

**From:** Bullock, Governor <[governor@mt.gov](mailto:governor@mt.gov)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 17, 2020 8:42 PM

**To:** Joe Unterreiner <[Joe@kalispellchamber.com](mailto:Joe@kalispellchamber.com)>

**Subject:** COVID-19 Update: Public K-12 Schools Closed, Social Distancing Measures Implemented

This week, I announced a set of directives and guidance to slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect vulnerable Montanans, including closing our public K-12 schools, adhering to social distancing, and limiting visitation at nursing home facilities.

I have directed Montana's public K-12 schools to close starting **March 16 until March 27**. During this time, schools will engage in planning to provide arrangements to provide free meals to students who need them, pursuant to a waiver obtained from the United States Department of Agriculture, and to provide for all other matters and services that students need in the event of future or ongoing closure.

I recognize that our schools often serve as a lifeline for families and that this decision is going to have disruption on Montanans over the coming weeks. I'm committed to working with schools, communities and public health to minimize the impact. I encourage businesses to do everything they can to support families as well.

I am strongly recommending that the public limits all gatherings, especially **no more than 50 people**, in every community across the state. I am also recommending that individuals over the age of 60 or who are immunocompromised or with chronic health conditions do not participate in gatherings of more than 20 people. I also recommend that parents should avoid, if possible, placing children for childcare with grandparents or individuals over the age of 60 or immunocompromised persons.

I have suspended visitation in Montana's nursing homes except for certain compassionate care situations. People who meet the exception for visitation will undergo a screening to determine whether they have traveled in the last two weeks, are residing where community spread is occurring, or if they have symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

As governor, it is my top priority to protect the health and safety of Montanans, particularly our most vulnerable, at a time when we face the potential for extraordinary health risks from coronavirus in our state. **Social distancing is one of the most important primary protective measures to flatten the curve of this virus. I cannot underscore the seriousness of following these measures to help our neighbors, friends, and families.**

If you have any symptoms, pick up the phone and call your doctor or local public health provider for consultation, instead of driving to the doctor's office or emergency room.

You can contact your local county or tribal health departments by finding their contact information through the online map [HERE](#).

The coronavirus Task Force has launched an informational phone line at **1-888-333-0461** and Montanans can also email questions to [covid19info@mt.gov](mailto:covid19info@mt.gov).

A website has also been set up to keep Montanans apprised of Task Force actions at [COVID19.mt.gov](https://COVID19.mt.gov). You can also visit the DPHHS website at [www.dphhs.mt.gov](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov) for the most up to date and timely health information related to the coronavirus.

Remember the simple steps you can take:

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or into your sleeve
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds
- Avoid touching your face
- Stay home if you have cold or flu-like symptoms and avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Thank you for making the tough, but correct decisions each and everyday. It's going to take all of us working together to overcome these challenges and dynamic times. But as Montanans, I have no doubt that's what we'll do.

Sincerely,

STEVE BULLOCK  
Governor