



STATE OF ALABAMA

TO: All State Government Heads
FROM: Governor Kay Ivey *Kay Ivey*
DATE: March 10, 2020
RE: **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Preparations Protocol**

Last week, out of an abundance of caution, I established a Coronavirus Task Force of cabinet and state agency officials, as well as disease specialists. Dr. Scott Harris, Alabama's state health officer, is serving as our chair and we intend to have weekly conference calls, or as needed, to keep our state government leaders informed of the latest information on the preparations and protocol of the COVID-19 virus (coronavirus).

It is important to note that there are currently no known cases in Alabama, but we must be vigilant in our efforts to be as prepared as possible should this illness affect our state. This memo will cover the preparation for continuous government services in the event of a widespread outbreak and serve as a reminder for good standard operating procedures to keep us all healthy.

Continuity of Government Services

Accompanying this memo is a matrix provided by Dr. Harris and the Alabama Department of Public Health, which was distributed to members of the Task Force Monday.

Dr. Harris has indicated it would be helpful if all State Agencies, Departments and Boards would review this matrix as soon as possible and help identify answers to the following questions:

- 1) Does your Agency/Department/Board have a plan in place to address each of the matrix's levels in the event the virus is detected in Alabama?
- 2) Does your Agency/Department/Board have any other plan to deal with the possible spread of the coronavirus?

The State Personnel Department is currently providing the following guidance: If employees who are on work-related assignments are quarantined due to the coronavirus, they will not be charged leave during the quarantine period. However, employees who contract the coronavirus, or are functioning as the caregiver for a family member with the virus, will be allowed to take their accumulated leave. Should that leave become exhausted, employees will be approved for donated leave. Rules requiring a doctor's statement will be waived for coronavirus. Donated leave forms should be submitted through normal work channels should that become necessary. Recertification requirements will be waived for the coronavirus as well. Updates to this guidance will be provided as needed.

Standard Operating Procedure

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has indicated that much like the flu, the coronavirus is spread through person-to-person contact as well through contact when someone infected sneezes or coughs. As such, standard precaution to mitigate the spread of the typical cold and flu will also apply to the coronavirus.

Dr. Harris – and other medical professionals – have emphasized that while we must address this as a serious issue that could impact our state, we do not need to spread alarm or false information.

As Task Force chair, Dr. Harris will be routinely providing updates to the people of Alabama. Let me encourage anyone with questions to visit the Alabama Department of Public Health's website at <http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/infectiousdiseases/2019-coronavirus.html>

Our medical providers and research professionals are doing everything they can to learn how this disease can be effectively treated, especially since a coronavirus vaccine is likely 18 months away at the earliest. In the meantime, let me urge all state employees to mitigate the risk of coronavirus by taking the following precautions:

1. **Notify your department head, supervisor and human resource officer immediately if you have recently traveled in areas affected by the coronavirus.** A full list of these locations can be found under the CDC's Travel Advisory Zones at <https://coronavirus.gov>
2. **Please stay home when you are exhibiting symptoms of a cold or flu and avoid contact with individuals who exhibit symptoms.** If you are sick, please practice common-sense guidelines for the benefit of yourself and others. The most serious cases of coronavirus have been when someone who was infected has been in contact with a person whose immune system is already compromised.
3. **Please wash your hands with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds.** Soap and water are better than hand sanitizers. However, if you are unable to use soap and water, use a hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol based. Also, please avoid touching any part of your face with unwashed hands.
4. **Practice common sense in traveling to areas within the U.S. that have known cases of coronavirus.** Using technology to conduct meetings may be a better option. Your Agency/Department/Board may develop additional travel guidelines regarding overseas travel.

Clearly, the safety and well-being of all Alabamians is our paramount concern. Working with other leaders throughout state government, my administration will do everything humanly possible to limit exposure of this illness.

For more information, please contact your department head or the Alabama Department of Public Health.