



FAQ's for Suspension of Public Events Due to COVID-19

As a precaution, and in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and reduce the risk of exposure, the Winnebago County Health Department (WCHD) is recommending that businesses, institutions, and organizations suspend all public gatherings and events of 25 people or more until further notice.

Why are we doing this?

Our goal is to protect the health and safety of our community. We know suspending events might not be a popular decision. This is a decision to support the need for a functioning health system and business community. The health and safety of our community is of utmost importance.

Why was this decision made, since we still have no cases? What changed between Wednesday and Thursday?

Every hour we're getting notification about nationwide cancellations. Between yesterday and today – we saw national closures. Worried well are showing up at healthcare facilities. The COVID-19 test was meant for people who are showing symptoms.

While we have no confirmed cases locally, our goal is to prevent community transmission as we have seen in other communities.

Winnebago County Health Department officials understand this suspension will be difficult, however this is an opportunity to get ahead of it. We don't know yet what the disease impact will be yet, the Winnebago County Health Department is being proactive. The goal is to be thoughtful about large events.

Is this for public events only? What about private events? What counts as a private vs. public event?

Public events – like fundraising events, concerts and sporting events – are suspended. Small group gatherings are permitted, and specific invite-only events, like weddings and baby showers. Larger gatherings of 25 or more make it more difficult for health department officials to contact attendees to provide guidance and testing as appropriate.

The Winnebago County Health Department is asking people to reconsider nonessential events. Schools, work, government and health care are considered essential.

What about church events and services?

Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports older adults and people who have severe underlying chronic medical conditions -- like heart or lung disease or diabetes -- may be at a higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness. People who are at higher risk are encouraged to avoid crowds and sick people as much as possible.





How long do we expect this suspension to last?

We're constantly evaluating the situation, and it's evolving quickly. The suspension is in effect until further notice. We'll likely issue guidance on a week-by-week basis. We will lift this suspension as soon as appropriate.

What else should the public consider?

Our goal is to return to normal operations as quickly as possible. The Winnebago County Health Department is taking action to provide health and safety tips to protect our community.

Is the suspension regional? Only Winnebago County?

We're working with our regional partners to ensure we keep our community as healthy and safe as possible. DeKalb, Ogle and Boone County Health Departments are recommending the same suspensions and guidance. Rockford has the third-largest population in the state, and the Winnebago County Health Department is providing the best guidance for our community.

What about Long-Term Care restrictions?

Area long term care facilities have restricted visitors, aside from end-of-life visitors. The guidance from the Winnebago County Health Department takes into consideration the fact that our long-term care facilities are caring for the most vulnerable patients.

What is the guidance now on international travel?

The CDC is working with state and local public health partners to implement after-travel health precautions for people traveling to China, Iran, Italy or South Korea, which are described as Level 3 Travel Health Notice. That means there is widespread or ongoing community spread of COVID-19. Depending on travel history, it's recommended these travelers stay home for a period of 14 days after leaving that area with widespread or ongoing community spread. [More information is available on the CDC website.](#)

What about travel within the United States?

The Winnebago County Health Department is asking people with plans to travel within the United States to be aware of whether the destination has cases of COVID-19. Travelers can find COVID-19 information from the nearest public health department. For people traveling to an area with community spread— such as [California, New York and Washington, for example](#) – the Health Department recommends staying home from school or work and away from public places for 14 days after you return – even if you're not showing symptoms of COVID-19. [Find FAQs for travelers from the CDC.](#)

How are schools affected?

At this time the Health Department has not recommended any school closures or cancellations.





What is a coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The most recently discovered coronavirus causes coronavirus disease COVID-19.

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.

How can the public help?

The public can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory illness, like flu by:

- WASHING YOUR HANDS OFTEN with soap and warm water.
- COVERING YOUR COUGH, cough and sneeze into your upper sleeve or a tissue that you throw away.
- CLEANING SURFACES OFTEN, increase cleaning of frequently touched surfaces.
- STAYING HOME, if you or someone in your household is not feeling well stay home to keep others from getting sick.

If you have questions or concerns about COVID-19, call the Illinois Department of Public Health hotline at 1-800-889-3931 or email DPH.SICK@Illinois.gov

More about COVID-19: As of right now, there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Winnebago County. The health and safety of our residents is our highest priority. This virus is highly contagious and because it's a new virus the general population doesn't have immunity to it. There is no vaccine for the COVID-19 virus at this time. The best way to control the spread of the illness is to avoid exposure to it. While a majority of the people won't become seriously ill from the virus, the most at risk include the older adults and those with underlying health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and lung disease.

The Winnebago County Health Department follows guidance and information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The number of confirmed cases in Illinois continues to increase, and current information suggests that person to person spread will continue to occur and more cases will be identified in Illinois. Our goal is to reduce the impact of COVID-19 by detecting new cases early and minimizing transmission and developing guidance to protect the community.

