



# COMAL COUNTY

## PUBLIC INFORMATION

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### Public Health encourages residents to stay calm, stay home

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, MARCH 16, 2020:**

*NEW BRAUNFELS* — Comal County has zero confirmed cases of COVID-19, but the Office of Public Health continues to actively prepare for the likelihood of its arrival in the county – and encourages residents to limit close contact with others to avoid contracting and spreading the novel coronavirus.

Residents experiencing fever, coughing or shortness of breath – especially those with a recent history of travel to places with a COVID-19 outbreak – should stay home and call their primary care provider or local emergency room or urgent care clinic, but *should not* simply show up without calling ahead first, said Cheryl Fraser, Comal County’s director of public health.

“I want to emphasize caution but not panic,” Fraser said. “Residents should be taking steps to avoid contracting and spreading the virus, but Comal County has no confirmed cases at this time.”

The Office of Public Health encourages county residents to take the following actions:

- Stay home if you are sick. Treat your symptoms and self-quarantine.
- Do not go to the emergency room unless you are experiencing a medical emergency.
- If healthy, limit close contact with others: Work from home if at all possible, pay bills online or over the phone, use grocery store pickup services if available and shop online.
- Do not visit hospitals or nursing facilities.

Testing is limited and being ordered by physicians, with members of at-risk groups receiving priority. Comal County’s Office of Public Health helps coordinate but does not perform COVID-19 testing.

The Office of Public Health has set up a hotline for residents with coronavirus-related questions or concerns. The hotline – 830-221-1120 – will be staffed from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

In order to fully staff that hotline and continue COVID-19 preparations, Public Health has closed its office to the public. Residents instead should call the office at 830-221-1150.

In addition, other county offices have made the following changes:

- As authorized under Gov. Greg Abbott’s disaster declaration, the Comal County Jail has suspended visitation with inmates. Attorney visitations will continue.

- The Sheriff’s Office has instructed deputies to handle non-emergency calls for service by telephone whenever possible and to enact social distancing measures when practicable, as well as suspending fingerprint services, civilian ride outs and vehicle inspections, and postponing its Citizen Sheriff Academy.
- The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has canceled all in-person meetings and events for this week.
- The district courts have canceled jury dockets for this week.
- Both courts-at-law have postponed their dockets for this week and next.
- The county has postponed its University of County Government classes until further notice.
- The Comal County Tax Office has taken social distancing measures for its lobby, and is encouraging customers to take care of business such as paying property taxes or registering vehicles online at [www.comalcountytaxoffice.net](http://www.comalcountytaxoffice.net), and asking customers needing to transfer vehicle titles to call 830-221-1353 and make an appointment.

Last week, the Office of Public Health conducted a planning exercise to test the community’s preparedness for a potential COVID-19 outbreak. About 60 people representing entities from across the county – including municipalities, first responders, hospitals, schools and nursing homes – participated, working through scenarios, plans and challenges they would face.

Likewise, the office is meeting regularly with state and federal health officials, monitoring the latest developments in a rapidly evolving situation.

“The most effective thing anyone can do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is to take common-sense steps to reduce their exposure,” Fraser said. “Residents should also be aware that even if they are not part of an at-risk group, they can still spread it to those who are unless they take proper precautions.”

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