



Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson
Office of Communications

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Governor Parson Emphasizes Importance of Mental Health During COVID-19 Crisis

(JEFFERSON CITY, MO) – In today’s press briefing, Governor Parson and Missouri Department of Mental Health Director Mark Stringer emphasized the importance of mental health during the COVID-19 crisis.

Governor Parson Reminds Missourians to Take Care of Their Mental Health

“We realize this is a challenging, uncertain time for Missouri and the nation,” **Governor Parson** said. “Mental health is something everyone should focus on not just right now, but going forward as Missourians continue to cope with the after-effects of COVID-19. We’re going to get through this together, but we have to take care of ourselves mentally and physically.”

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) serves people of all ages with mental illness, substance use disorders, and intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Department serves approximately 170,000 people a year through both institutions and community programs.

In response to COVID-19, DMH has taken a number of steps to ensure its services continue with as little disruption as possible.

The Department has worked with partners across state government to make it possible for community providers to do much of their work by telephone, rather than the traditional face-to-face requirement. Service providers have also dramatically increased their use of telehealth, and DMH is exploring ways to stay in touch with people who cannot afford cell phones or extra minutes.

For psychiatric hospitals and rehabilitation centers, DMH has worked with other state departments to share best practices, policies, and procedures during times of crisis. Public visitation is temporarily suspended at all DMH facilities and offices statewide.

For Missourians struggling to cope with this pandemic, the federal Disaster Distress Helpline (800-985-5990) is an important resource. It is staffed with mental health professionals who can talk with you and, if you need more help than they can provide, connect you with services here in Missouri.

Specifically, they can connect you with the Access Crisis Intervention (ACI) system. This system is staffed with professionals linked to state certified mental health and substance use disorder services. The ACI system is free and completely confidential.

Missouri Department of Transportation Takes Steps to Assist with COVID-19 Response

Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) Director Patrick McKenna also provided an update at today's briefing.

MoDOT has announced a free, temporary overweight permit that allows haulers to transport up to 100,000 pounds on any Missouri highway, including interstates, through April 30, 2020, as long as the following criteria are met:

- A copy of the special permit and a bill of lading must be in the possession of the operator of the overweight vehicle during its operation and shall be produced for inspection upon request to any Missouri law enforcement official and/or any MoDOT employee. Motor carriers can find this document at modot.org/mcs.
- The load must carry supplies and/or equipment in the direct effort to prevent, contain, mitigate, and treat the effects of the COVID-19 virus. This includes shipments of livestock, poultry, feed, and fuels. Any fuels being transported can be hauled at 100,000 pounds or up to the manufacturer's specifications of the tank type being operated – whichever results in the lower weight.

To ensure the continued transportation of essential supplies, equipment, and individuals, the Missouri Department of Revenue has also issued the following extensions in coordination with MoDOT:

- Sixty-day extension of driving privileges: This extension applies to individuals with CDL or non-CDL license expiration dates of March 1, 2020, through April 30, 2020. For example, an individual with a CDL expiring March 1, 2020, will have until May 1, 2020, to complete the required license renewal in their local license office.
- Extension of CDL medical certificates: This extension applies to individuals holding a CDL or CLP with a current medical certificate that has been issued for a period of 90 days or more and has an expiration date of March 1, 2020, through April 30, 2020. These individuals have been granted an extension of their medical certification until June 30, 2020. This relief will give Missouri's commercial drivers additional time to complete the required medical exam and to submit an updated medical certificate to their local license office so their Missouri driver record can be updated.
- Both of these extensions have been applied automatically, so no additional action is required by eligible drivers to qualify.

In addition, MoDOT is making an effort to keep interstate highway rest areas open to the traveling public and commercial motor carriers. The rest areas are being cleaned and disinfected on a more frequent basis.

Call to Action: What Missourians Can do to Combat COVID-19

Social distancing is one of the most important steps Missourians can take to combat the spread of COVID-19.

- **Follow the statewide social distancing order:** Avoid social gatherings of more than 10 people. Avoid eating and drinking at restaurants, bars, or food courts – use drive-thru, delivery, or pick-up instead. Do not visit nursing homes, long-term care facilities, retirement homes, or assisted living homes unless to provide critical assistance.
 - People may still visit a variety of places, including grocery stores, gas stations, parks, and banks, so long as necessary precautions are taken and maintained to reduce the transmission of COVID-19, including maintaining at least six feet of distance between all individuals that are not family members.
- **Exercise common sense:** If you feel sick, stay home. Do not go to work. If someone in your household has tested positive for COVID-19, keep the entire household at home. Do not go to work.
- **Take extra precautions:** If you are an older person, stay home and away from other people. If you are a person with a serious underlying health condition that can put you at increased risk (for example, a condition that impairs your lung or heart function or weakens your immune system), stay home and away from other people.
- **Protect yourself and others:** Avoid discretionary travel, shopping trips, and social visits. Practice good hygiene and stay home as much as possible.

To view Governor Parson's remarks from today's press briefing, please see attachment. All pictures from today's press briefing are available on [Governor Parson's Flickr page](#).

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Contact: Kelli R. Jones
Communications Director
Work: 573-751-0765
Mobile: 573-508-9072
Email: communications@governor.mo.gov
Website: www.governor.mo.gov