Governor Hutchinson’s Actions & Updates Regarding COVID-19

Thursday, April 23, 2020 (Press Conference)

- Governor Asa Hutchinson launched a two-day “Arkansas Surge Campaign” with a goal of increasing testing for COVID-19 from 1,000 to 1,500 test per day over the next two days, beginning Friday, April 24. “If you think you have symptoms, don’t wait—get tested,” he said at the briefing.

- Per the press release: “The two-day campaign could provide an early diagnosis and quicker treatment for people who might have been reluctant to test early in the pandemic. The increased number of people who go for testing during the Friday and Saturday Surge will also help give the state a more complete understanding of the presence of COVID-19 in Arkansas.”

- The governor presented four recommendations from his Testing Advisory Group to expand and increase testing in Arkansas. Those recommendations are as follows:
  - Expand testing for all patients with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and those with history of potential exposure.
  - Expand testing for contact investigations.
  - Increase testing in high-risk settings such as long-term-care facilities.
  - Develop a strategy for statewide serosurveillance.

- Read the full press release here: https://bit.ly/2xMzghA.

- The Arkansas Department of Health offers guidance for getting tested: https://bit.ly/2VyW3GI.


Wednesday, April 22, 2020 (Press Conference)

- Governor Asa Hutchinson announced that the April 3 Arkansas Department of Health directive restricting elective surgeries and procedures would be lifted incrementally beginning on Monday, April 27. An updated directive will be released today or tomorrow, per the press briefing. We will share that information when it becomes available.

- The governor also announced a series of decision dates related to lifting restrictions on restaurants, gyms, barbers and beauty shops, and houses of worship and larger venues, including sporting events. Those dates are as follows:
  - April 29: Restaurants
  - April 30: Gyms
  - May 1: Barber and Beauty Salons
  - May 4: Places of Worship and Larger Venues
Tuesday, April 21, 2020 (Press Conference)

- Governor Hutchinson issued Executive Order 20-21 (https://bit.ly/3eFMJ1r) to establish the Governor’s COVID-19 Testing Advisory Group to make recommendations to expand the capacity and performance of COVID-19 testing in the state. The working group includes senior representatives of the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH), the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), Baptist Health of Arkansas and Arkansas Children’s. The group will examine the state’s supply of testing equipment and make recommendations to maintain adequate testing capabilities and conduct surveillance testing across the state. Read the press release here: https://bit.ly/3atjDZE.

- Members of the Governor’s COVID-19 Testing Working Group are:
  - Dr. Nathaniel Smith, ADH
  - Dr. Glen Baker, ADH
  - Dr. Naveen Patil, ADH
  - Dr. Katie Seely, ADH
  - Dr. Jennifer Hunt, UAMS
  - Dr. Jose Romero, ADH, UAMS, Arkansas Children’s
  - Dr. Atul Kothari, ADH, UAMS
  - Mr. Robin Mitchell, Arkansas Children’s
  - Dr. Bobby Boyanton, Arkansas Children’s

Saturday, April 18, 2020 (Press Conference)

- Governor Hutchinson issued Executive Order 20-20 (https://bit.ly/2VK44Y3) to establish the Governor’s Taskforce for Economic Recovery. The task force includes 27 leaders from the private sector and public agencies who will examine the impact of COVID-19 on businesses and industries in the state. The task force will recommend a strategy to the Governor for our economy to shift out of low gear consistent with public-health guidance. Read the press release here: https://bit.ly/2VPkcI2.

- Members of the task force include:
  - Steuart Walton, Runway Group (Chair)
  - Wes Ward, Department of Agriculture
  - Mike Preston, Department of Commerce
  - Stacy Hurst, Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism
  - Ted Thomas, Public Service Commission
  - Randy Zook, Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce
  - Sylvester Smith, National Federation of Independent Business
  - Joey Dean, Associated General Contractors of Arkansas
  - Annemarie Jazic, Dillard’s Inc.
  - Charlie Spakes, Arkansas Grocers and Retail Merchants Association
  - Montine McNulty, Arkansas Hospitality Association
  - Kelly Eichler, Indoor Recreational Facilities
  - Deke Whitbeck, Arkansas Game and Fish Foundation
  - Lance Taylor, Arkansas Activities Association
  - Hunter Yurachek, University of Arkansas
Wednesday, April 15, 2020 (Press Conference)

- Governor Hutchinson announced that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has approved Arkansas’ request to use Medicaid funds to temporarily increase the weekly income of long-term services and supports (LTSS) direct-care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Per the press release:

  “CMS’s approval of this request is welcome news for LTSS direct-care workers, who are working long hours to see that our most vulnerable Arkansans are well-cared for during this public health emergency. Not only will these funds help ensure continuity of care, the extra pay will alleviate some of the financial stress for the caregivers, who are selflessly serving in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and in private homes at increased risk to their own health.”

- For more information about the payments and worker eligibility, read the full press release here: https://bit.ly/3enSAlF.

Tuesday, April 14, 2020 (Press Conference)

  - Suspend provisions of Ark. Code Ann.§ 11-9-601(C)(2) that currently require a contagious or infectious disease be contracted in or in immediate connection to a hospital or sanitorium to allow first responders and front-line healthcare workers to seek workers compensation for exposure to COVID-19 in the line of duty outside of those settings; and

  - Suspend provisions of Ark. Code Ann. § 11-9-601(C)(3) that currently bars compensation for exposure to a disease to which the general public is exposed to allow first responders and front-line healthcare workers to seek workers compensation for exposure to COVID-19 if contracted in the line of duty; and
Define exposure to COVID-19 as an "unusual and unpredicted incident" under Ark. Code Ann. § 11-9-114, as it pertains to pulmonary and respiratory accidents that are the major cause of injury, illness, or death to first responders and front-line healthcare workers for the duration of this emergency; and

Pursuant to this Order, first responders and front-line health care workers who test positive for COVID-19 may be eligible for workers compensation if they can demonstrate a causal connection, as required by law, between their diagnosis of COVID-19 and exposure to COVID-19 as a result of their employment or occupation; and

Claims for workers compensation due to exposure to COVID-19 must be actually incurred due to one's employment and not due to exposure outside the line of duty; and

Authority granted pursuant to this Order is effective as of the issuance of Executive Order 20-03 and shall automatically expire when the state of emergency is terminated, or at such other time as I may direct in a subsequent Executive Order.

Monday, April 13, 2020 (Press Conference)

Governor Asa Hutchinson issued Executive Order 20-17 (https://bit.ly/3a8pCTv) to establish “The Governor’s Medical Advisory Committee for Post-Peak COVID-19 Response.” The committee will examine testing capabilities and social distancing protocols and make any recommendations necessary to avoid a resurgence of COVID-19. Dr. Nathaniel Smith, secretary of the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH), will serve as the committee chairman.

Members of the Governor’s Medical Advisory Committee for Post-Peak COVID-19 Response are:
- Dr. Nathaniel Smith – Secretary of ADH (Chair)
- Dr. Jose Romero – ADH Chief Medical Officer and Chief of Pediatric Infectious Disease at University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS)/Arkansas Children’s Hospital
- Dr. Naveen Patil – ADH Medical Director for Infectious Disease
- Dr. Jennifer Dillaha – ADH State Epidemiologist
- Dr. Austin Porter – ADH Deputy Chief Science Officer and Assistant Professor at the UAMS College of Public Health
- Dr. Greg Bledsoe – Surgeon General of Arkansas
- Dr. Jerrilyn Jones – ADH Medical Director for Preparedness and Response and Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine at UAMS
- Dr. Sam Greenfield – ADH Medical Director for Family Health and Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at UAMS

Governor Hutchinson issued Executive Order 20-18 (https://bit.ly/2V6ldLD) to amend Executive Order 20-03 for the purpose of equipping health care professionals with the tools necessary to combat the COVID-19 emergency.
A suspension of Arkansas Code to the extent necessary to remove limits on working hours for physicians, physician assistants, specialist assistants, nurse practitioners, licensed registered nurses, and licensed practical nurses, to allow healthcare facilities affected by the disaster emergency to maintain adequate staffing and otherwise respond to the COVID-19 outbreak;

An authorization and request to certain emergency responders, as defined by Ark. Code Ann. § 12-75-103(7), including physicians and other health care providers licensed, registered, certified or otherwise legally permitted to practice in this state and all licensed health care facilities legally permitted to provide services in support of this state and their administrators, to provide medical and health care, assistance, and advice in response to the COVID-19 pandemic during the declared emergency under directives and orders of the Secretary of the Arkansas Department of Health;

A suspension of Arkansas Code to the extent necessary to allow emergency medical treatment protocol development or modification to occur solely with the approval of the Secretary of the Arkansas Department of Health, which may include but is not limited to: (a) triage, diagnostic testing, and/or treatment to patients with known or suspected COVID-19; (b) services provided in response to personnel shortages caused by COVID-19; (c) cancelling, postponing or denying elective surgeries or procedures or other routine care; (d) redeploying or cross training staff not typically assigned to such duties, to the extent necessary to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak; (e) planning to or enacting crisis standards of care measures, such as modifying numbers of beds, preserving personal protective equipment, and triaging access to service or equipment; and (f) reducing recordkeeping requirements to the extent necessary for health care providers and facilities to perform tasks as may be necessary to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak;

A suspension of Ark. Code Ann. § 12-75-103(7)(C), to the extent necessary to provide immunity from liability to the following emergency responders, whether employed by the State or Federal Government a private entity, or non-profit entity, for any injury or death alleged to have been sustained directly as a result of an act or omission by such medical professional in the course of providing medical services in support of the State's response to the COVID-19 outbreak or the implementation of measures to control the causes of the COVID-19 epidemic: (a) physicians; (b) physician assistants; (c) specialist assistants; (d) nurse practitioners; (e) licensed registered nurses; and (f) and licensed practical nurses;

A grant of immunity from liability under Section 4 of this Order will not be extended to an emergency responder, who as a result of his or her action or omission, causes an injury or death due to: (a) acting outside the scope of his or her practice unless he or she has been redeployed as a result of Section 3( d) of this order; or (b) acting in gross negligence, willful misconduct, or bad faith.

Monday, April 6, 2020 (Press Conference)
Governor Asa Hutchinson has extended the mandatory closure of all Arkansas public schools through the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, he announced at a news conference today. Arkansas educators will continue to provide alternative methods of instruction (AMI) for students to continue learning at home. Read the press release here: https://bit.ly/2UOyWaw.

Saturday, April 4, 2020 (Press Conference)


- Effective as of 12:01 a.m. on April 6, 2020 until further notice:
  - All public and private gatherings of any number of people occurring outside a single household or living unit are subject to the following directives and exceptions:
    - Due to the high risk of community spread of COVID-19, gatherings of more than ten (10) people in any confined indoor or outdoor space are prohibited until further notice. Gatherings subject to this directive include, without limitation, community, civic, public, leisure, commercial, or sporting events, concerts, conventions, fundraisers, parades, fairs, and festivals; and
    - This directive does not apply to gatherings of ten (10) or more people in unenclosed, outdoor spaces such as parks, trails, athletic fields and courts, parking lots, golf courses, and driving ranges where social distancing of at least six (6) feet can be easily maintained; and
    - This directive does not apply to businesses, manufacturers, construction companies, places of worship, the Arkansas General Assembly, municipal or county governing bodies, or the judiciary; however, these entities are advised to limit person-to-person contact, maintain appropriate social distancing of at least six (6) feet, and adhere to the social distancing protocols mandated by this order; and
    - The Secretary of Health reserves the right to exercise his authority to prevent the spread of disease in this State if, in his judgment, any of the excluded entities are operating in a manner that is a risk to public health.

- All businesses, manufacturers, construction companies, and places of worship shall implement the following social distancing protocols:
  - Limit the number of people who can enter into the facility at any one time to ensure that people in the facility can easily maintain a minimum six-foot distance
from one another;

- If lines form at a facility (inside or outside), facilities shall mark off six-foot increments at a minimum, establishing where individuals should stand to maintain adequate social distancing;

- Provide hand sanitizer, soap and water, or effective disinfectant at or near the entrance of the facility and in other appropriate areas for use by the public and employees, and in locations where there is high-frequency employee interaction with members of the public;

- Retail businesses shall provide contactless payment systems or provide for disinfecting all payment portals, pens, and styluses after each use;

- Regularly disinfect any high-touch surfaces;

- Post a sign at the entrance of the facility informing all employees, customers, and congregants that they should: avoid entering the facility if they have a cough or fever; maintain a minimum six-foot distance from one another; sneeze and cough into one’s elbow; not shake hands or engage in any unnecessary physical contact.

- **Commercial lodgings and short-term rentals, including, but not limited to, hotels, motels, and vacation rentals, shall only permit occupancy for the following authorized guests:**
  - Healthcare professionals;
  - First responders;
  - Law enforcement;
  - State or Federal employees on official business;
  - National Guard Members on active duty;
  - Airline crew members;
  - Patients of hospitals and their families;
  - Journalists;
  - Persons unable to return to their home due to COVID-19 travel restrictions;
  - Arkansas citizens unable to return to their home due to exigent circumstances, such as fire, flood, tornado, or other disaster;
  - Persons in need of shelter due to domestic violence or homelessness;
  - Employees of hotels, motels, or other service providers/contractors of a hotel or motel; and
  - Persons away from their home due to work or work-related travel

- **K-12 schools and extracurricular activities, including athletic events and practices, will remain closed for on-site instruction until such time as the Governor and Secretary of Education deem appropriate;**

- **State government employees will continue to conduct business through both remote work and on-site work. On-site government work will be limited to employees that are critical to the necessary function of government during a public health emergency and are required to report to work on site;**
• Bars, clubs, and restaurants shall remain closed for dine-in purposes and remain open for takeaway and delivery only;

• Gyms (including fitness centers/clubs, fitness classes, and group fitness studios) and indoor entertainment venues, such as bowling alleys, trampoline parks, and indoor amusement centers, shall remain closed to nonessential functions;

• Casinos shall remain closed;

• Barbers, body art establishments, body art schools, cosmetology establishments, massage therapy clinics/spas, and medical spas shall remain closed;

• The directives of the Arkansas Department of Health issued on March 13, 2020, regarding long term health facilities shall remain in effect for the duration of this order;

• Cities and counties taking reasonable measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by imposing curfews and closing city or county owned parks and facilities shall not be interpreted as a quarantine regulation of commerce or travel. Curfews should not prevent citizens of any age from traveling to and from work, acquiring food or essential goods and services, walking pets, or acquiring exercise outdoors while maintaining social distance of at least six (6) feet;

• Executive Orders of the Governor issued pursuant Ark. Code Ann. §§ 12-75-101, et seq., have the force and effect of law. Additionally, pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 20-7-101, violation of a directive from the Secretary of Health during this public health emergency is a misdemeanor offense, and upon conviction thereof is punishable by a fine of not less than one hundred dollars ($100) nor more than five hundred dollars ($500) or by imprisonment not exceeding one (1) month, or both. All law enforcement officers within this state shall enforce the directives of this order and those of the Secretary of Health to preserve the health and safety of all Arkansans during this emergency.

Friday, April 3, 2020 (Press Conference)

• The Arkansas Department of Health issued a directive on elective surgeries. Per the directive (https://bit.ly/2xYegEg):

• On March 30, 2020, a guidance letter was sent to all health facilities, including ambulatory surgery centers and abortion facilities. In view of the continued uncertainty and increase in cases of COVID-19, there are increasing concerns of staff and medical supplies capabilities in hospitals statewide. The following mandatory actions can preserve staff, personal protective equipment (PPE), and patient care supplies; ensure staff and patient safety; and expand available hospital capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic:
  o Procedures, testing, and office visits that can be safely postponed shall be rescheduled to an appropriate future date.
  o Routine dental and eye care visits shall be postponed.
Emergent, urgent and care designated as an exception below will continue.
Small rural hospitals under 60 beds and critical access hospitals, though strongly advised to follow this directive to maximize resources, are excluded from this directive.

- Exceptions to this directive should be made in the following circumstances:
  - If there is a threat to the patient’s life if the procedure is not performed.
  - If there is a threat of permanent dysfunction of an extremity or organ system if the surgery is not done.
  - If there is a risk of metastasis or progression of staging of a disease or condition if surgery is not performed.
  - If there is a risk that the patient’s condition will rapidly deteriorate if surgery is not done, and there is a threat to life or an extremity or organ system or a threat of permanent dysfunction or disability.

**Wednesday, April 1, 2020 (Press Conference)**

- Governor Asa Hutchinson directed Arkansas State Parks to implement new measures for public health. In conjunction with Stacy Hurst, secretary of Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, decision was made to move to a “day use only” operating model. The changes are in effect as of 8 a.m. on Friday, April 3.

- Additionally, the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism is temporarily implementing safety measures to prevent visitation surges in state parks. Arkansas State Parks will deploy park rangers to enforce social distancing, disperse gatherings of more than 10 people, and implement parking restrictions to limit overcrowding at popular parks.


**Tuesday, March 31, 2020 (Press Conference)**


- DHS announced today that it will be accelerating quarterly Medicaid access payments to private hospitals. This will release $85.3 million to these hospitals on Thursday, April 9. Along with this accelerated payment, DHS will
also delay collection of hospital access fees until June 15. A credit will also be issued to hospitals for nearly $9 million due to the increase in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP). This will be used to reduce the fees that hospitals owe in the future.

- Additionally, Medicaid will pay $41 million in costs settlements this week and expects another $37.5 million to be paid next week.

- In total, these accelerated hospital access payments and cost settlement payments will result in an infusion of $163.8 million to Arkansas hospitals and clinics over the next two weeks.

- These payments are previously budgeted items that DHS is issuing in an accelerated manner in order to ensure that these hospitals can continue to provide care to Arkansans during this critical period.

- The directive for closure of casinos in Arkansas has been extended to April 30.

**Monday, March 30, 2020 (Press Conference)**

- The Governor announced that thanks to the creation of the COVID-19 Rainy Day Fund by the General Assembly, the state was able to approve an additional $45 million for purchase of PPE and ventilators. Read the press release here: [https://bit.ly/3bLjLot](https://bit.ly/3bLjLot).

- The Governor also announced an Executive Order to create the Arkansas Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act Steering Committee. The committee will be tasked with analyzing the relief available to Arkansas citizens and businesses through the $1.25 billion anticipated for the state of Arkansas within the federal CARES Act and to make recommendations to the Governor on how to most appropriately use the funds in Arkansas. Read the full Executive Order here: [https://bit.ly/2w2EN2B](https://bit.ly/2w2EN2B).

- The 15-person committee will include the following:
  - Larry Walther, Secretary of DFA
  - Mike Preston, Secretary of Commerce
  - Dr. Nate Smith, Secretary of Health
  - Cindy Gillespie, Secretary of DHS
  - Amy Fecher, Secretary of Transformation and Shared Services
  - Jami Cook, Secretary of Public Safety
  - Elizabeth Smith, Secretary of the Department of Inspector General
  - Johnny Key, Secretary of Education
  - Bill Gossage, Governor’s Office Representative
  - Senator Missy Irvin
  - Senator David Wallace
  - Senator Will Bond
  - Representative Lane Jean
  - Representative Michelle Gray
Representative Fred Allen

- Secretary Stacy Hurst announced that Arkansas State Parks are still open, but additional steps have been taken to protect staff and visitors:
  - Lodges have been closed
  - Camping closed (except for self-contained units such as recreational vehicles)
  - Museums/exhibits closed
  - Contactless check-in for RV camping
  - State Parks staff will be monitoring parks and reminding visitors of social distancing requirements.

- DHS has released a FAQ page regarding the Continuity of Care Initiative. Additional avenues are being explored for additional pay to healthcare workers not covered under the Continuity of Care Initiative. The CARES Act provides additional funding to hospitals which should provide additional opportunities for increased pay to frontline healthcare workers during the public health crisis. View the PDF here: https://bit.ly/2Uw4TUS.


**Thursday, March 26, 2020 (Press Conference)**

- The Secretary of Health, in consultation with the Governor, has sole authority over all instances of quarantine, isolation and restrictions on commerce and travel throughout Arkansas, as necessary and appropriate to control disease in the state of Arkansas as authorized by Ark. Code Ann. §20-7-109-110.

- Through executive order 20-10, Governor Hutchinson has issued a directive prohibiting gatherings of 10 or more people:

  “All public and private gatherings of any number of people occurring outside a single household or living unit are subject to the following directives and exceptions:

  *Due to the high risk of community spread of COVID-19, gatherings of more than ten (10) people in any confined indoor or outdoor space are prohibited until further notice. Gatherings subject to this directive include, without limitation, community, civic, public, leisure, commercial, or sporting events, concerts, conferences, conventions, fundraisers, parades, fairs, and festivals.”*
There are some exceptions noted in the directive, available here: https://governor.arkansas.gov/images/uploads/executiveOrders/EO_20-10..pdf

Governor Hutchinson also announced a proposal to protect and support health care professionals, public and providers. Per the press release:

"The Arkansas Department of Human Services is submitting a Medicaid Section 1115 Demonstration Project ("waiver") to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to provide support to Arkansans in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The waiver will provide $116 million in additional Medicaid funding to support a number of initiatives to protect Arkansas health care workers and their patients and to support health care providers. Additional funding is aimed at helping the Long-term Services and Supports (LTSS) sector to ensure Arkansas' vulnerable populations continue to receive care whether they reside in facilities or in their homes. The initiatives also provide additional support to rural hospitals, independent physician practices, and other Medicaid providers struggling as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

This new waiver is just one piece of federal and state efforts to help our hospitals, nursing homes and physicians. Regulatory relief and additional payments to providers will also be provided through federal legislation."


Wednesday, March 25, 2020 (Press Conference)


Sunday, March 23, 2020 (Press Conference)

Effective March 25, 2020:

In order to slow the spread of COVID-19, all barbers, body art establishments, body art schools, cosmetology establishments, massage therapy clinics/spas and medical spas should close for in-person operations. Maintaining any related schools' distance education/learning is acceptable.

This directive to barbers, body art establishments, body art schools, cosmetology
establishments, massage therapy clinics/spas and medical spas is made in an attempt to reduce introduction of the virus into new communities and to slow the spread of infection in communities already affected by the virus. This directive and mandate is subject to change as the COVID-19 pandemic progresses.


- Following the recommendation of the Arkansas State Board of Dental Examiners and the American Dental Association, an additional directive was made for dentists to suspend all non-emergent dental care until April 17, 2020. This directive and mandate is subject to change as the COVID-19 pandemic progresses.

Read the full directive here: https://bit.ly/2xqIXBM.

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.

• 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.

• 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.
• Contact information for all ADWS offices can be found in the following document: 

• Read the governor’s full directive regarding unemployment waivers: 

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

• Overall Information on State COVID-19 Response/Resources: Arkansas Division of Emergency Management- Joint Information Center: 

• 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/