



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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GOVERNOR

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 Daily Update

DOH Launches New, Dedicated COVID-19 Website Today

Today, the Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) unveiled a new website for the public to access the latest information on COVID-19 in Hawai'i. The State of Hawai'i has mobilized an inter-agency collaborative effort to keep the community safe and healthy. The website, hawaiicovid19.com will go live at 3pm. The website provides timely information and resources on the coronavirus, including guidance on how to prevent and mitigate community spread, common symptoms of COVID-19, and frequently asked questions. Please read and share the information.

By providing our family and friends, our neighbors and our visitors with accurate information, we keep our community healthy and we keep Hawai'i a welcoming place to live and visit. Don't spread the virus. Don't spread misinformation. And let's prepare together. Always share aloha.

Sign up to receive updates at health.hawaii.gov/updates.

Social Distancing: A New Way of Expressing Aloha

In Hawai'i's close-knit communities, federal, state and county mandates for social distancing can be a difficult message to accept. Island residents are accustomed to gathering together for social and public events and expressing their support and aloha for each other with hugs and other signs of affection.

COVID-19 recommendations are changing the rules on how much physical distance individuals should keep from each other, but the aloha spirit prevails in the islands. Social distancing is a new way of expressing aloha. Cancelling events that do not allow attendees to be at least six feet apart—the equivalent of two arms length—and avoiding unnecessary physical meeting with others are proven

strategies to mitigate the spread of the virus. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives largely depends on the cooperation and compliance from the public.

“It may feel counterintuitive, but one of the best ways to show aloha for each other at this critical time is to refrain from being in large gatherings and to keep a safe, healthy distance from each other,” said Bruce Anderson, director of the Hawai‘i Department of Health. “These unprecedented times require a new way of thinking. You may be healthy, but others around you may not be as fortunate. By practicing social distancing, you’re limiting the potential for exposure to any illness in your household and protecting everyone in our community. We all need to consider the health and wellbeing of others, especially seniors, those with preexisting health conditions and others whose health may be compromised.

Anderson noted that technology enables us to have social distance without sacrificing emotional connection. “When feasible, we should use tools available for virtual meetings by phone, tablet or computer as a way to maintain contact with loved ones, especially kupuna in care homes given Gov. Ige’s directive to refrain from visiting nursing homes, retirement or long-term care facilities at this time.”

Compliance with Governor’s Directives

The Hawai‘i Department of Health is fully endorsing Gov. David Ige’s directives to close establishments that typically attract large numbers of people, and to limit employees in the workplace to minimize exposure. While these are not mandates with consequences for non-compliance, these directives require the cooperation of businesses, organizations and individuals to be effective from a public health perspective.

“We can be more effective in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 if everyone takes these aggressive actions seriously,” Anderson said. “The response to the Governor’s directives has been positive so far and there are many, such as food establishments, which have identified alternative ways to serve the public with drive-through and take-out service to maintain their operations.”

Criteria for Screening Sites

There are limited supplies of COVID-19 testing in Hawai‘i, and this makes prudent use of these resources a priority. Many who are well or experiencing only mild flu-like symptoms may want a COVID-19 test for peace of mind, but this is not a good use of the testing resources. The DOH wants to underscore the criteria for testing and how to properly use the screening sites so that only those who critically need the tests, including older adults and those with existing health conditions, can have access when they need them.

The public should heed the following steps:

- First, contact your healthcare provider in advance to determine if you need to have an in-person visit with your provider. If you do not have a healthcare provider, call the nearest healthcare provider to see if you should come in or remain at home.
- Your provider will determine over the phone whether you meet the criteria for COVID-19 testing.
 - If your provider directs you to come in for a screening, bring a photo ID and your provider’s order.

- Your provider will take a swab for testing.
- The specimen will be sent to a private or state lab for the results. During this time, you are expected to self-quarantine at home until the test results are available, which could be up to 3 to 4 days.
- If you are healthy or experiencing mild to moderate flu-like symptoms, DOH urges you to stay at home and avoid an unnecessary visit to a screening site. The screening sites are only for those who are severely ill with COVID-19 symptoms.

Two New Positive Cases on Oahu

As of March 18, 2020, noon, there is a total of 16 confirmed or presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 in Hawai'i. New positive results were announced today for two O'ahu residents who traveled outside Hawai'i. The Department of Health (DOH) is monitoring these individuals and supervising their isolation as well as the self-quarantine of their family members.

One of the O'ahu cases announced this past Monday, March 16, was a Kualoa tour operator who had not traveled, but was exposed to travelers daily. Three family members from the individual's household were tested with negative results. **All cases who tested positive in Hawai'i are travel related. There is no evidence of community spread in Hawai'i at this time.**

COVID-19 Summary of Numbers as of March 18, 2020 at noon (updated as new information becomes available)

Number of Confirmed or Presumptive Positive Case(s)* 16

Number of Persons Under Investigation (current, testing pending) 9

Confirmed: Meets CDC criteria and positive test result received from a certified laboratory such as the DOH State Laboratories Division.

*The CDC has advised states that respiratory samples positive for SARS-CoV2 in a state and public-health laboratory will be considered "positive" with no need for further testing.

Presumptive Positive: Positive test results from a private laboratory requiring confirmation by a state public health laboratory.

Persons Under Investigation (PUI): Meets CDC criteria for investigation and testing pending.

2-1-1 Call Center for Information on COVID-19

The Aloha United Way call center is open daily between 7 a.m. – 10 p.m. For information or questions about COVID-19:

- Call 2-1-1 from any location in the state
- Text 877-275-6569
- Email info211@auw.org
- Visit health.hawaii.gov/covid19 or coronavirus.gov

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