

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**Washington County, North Carolina  
Coronavirus COVID-19 Response  
General Press Release #1  
March 16, 2020 @ 4:30PM**

Washington County continues to prepare for and/or respond to the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic.

In the interest of public health, the following strategies have been put into place:

- **MOST COUNTY OFFICES ARE ANTICIPATED TO REMAIN OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AT THIS TIME:**
  - Additional Hygiene/Sanitation Rules are being posted at such offices and should be followed at all times by staff and citizens.
  - All citizens are highly encouraged to avoid unnecessary personal visits to county offices, and to contact individual county offices before making a personal visit to determine if their inquiry or business can otherwise be handled through some other means. In many instances business can be transacted using online/phone/or drop box measures including:
    - Taxes may be paid online at [www.officialpayments.com](http://www.officialpayments.com) or Make check payable and remit to: Washington County Tax Collector PO Box 1007 Plymouth, NC 27962
    - Water payments can be paid [www.ccpaymentsservice.com](http://www.ccpaymentsservice.com) or via mail – Make check payable and remit to: Washington County Water Department PO Box 1007 Plymouth, NC 27962.
    - For customer convenience, a water bill payment drop box is located in the parking lot of the Washington County Courthouse.
    - The Department of Social Services will accept and process Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) applications by telephone. Call 252-793-4041 for more information.
  - Office phone numbers will be provided through an addendum to this release and posted on our County Facebook Page along with other official press releases and public updates.
  - If you do not know which office to contact you may contact the County Manager's Office at 252-793-5823 for guidance.
- **DISTRICT AND SUPERIOR COURT SCHEDULES** – Most NC District and Superior Court cases are to be postponed at least 30 days in COVID-19 response. For specific questions about individual cases, visit [www.nccourts.gov](http://www.nccourts.gov) or call the Washington County Clerk of Court at 252-791-4000.
- **JAIL VISITATION POLICY** – Family and/or ministerial visitation of inmates has been suspended until further notice. Inmate visitation is limited to phone appointments for attorneys, law enforcement officers, etc.
- **WASHINGTON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM** – The Washington County School System is closed for students for at least two (2) weeks in compliance with Executive Order No. 117. Additional information may be obtained from the School System at <https://www.wcsnc.org/>

- **PETTIGREW REGIONAL LIBRARY** – The Pettigrew Regional Library Offices and Facilities in Washington County are closed and will remain closed for at least two weeks. They are anticipated to follow the lead and schedule of the Washington County School System until further notice.
- **SENIOR CENTER TRAVEL/TRIPS/ACTIVITIES** – Senior Center trips have been cancelled until further notice. All Senior Center activities have been suspended until April 6, 2020.
- **SENIOR CENTER MEALS** – Until further notice, Meals on Wheels food delivery will continue on its regular schedule, and we will deliver meals to the seniors who were transported via Riverlight Transit. Seniors who drive will be able to pick up carry-out plates for lunch, but will not be permitted to stay at the senior center. For more information contact 252-793-3816. Senior Center Hours may also be modified as needed to accommodate changing operations. Initial modified hours are expected to be 8AM to 1PM.
- **COUNTY RECREATION** - Until further notice, all Recreation programs and facilities will be closed.
- **911 COMMUNICATIONS** – 911 Communications staff is utilizing a NC Department of Health and Human Services provided protocol for filtering calls to identify potential active cases.
- **ADDITIONAL HAND SANITIZER STATIONS DEPLOYED** – Additional hand sanitizer dispensers have been deployed throughout county facilities. Some complaints have been received about short term displeasing after odor associated with the sanitizer used in these stations. The Health Department has confirmed this odor is not unusual, and that the sanitizer being used is still effective. We are working to find a viable replacement that does not contain the same odor concerns but sanitizer products are in short supply and it may be some time before a permanent long term replacement sanitizer is obtained. Until then, the current stations and sanitizer product will remain in place. HOWEVER, please note that Hand Sanitizing is NOT an appropriate substitute for proper hand washing protocols.
- **PROMOTION OF HANDWASHING** – Signs have been put up around county buildings to promote hand-washing. Remember that hand sanitizer is NOT an appropriate substitute for proper hand washing protocols.
- **CLEANING MATERIALS / PERSONAL PROTECTION EQUIPMENT** – Staff is acquiring additional cleaning products, sanitizer for general staff and facilities and PPE (personal protection equipment) for first responders and other employees whose duties may require ongoing or broad contact with the public. It is imperative that all such supplies be properly inventoried, secured, and usage carefully monitored to maximize and extend the useful life of all current supplies. PPE should only be utilized according to official departmental protocols and directives.
- **COUNTY EMPLOYEE TRAVEL** - Non-essential out-of-county travel for professional conferences and training is restricted until further notice. Additional guidance will be provided to employees regarding internal operations.
- **ADJUSTMENT OF GATHERINGS/EVENTS** – Large meetings and events are being evaluated and altered where deemed necessary or appropriate. The most recent guidance provided by the White House is that in-person gatherings of 10 persons or more should be avoided to the fullest extent possible.
- **REGIONAL COORDINATION** – Washington County staff is regularly communicating with MTW District Health staff and various other regional partners to stay up to date on, and respond proactively to, the latest Covid-19 guidance and information.
- **STATE OF EMERGENCY UNDER CONSIDERATION** - Like most local governments in North Carolina dealing with Covid-19 response matters at the moment, Washington County is evaluating the potential need to declare a local State of Emergency to help facilitate the delivery of requested supplies or to authorize reimbursement funding for eligible local expenses incurred in relation to emergency management efforts undertaken to help deal with Covid-19. Any such declaration will be made via separate announcement following the adoption of such a declaration in accordance with applicable statutory authority. Such an announcement should not come

as a shock or surprise, and should instead be considered as a normal outgrowth of escalating efforts to appropriately respond to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Coronaviruses like COVID-19 are most often spread through the air by coughing or sneezing, through close personal contact (including touching or shaking hands), or through touching your nose, mouth, or eyes before washing your hands. In order to prevent the spread of all infectious diseases, including COVID-19, take the following common-sense precautions:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds at a time.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill.
- Stop handshaking – use other noncontact methods of greeting
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Do not reuse tissue after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched.

This is a rapidly evolving event. Please maintain awareness and monitor for further updates from Washington County. Also, as per the CDC advice, stay at home if you are sick, or if you have a sick family member at home.

For additional information and resources, consult and follow the latest official guidance provided by the Federal Centers for Disease Control, NC Department of Health & Human Services, and Martin-Tyrrell-Washington District Health Department at the following links:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>
- <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-response-north-carolina>
- <https://mtwdistricthealth.org/>

If you have any specific questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact:

Curtis S. Potter  
County Manager/Public Information Officer  
Washington County  
116 Adams Street  
P.O. Box 1007  
Plymouth, NC 27962  
252-793-5823  
[cpotter@washconc.org](mailto:cpotter@washconc.org)