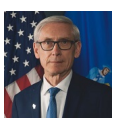
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Closure will begin on Wednesday, March 18th, in order to give school districts ample time to make plans for kids, families, educators, and staff. The anticipated reopening date is April 6, 2020, but may be subject to change.

MADISON - Gov. Tony Evers today directed Department of Health Services (DHS) Secretary-designee Andrea Palm to issue an agency order mandating the statewide closure of all K-12 schools, public and private, as part of the state's efforts to respond to and contain the spread of COVID-19 in Wisconsin. A copy of DHS Secretary-designee Palm's order can be found here .

The mandated closure will begin on Wednesday, March 18th, in order to give school districts ample time to make plans for kids, families, educators, and staff. School districts, particularly those in counties with reported cases of COVID-19, may choose to close earlier than Wednesday. The anticipated reopening date is April 6, 2020; however, the reopening date is subject to change pending further information.



"Closing our schools is not a decision I made lightly, but keeping our kids, our educators, our families, and our communities safe is a top priority as we continue our work to respond to and prevent further spread of COVID-19 in Wisconsin," said Gov. Evers.

Earlier today, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services reported 11 new cases of COVID-19, bringing the state's total to 19 cases, including one individual who has recovered.

"Kids and families across Wisconsin often depend on our schools to access food and care," Gov. Evers continued. "We are going to continue working to do everything we can to ensure kids and families have the resources and support they need while schools are closed."

On Thursday, March 12th, the governor signed an executive order that directs DHS to take all necessary and appropriate measures to prevent and respond to incidences of COVID-19. It allows the Department to purchase, store, or distribute appropriate medications, regardless of insurance or other health coverage, as needed to respond to the emergency. It also authorizes state funds to support local health departments with costs related to isolation and quarantine, as well as the use of the Wisconsin National Guard.

Decisions about the implementation of other community measures will be made by state and local officials based on CDC and DHS guidance, as well as the scope of the outbreak.

People should follow simple steps to prevent illness and avoid exposure to this virus including:

- Frequent and thorough hand washing with soap and water;
- Covering coughs and sneezes;
- Avoiding touching your face;
- Staying home when sick.

Recently DHS released new guidance for mass gatherings and travel, which can be found at the DHS website linked below.

This is a rapidly evolving situation and we encourage you and the public to frequently monitor the DHS website for updates , and to follow @DHSWI on Facebook and Twitter , or dhs.wi on Instagram
. Additional information can be found on the

CDC website

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