus or COVID-19 is a contagious virus that makes people sick.

Symptoms can include:

Fever

Cough

Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing



Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others that circulate among animals, including camels, cats and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can evolve and infect people and then spread between people.

Q: How does COVID-19 spread?

Health experts are still learning the details about how this new coronavirus spreads. Other coronaviruses spread from an infected person to others through:

Respiratory droplets produced when coughing and sneezing

Close personal contact

Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes

People can also become infected if they breathe in the droplets from the person who has COVID-19. This is why it's important to stay at least 6 feet away from an infected person

Q: What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

For confirmed coronavirus infections, reported illnesses have ranged from infected people with little to no symptoms (similar to the common cold) to people being severely ill and dying. Symptoms can include:

Fever

Cough

Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing

Q: What is the incubation period for COVID-19?

The incubation period for COVID-19 is about 5 days. The range is between 4 and 7 days, although it is sometimes quicker and it sometimes may take up to 14 days.

Q: Is COVID-19 fatal?

While people have died from COVID-19 in the U.S. and abroad, the majority of people who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 do recover.



The virus appears to only be severe if it reaches the lungs and remains untreated. Most otherwise healthy people can recover from COVID-19 at home.

Q: What steps should I take to protect myself and my family?

We all have a role in preventing the spread of COVID-19. The single most important thing we can all do is stay home when we are sick. Social distancing, washing hands vigorously and often, coughing into elbow.

TREATMENT

Q: Is there a vaccine or medicine to treat COVID-19?

No. There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for this infection. People infected with COVID-19 receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms.

Feeling sick? TESTING for COVID-19

Q: How do I get tested?

The Louisiana Department of Health recommends to healthcare providers for COVID-19 testing for any patient with fever, respiratory symptoms, and a negative influenza test.

If you believe you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, you should contact your primary care physician for guidance. Your primary care physician can do testing on you, and order a test from LabCorp. Quest labs will begin offering testing later in the week or early next week. Your doctor might also request testing from the State Lab.

Q: How do I know to get tested or test family members?

If you are experiencing symptoms such as fever, cough or shortness of breath, you should contact your primary care physician for guidance. Your primary care physician can order tests from commercial labs or the State Lab. The Department of Health recommends COVID-19 testing for any patient with fever, respiratory symptoms and a negative influenza test.

Q: What if I am on Medicaid?



If you are on Medicaid and are experiencing symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath, you should contact the primary care physician listed on the back of your Medicaid card.

If you do not have your Medicaid card, please contact:

- Patient Plus: patientplusuc.com
- CareSouth: caresouth.org
- Open Healthcare Clinic: ohcc.org

Q: What if I don't have a doctor, don't have insurance or do not have their Medicaid card?

If you do not have a doctor or if you do not have insurance, contact one of the following clinics:

- Patient Plus: patientplusuc.com
- CareSouth: caresouth.org
- Open Healthcare Clinic: ohcc.org

Q: Who can be tested for COVID-19?

The Louisiana Department of Health recommends COVID-19 testing for any patient with fever, respiratory symptoms and a negative influenza test

Healthcare providers have been advised that testing is recommended for any patient with fever, respiratory symptoms and a negative influenza test.

Q: What do I do if I don't have an established doctor or can't get an appointment?

If you do not have a doctor or if you do not have insurance, contact your nearest community clinic. This website lists all of these clinics/health centers: www.lpca.net/main/for-patients/find-a-health-center

Q: I have symptoms. What should I do if I am not established with a doctor and no one I call appears to be taking new patients at this time?

If you do not yet have a primary care provider, you can call your local federally-qualified health center to make an appointment: You can find your nearest community health center here: <https://www.lpca.net/main/for-patients/find-a-health-center>

If no community health centers are performing COVID-19 testing in your area, you can call your local emergency department to request testing. Please remember to **call first** before visiting your health care providers for COVID-19 symptoms.



**Q: I have symptoms and I do not have insurance or money to go to a doctor...
Where do I seek medical care?**

Federally-qualified health centers provide primary care, oral health, and mental health services on a sliding scale basis. Several of these community health centers are performing testing for COVID-19. You can find your nearest community health center here: <https://www.lpca.net/main/for-patients/find-a-health-center>

Please remember to call first before visiting your health care providers for COVID-19 symptoms.

Q: Should I go to the ER? Or, when should I go to the ER?

You should go to the ER if you are seriously ill (difficulty breathing, confusion, dehydrated). If you are sick with typical cold or flu symptoms, call your primary care doctor.

Q: When you hear “presumptive positive,” what does presumptive mean?

“Presumptive positive” means that a test conducted by the State Lab has come back positive. The “presumptive” becomes “confirmed” only after the State’s test is confirmed by the CDC.

Q: If I need to get tested for COVID-19, how much will it cost?

The federal government has announced that all testing is free, including for the uninsured.

Q: What should I do if I have come in contact with someone who has tested positive?

You should self-isolate and limit your contact with other people. And, you should contact your primary care physician for guidance. If you develop a fever and a cough, you should contact your doctor.

Q: What should I do if I am sick?

Call your doctor immediately if the following:

Think you have been exposed to COVID-19

Are over the age of 60 with symptoms

Have an underlying medical condition like heart, lung, or kidney disease

Develop a fever

Develop symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or difficulty breathing



Q. OPH recommends that you stay home and treat your symptoms as you would with the common cold if the following:

If you are under 60 and other otherwise healthy

Have not been in contact with someone who has COVID-19

Have not recently traveled to a country with a high rate of COVID-19

Q. What should I do if I am caring for someone who is sick?

If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19, are over the age of 60, or have an underlying medical condition like heart, lung, or kidney disease, and develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or difficulty breathing, call your healthcare provider immediately.

If you are young, otherwise healthy, and have not been in contact with someone who has COVID-19 or recently traveled to a country with a high rate of COVID-19, stay home and treat your symptoms as you would with a common cold.

Q: What is the difference between quarantine and isolation?

Isolation and quarantine are both public health practices that are being utilized to limit the spread of COVID-19. While they are often used interchangeably, they have very different meanings.

Isolation is a strategy used to separate people who are sick with a contagious illness from those who are healthy. Isolation restricts the movement of people who are ill to help stop the spread of certain diseases. People in isolation may be cared for in their homes, in hospitals, or in designated healthcare facilities.

Quarantine is used to separate and restrict the movement of people who may have been exposed to a contagious illness, but do not have symptoms to see if they become sick. These individuals may or may not be contagious.

Q: How can a healthcare provider get answers to questions about laboratory testing?

Healthcare providers can call the Lab Provider Help phone line, 225-219-5265 (answered M-F, 8am-4:30pm) They can also send an email to COVIDLAB@la.gov Provider emails will be answered 7am-midnight daily, including the weekend.

Q. Does pre-existing respiratory illness qualify you for asymptomatic testing?

No. Currently, there is no testing for people not experiencing symptoms.



COVID-19 testing is based on recent travel to affected areas with combined respiratory illness symptoms, or exposure to a known case of COVID-19. Currently, there is no testing for asymptomatic people.

SYMPTOMS

Q: What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

For confirmed coronavirus infections, reported illnesses have ranged from infected people with little to no symptoms (similar to the common cold) to people being severely ill and dying. Symptoms can include:

Fever

Cough

Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing

Q: How does COVID-19 compare to influenza in terms of symptoms, mortality rate, number of cases, etc.?

Based on what is known, COVID -19 is at least as severe, if not more serious than flu. Much is unknown about COVID-19 about how easily it spreads, who most is at risk.

From preliminary studies, people who are most at-risk for a serious illness from COVID-19 are: People over age 60 who also have underlying medical conditions.

PREVENTION

Q. Is there a vaccine for COVID-19?

No. There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for this infection. People infected with COVID-19 receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms.

Q. How can I help protect myself and/or my family?

The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. There are simple everyday precautions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses.

Actions to help protect you and your family include:

Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Stay home when you are sick.

Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw tissue in the trash.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

The best preparation families can do is practice good seasonal flu/cold hygiene: cover your cough, wash your hands (especially after being in public spaces, shaking hands), stay home if you are sick, and get your flu shot!

Q. Should I keep my children home from school or avoid going to work?

You should follow guidance from your employer about closures.

On March 13, Gov. Edwards ordered the closure of all K-12 public schools statewide. This is effective Monday, March 16, through April 13.

For the most up-to-date information about schools and education-specific questions, the Department of Education has established a special email address: LDOECOVID19Support@la.gov

Q. Is there special guidance for people who are deaf or blind?

If you are not feeling well, stay home. Do not put yourself or support service provider at risk.

Touch support service provider only on shoulder or elbow for guiding techniques. Avoid touching support service provider hands or face aside from communicating.

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. Wash hands immediately after communication interaction.

Let your support service provider know if you need to sneeze/cough so they can put distance between you.

Carry and use hand sanitizer in between as needed.

Allow your support service provider to sit/stand on side of you as much as is comfortable instead of face to face to limit contact of skin and/or bodily fluids.

Attempt to stand as far apart from your support service provider as is comfortable

Important: Patients who have severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, should seek emergency care immediately. Use Video Relay Services, or ask family/friend to contact them for you. If necessary, contact Interpreting/SSP office for assistance.

Q. Should I cancel my travel plans?

If you have a trip planned, [check the CDC's site](#) for a risk assessment of your destination.

CDC is not recommending that travelers cancel all plans except to specific locations where the threat of COVID-19 spread is significantly higher.

If you travel, take the same precautions you would while home to avoid getting sick or spreading germs including washing your hands thoroughly and often and avoiding contact with sick people.

Q: Should I or my family wear a protective mask?

It is not recommended that most people wear protective masks. This is because most people fiddle with and touch their masks, limiting any protective benefit. Masks are recommended for healthcare providers.

If someone is sick, a mask will limit the spread of the virus by the sick individual. Therefore, the general public is not recommended to use masks at this point, given they don't work well, and they need to be used by healthcare personnel treating those with COVID-19.

Q: Coronavirus is noted on Lysol bottles. Why is COVID-19 categorized as new if listed on old Lysol bottles? Should the public expect any new commercially available disinfectant products to address COVID-19?



Coronaviruses are a family of viruses, and they are not new. There were six existing strains of coronavirus before 2019, some of which cause the common cold. The latest strain, however, is nCoV-2019 (COVID-19) which originated in 2019.

Lysol bottles are not referencing the latest COVID-19, but instead the coronaviruses that cause the common cold. There is no reason to believe, though, that Lysol is not effective for COVID-19, so please use it!

TRANSMISSION

Q. How does COVID-19 spread?

Health experts are still learning the details about how this new coronavirus spreads.

Other coronaviruses spread from an infected person to others through:

Respiratory droplets produced when coughing and sneezing

Close personal contact

Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes

Q: If a person tested positive for COVID-19 can they be re-infected?

There is evidence to suggest that some people have contracted the virus a second time. This means that all people – even those who have already had the illness – should remain vigilant and take the necessary precautions.

Q: Can pets get COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some causing illness in people and others that circulate among animals, including camels, cats and bats. It is rare for an animal to infect people and then spread between people such as with recent outbreaks of MERS and SARS. Nevertheless, the coronavirus



that causes COVID-19 is not considered a threat to dogs and cats, and pets do not play a role in transmission of the virus to people.

Q: Is it safe to receive a package from an area where COVID-19 has been reported?

Yes. The likelihood of an infected person contaminating commercial goods is low and the risk of catching the virus that causes COVID-19 from a package that has been moved, traveled, and exposed to different conditions and temperature is also low.

HEALTH EFFECTS / COMPLICATIONS

Q. What are severe complications from this virus?

Severe complications include pneumonia in both lungs.

Q. Who is at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19?

Those who are most at risk are people over age 60 AND who have severe chronic medical conditions such as heart, lung, kidney disease or diabetes.

Other people who are not age 60, but who have these same medical conditions also face a higher risk than the general population.

Q. What about women who are pregnant?

There is not currently information from published scientific reports about susceptibility of pregnant women to COVID-19. Pregnant women experience immunologic and physiologic changes which might make them more susceptible to viral respiratory infections, including COVID-19.

Q. What is the risk to children?

Although infections in children have been reported, there is no evidence that children are more susceptible to COVID-19 or at greater risk of a serious illness. More information is being gathered to determine more about this outbreak.

Q. What precautions are nursing homes and assisted living facilities taking?

Nursing homes, assisted living centers and other similar healthcare facilities have the authority to restrict entry to people, including family members and friends of residents, during this health crisis.



People are advised to contact individual facilities for restrictions and recommendations that have been put in place at that location.

Q: Does the state's restricted visitors policy mean no visitors can enter a health care facility?

No. Health care facilities can allow visitors at their discretion, in consultation with families and responsible parties. This order also doesn't apply to situations involving end-of-life care. However, no one who meets the definition of a "restricted person" can be allowed in a healthcare facility.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Q: What should I do if I have recently traveled?

If you were recently in a country with a COVID-19 outbreak, you should self-isolate for 14 days after your return. If you do not experience any sickness (fever, cough, difficulty breathing) after 14 days, you may resume your regular activities and use the same usual precautions to prevent spread of viruses like the flu (wash hands frequently, cough /sneeze into your elbow, disinfect surfaces).

Q. What if I feel sick within 14 days after returning to the U.S.?

Seek medical advice – Call ahead before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room. Tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.

Avoid contact with others.

Not travel on public transportation while sick.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.

Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to avoid spreading the virus to others.



Wash your hands with soap and water immediately after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.

Q: I am a recent traveler from Italy. Can I request a COVID-19 test from my provider for peace of mind? I am willing to pay any applicable cost.

COVID-19 testing is only currently available to sick people due to a limited number of tests available. You should monitor your health for 14-days following your return from travel. If you do become ill in the 14-days (especially with fever and cough), stay home and call your doctor. Your doctor can assist with the necessary steps to determine if testing would be appropriate for you. At this time, there is no test for well people who just want to know if they have been exposed.

Q: I am a recent traveler from Italy and experiencing flu like symptoms. I reported this to my healthcare provider at a recent visit and no testing was offered. What should I do next?

Healthcare providers work with the Office of Public Health to determine if a patient should be tested for COVID-19. It is possible that a flu test was done (and was positive), which would be responsible for the symptoms (and be the reason for no COVID-19 testing). If you continue to have concerns or if your symptoms worsen, please contact your healthcare provider.

RESOURCES

Q: Where can I get the most up-to-date information?

For local information please visit brla.gov/coronavirus

State-wide information can also be found at the Department of Health's website: www.ldh.la.gov/coronavirus

For information about schools, contact the Department of Education at this email address: LDOECOVID19Support@la.gov



COVID-19 in Louisiana

Q: Are there any confirmed cases in Louisiana?

Check the Louisiana Department of Health's website for the most up-to-date information: www.ldh.la.gov/coronavirus. The website is updated twice daily, at 9:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. To date, most cases have been clustered in the New Orleans area.

Q: Will Louisiana Health Department's expand testing?

LDH is preparing to test more broadly as the federal government expands its testing guidelines. The Department is in constant communication with the CDC and will test more patients as needed. In addition, the Department expects more tests to take place as commercial labs receive referrals from health care providers.

Q: Have public schools been closed?

Yes, on March 13, Gov. Edwards ordered the closure of all K-12 public schools statewide. This is effective Monday, March 16, through April 13.

For the most up-to-date information about schools and education-specific questions, the Department of Education has established this email address: LDOECOVID19Support@la.gov.

The Governor also ordered the halt of any gathering of more than 250 people for this same time period.

Q: What about childcare centers and preschools?

Daycares and early learning centers run by private entities can remain open unless otherwise informed as the situation progresses. However, daycare programs should encourage children who can stay home to do so, children and staff should wash their hands frequently and they should limit child grouping.

Q: Can children still get school meals?

Yes, according to the Governor's order. It requires schools to use appropriate social distancing measures, and continue to provide meals or other essential services with applicable staff. You should contact your child's school for specific instructions.

Q: Can I apply for Disaster SNAP food benefits for this emergency?



At this time, there is no option for emergency/disaster SNAP. However, if you are not already a SNAP recipient and have a food need, you can apply for benefits online. There's no need to visit a DCFS office. You can apply online or by mail/fax. For more information, text GETSNAP (no spaces) to 898-211, visit the DCFS website at www.dcfs.la.gov/getSNAP, email LAHelpU.DCFS@la.gov or call 1-888-LA-HELP-U (1-888-524-3578) Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Q: I'm quarantined and/or staying home as advised by officials. Do I have to go into an office to apply for SNAP?

No, you don't have to visit a DCFS office to apply for SNAP. You can apply online or by downloading a paper application and then mailing or faxing it to us. You can also request an application by contacting DCFS at LaHELPU.DCFS@la.gov or 1-888-LAHelpU (1-888-524-3578) toll free. For instructions on how to apply, visit www.dcfs.la.gov/getSNAP. DCFS will continue to add information at www.dcfs.la.gov/getSNAP as the situation develops.

Q: What is the current COVID-19 situation in Louisiana?

While the CDC now expects community spread in some parts of the United States, the immediate threat to the U.S. remains low. That said, it is important to be prepared.

The Louisiana Department of Health has been preparing for COVID-19 since the outbreak in mainland China. The Office of Public Health has developed guidance for doctors for testing and treatment of COVID-19, as well as developed guidance for home care of patients with coronavirus. This guidance is given to all health care providers via our Health Alert Network.

Additionally, the Mayor's has signed a parish-wide Emergency Disaster Declaration related to the City-Parish's efforts to protect against COVID-19 and activated the All Hazards Recovery Plan and the seven Recovery Support Functions in order to address all aspects of the virus' effects on the community.

Q: What is Louisiana's testing capability?

Louisiana has a testing capability of several hundred patients. This number changes constantly as test kits are used up and more arrive. The Office of Public Health has ordered additional testing kits from the CDC and has been pleased that they arrived in a timely fashion.



Commercial testing is now also available, and any positive private lab tests that come back positive will be verified at the OPH lab in Baton Rouge and confirmed by the CDC lab in Atlanta.

Q: What is the number of tests being given by healthcare providers for COVID-19 around the state of Louisiana? What percentage have been positive?

For the most up-to-date information about cases in Louisiana, please go to the COVID-19 website: www.ldh.la.gov/coronavirus

Q. What are the appropriate swab kits to use for COVID19 testing?

Medical providers can use any available Viral Transport Media (VTM) or Universal Transport Media (UTM) available to them, making sure to follow instructions on the testing materials and ensuring the vial is completely closed and sealed.

Q: How does the process for testing in Louisiana for COVID-19 work?

The Office of Public Health operates a laboratory in Baton Rouge that performs many types of tests for infectious diseases, such as for tuberculosis and measles. State lab workers are a team of highly trained professionals who are experienced at testing for many kinds of infectious diseases using a variety of different tests.

Q: Is the Louisiana Department of Health concerned about shipping channels such as the Port of New Orleans being affected by COVID-19?

Department officials met with the Coast Guard to discuss potential issues with the COVID-19 virus once it became clearer that the virus was spreading globally. We don't think there will be potential for spreading the virus through shipping channels.

Q: What are Louisiana Health Department leaders doing to monitor people who may have been exposed?

LDH's first priority was to monitor any travelers who returned to Louisiana from visiting China's areas that had the most community spread. As other countries experienced community spread, Louisiana epidemiologists have been in contact with travelers who returned from traveling abroad to high-exposure countries to ask whether they were experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

LDH workers touch base with those travelers each day and ask about their symptoms during a 14-day period of observation. LDH is also ensuring that travelers know the destinations where non-essential travel should be avoided.



The countries under a Level 3 Travel Notice are China, Iran, Italy and South Korea.

Q: Will the State identify COVID-19 patients?

No. Because of patient privacy laws, the Louisiana Department of Health cannot provide any information that might identify patients. This includes name, residence of patient or any other potentially identifying patient information.

Q: What precautions is the State taking to protect our students and school system staff and parent volunteers from possible exposure to the COVID-19?

The Louisiana Office of Public Health (OPH) has been in contact with the Louisiana Department of Education (DOE) in regard to disease control and prevention of COVID-19.

For the most up-to-date information about schools and education-specific questions, the Department of Education has established this email address:

LDOECOVID19Support@la.gov

OPH has provided guidance from the CDC on infection control best practices such as handwashing, covering of coughs, disinfection of environmental surfaces, and encouraging students and staff to stay home when they are ill. Further guidance has been shared on social distancing, cancellation of classes and school events, as well as discouraging social gatherings among students in the event that there is community (person-to-person) transmission of the disease.

Q: Are hospitals prepared?

Through her Healthy City Initiative, Mayor Broome is partnered with all area hospitals. LDH has also been working with the Louisiana Hospital Association (LHA) and the ESF8 Network to prepare hospitals for an outbreak and ensure they have the proper supplies needed as well as protocols in place for anyone treated who tests positive. There is no indication that hospitals don't have what they need on the supply side.

Q. What precautions are nursing homes and assisted living facilities taking?

On March 12, the Louisiana Department of Health started requiring all licensed healthcare facilities in the state to restrict visitors to those deemed essential, vital or necessary to the care and well-being of patients, clients and residents. This prohibition will last for the next 30 days, ending on April 10, 2020 unless otherwise extended by the Department.



Nursing homes, assisted living centers and other similar healthcare facilities have the authority to restrict entry to people, including family members and friends of residents, during this health crisis.

Q: What's the next major step in the Department's plan for responding to an outbreak?

Mirroring the federal government's response, LDH is moving from a 'containment' approach focusing on travelers to a 'mitigation' approach anticipating and planning for person-to-person transmission in the community somewhere in the United States. We are focused on state and local government preparedness and are providing support to health care providers, schools, businesses and community members to ensure they are adequately prepared to take action to reduce the spread of COVID-19. We don't want people to be alarmed, but we do want them to be prepared. We also want businesses and health care facilities to be prepared to make sure people are safe and protected so we can avoid an unnecessary spread.

Q: Are quarantines being planned?

LDH does not expect to use its legal authority to quarantine for this particular infection. LDH has extensive quarantine plans stemming from prior health events such as H1N1 and Ebola.

Q: Is LDH in regular contact with the federal government?

Yes. LDH are in constant contact with the US Center for Disease Control and HHS

In addition, LDH standing calls across state health departments and a standing call internally in Louisiana.

GOVERNMENT PREPAREDNESS

Q: What is the latest on the State of Louisiana's response to COVID-19?

On March 13, Governor John Bel Edwards declared a public health emergency in Louisiana. That same day the Governor signed a proclamation that immediately halts any gathering of more than 250 people until Monday, April 13. This limitation includes the closure of all K-12 public schools statewide effective March 16, and it limits church services to gatherings to 250 people or fewer.

Additionally, the Louisiana Department of Health ordered health care facilities in the state, including hospitals and nursing homes, to restrict visitors to those deemed essential, vital or necessary to the care and well-being of patients, clients and residents.

Separately on March 13, the governor postponed the April 4 elections until June and July.

Mirroring the federal government's response, the state has moved from a 'containment' approach which focuses on travelers to a 'mitigation' approach -- anticipating and planning for person-to-person transmission in the community. The State is focused on state and local government preparedness and providing support to health care providers, schools, businesses and community members to ensure citizens are adequately prepared to take action to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Q: What is the protocol in place for responding to a pandemic like Coronavirus/COVID-19?

COVID-19 behaves in many ways similar to influenza. Because of this, the CDC recommends using the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness plan as our model for the response.

The Louisiana Department of Health has been working on our Pandemic Preparedness Plan for the last 15 years, and we have been preparing for COVID-19 starting in early January 2020.

In early March, the Governor directed the formation of a COVID-19 Task Force with representation from state agencies and federal partners key to preparing for a COVID-19 outbreak. This task force guides updating Louisiana's pandemic flu/COVID-19 response and ensures a continuity of operations and advises the Unified Command Group.

Q: What factors would trigger a government-mandated closure of schools or businesses, etc.?



COVID-19

The Governor has ordered the halt of any gathering of more than 250 people from March 13, 2020 through April 13, 2020 as well as school closures. The Presidential Primary has also been postponed in the interest of reducing contact of large groups at the beginning of April.

For the most up-to-date information about schools and education-specific questions, the Department of Education has established this email address: LDOECOVID19Support@la.gov.