

# Governor Hutchison's Actions & Updates Regarding COVID-19

## Thursday, March 19, 2020 (Press Conference)

### Effective Friday, March 20, 2020:

- K-12 schools will remain closed for on-site instruction until April 17, and then re-evaluated based upon public health conditions. Education will continue through alternative methods of instruction.
- State government employees will conduct business through both remote work and on-site work. On-site government work will be limited to personnel necessary for the proper functioning of government. Broad discretion will be given to secretaries to determine what personnel are necessary for the proper functioning of their department.
- Hospitals, clinics and mental health facilities are mandated to screen staff and visitors with temperature and symptom screening.
- Bars and restaurants will be closed for dine-in service but are allowed to remain open for carryout, drive-thru and delivery. Those licensed to sell beer and wine under any permit issued by the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) may sell corked or sealed bottles of wine to go with the purchase of food. Other specifics will be covered in the directive from ABC. <https://www.dfa.arkansas.gov/news/details/emergency-rule-changes-regarding-the-sale-of-alcoholic-beverages>
- Indoor venues such as gyms are closed to nonessential functions.

In addition, the Governor stressed the following messages to specific constituencies:

### **Recommendations for Businesses**

- Move to telecommuting, video conferencing or remote work whenever possible.
- Implement screening of staff and visitors.
- Enforce social distancing.
- Plan for the future by updating continuity of operations plans.

### **Recommendations for the General Public**

- Older individuals and those with serious medical conditions should stay home to the extent possible. Avoid contact with visitors.
- Avoid social gatherings of more than 10 people.
- Use the drive-thru, carryout and delivery services of local restaurants.
- Avoid unnecessary trips where exposure to large groups is likely.
- Enjoy walking, hiking, fishing and other outdoor activities consistent with social distancing.
- Do not visit nursing homes, retirement centers or long-term care facilities unless you are providing critical assistance.

## **Wednesday, March 18, 2020 (Press Conference)**

Governor Hutchinson announced the following actions being taken to assist businesses and workers needing childcare:

**Small Business Assistance:** (Please encourage your members to contact AEDC directly about this assistance.)

- The Dept. of Commerce will utilize \$12 million in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to provide assistance to businesses impacted by the public health emergency.
- In addition, the Dept. of Commerce will utilize \$4 million from the Governor's Quick Action Closing Fund to provide bridge loan assistance for businesses impacted by the public health emergency. These loans will be up to \$250,000 per business.
- Governor Hutchinson has requested that the Small Business Administration (SBA) grant an Economic Injury Disaster Loan. The SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan program has been made available to eligible businesses and private nonprofits that were impacted by the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Any such Economic Injury Disaster Loan assistance declaration issued by the SBA makes loans available to small businesses and private non-profit organizations in designated counties of the state (county by county). SBA's Office of Disaster Assistance will coordinate with the state to submit the request for Economic Injury Disaster Loan Assistance.

If this request is approved, these working capital loans of up to \$2 million can be used to pay fixed debts, payroll and other bills that can't be paid because of the disaster's impact. The interest rate is 3.75% for small businesses without credit available elsewhere; businesses with credit available elsewhere are not eligible. The interest rate for nonprofits is 2.75%. SBA offers loans with long-term repayments in order to keep payments affordable, up to a maximum of 30 years. Terms are determined on a case-by-case basis, based upon each borrower's ability to repay.

- Businesses can find additional information at the following link:  
<https://www.arkansasedc.com/covid19>

**Childcare/SNAP Assistance:** (Please encourage anyone with questions to contact DHS.)

- For childcare voucher providers that remain open through March 27, the Dept. of Human Services will reimburse through claim payment an additional \$10 per infant/toddler, \$7 per preschool, and \$5 school age/out of school time care for children receiving federal childcare assistance through the Child Care Development Block Grant.
- DHS will suspend childcare voucher requirements for 30 days.
- For SNAP benefits, reporting requirements will be waived through the remainder of March and April.

- DHS is posting a map on their website of all 1,200 childcare facilities which remain open at this time. According to DHS, approximately 800 childcare facilities have closed.  
<https://humanservices.arkansas.gov/>

## **Tuesday, March 17, 2020 (Press Conference)**

Governor Hutchinson announced that he has directed the Department of Commerce-Division of Workforce Services to waive a number of restrictions for workers who have lost employment due to the public health emergency to insure that Unemployment Insurance Program (UIP) can provide needed assistance in a timely manner.

The changes are outlined as follows:

- Waive one week waiting period to receive benefits. Unemployed individuals will be able to collect benefits immediately upon application approval rather than the typical week-long waiting period.
- Waive work search requirement for 30 days. Unemployed individuals will not be required to meet job search requirements during this period.
- Waive in-person application requirements. Beginning Friday, unemployed individuals will be able to fulfill the entire application process by calling the ADWS hotline (currently being set up, a number will be pushed out as soon as it becomes available) or by completing the online application at the following link: [www.ezarc.adws.arkansas.gov](http://www.ezarc.adws.arkansas.gov).
- Workers who have become separated from employment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic should file their unemployment insurance claims through ADWS' online claims filing system EZARC which can be accessed at [www.ezarc.adws.arkansas.gov](http://www.ezarc.adws.arkansas.gov).
- Generally, workers who are laid off due to a business closure or are unable to work due to COVID-19 quarantines will be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits provided they meet the other eligibility requirements. Once an affected worker has filed their claim through EZARC, they should report to their nearest Workforce Center to finalize their unemployment insurance claim. For additional questions related to the Unemployment Insurance program, please contact ADWS Info at 1-855-225-4440 or via email at [ADWS.Info@arkansas.gov](mailto:ADWS.Info@arkansas.gov).
- Contact information for all ADWS offices can be found in the following document: [https://www.arml.org/static/arml/ADWS\\_Office\\_Contacts.pdf](https://www.arml.org/static/arml/ADWS_Office_Contacts.pdf).
- Read the governor's full directive regarding unemployment waivers: [https://www.arml.org/static/arml/Unemployment\\_Insurance\\_Program\\_Waivers.pdf](https://www.arml.org/static/arml/Unemployment_Insurance_Program_Waivers.pdf).

For additional information regarding health resources, unemployment assistance, assistance for small businesses and emergency response resources, please see the following links:

- Health and Guidance for the Public: Arkansas Department of Health:  
[https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/novel-coronavirus?\\_ga=2.177635116.809456673.1584116216-1333483042.1580772836](https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/novel-coronavirus?_ga=2.177635116.809456673.1584116216-1333483042.1580772836)
- Overall Information on State COVID-19 Response/Resources: Arkansas Division of Emergency Management- Joint Information Center:  
[http://ardem.publishpath.com/Default.aspx?shortcut=external-affairs-educationoutreach&\\_m=1](http://ardem.publishpath.com/Default.aspx?shortcut=external-affairs-educationoutreach&_m=1)
- Economic Assistance: Arkansas Department of Commerce COVID-19 Webpage:  
<https://www.arkansasedc.com/covid19>
- Online COVID-19 Screening: UAMS- HealthNow Screening Application:  
<https://uamshealth.com/coronavirus/>