



Gary Stevens Capitol Report

March 11, 2020

Dear friends and neighbors,

As you may know, Governor Mike Dunleavy today issued a declaration of public health disaster emergency in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) anticipated outbreak. The governor's declaration establishes a unified command structure between the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Public Safety, and fully engages state departments to utilize all capabilities to ensure a swift and effective COVID-19 response.

Also today, the legislature amended and passed the Mental Health Budget (House Bill 206) to include \$4 million in state funds and \$9 million in federal receipt authority. This funding will allow the administration to fill 10 temporary public health positions:

- Five new public health nurses
- Three nurse epidemiologists
- One microbiologist in Fairbanks to assist with lab testing;
- One emergency manager to assist in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

These public health professionals will be based statewide and will be able to assist rural communities to monitor and screen for COVID-19.

HB 206 goes next to Governor Dunleavy for his signature.

Coronavirus Prevention and Preparedness

State health officials advise you to practice these preventative and preparedness actions:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if you don't have soap and water.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue you throw away after use or the inside of your elbow if you don't have a tissue handy.
- Avoid touching your face, mouth, nose and eyes.
- If you begin to feel ill, stay home for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
- If you have to go to the doctor, call ahead and make an appointment. This helps the provider's office take steps to keep other people from being exposed.
- Routinely clean frequently-touched surfaces and objects.
- Stay informed. Follow updates from DHSS, Centers for Disease Control and other trusted public health officials, as well as from schools and your employer.
- Do your part to fight fear, stigma and misinformation which can only make the situation worse.

Emergency Kits

Whether for a pandemic, an earthquake, or some other disaster, Alaskans should have an emergency kit. Include supplies like soap, hand sanitizer, and tissues. If you or a family member regularly take a prescription medication, talk to your health care provider and pharmacist about getting a larger supply. Have any nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough 3 and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.

For more information about emergency kits, please see this information from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/prepareyourhealth/PersonalNeeds.htm> and this information from the Department of Homeland Security at <https://www.dhs.gov/how-do-i/prepare-my-family-disaster>.

For the latest information on Alaska's response to COVID-19, please visit <http://coronavirus.alaska.gov>.

The legislature is closely monitoring COVID-19 developments and has begun the planning process in the event we will have to alter operations in the Capitol. We hope to be able to conduct business as usual, but we believe it is wise to have a contingency plan in place should it become necessary.

As information is changing rapidly, I encourage you to check the Department of Public Health's website on a regular basis and to contact your health provider with any questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

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