

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE July 23, 2020

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BAY COUNTY ISSUES UPDATE ON COVID-19

PANAMA CITY, Fla. — Bay County's total case count is at 2,356 including 2,298 residents and 58 non-residents. Fourteen Bay County residents have died from COVID-19. There has been one death associated with a long-term care facility. Bay County's overall COVID-19 positive testing rate is 12 percent. Of the 19,408 tests processed, 17,024 tests are negative.

Protect the vulnerable by avoiding the Three Cs: Closed Spaces, Crowded Places and Close-Contact Settings and by wearing a mask in public:

1. **Closed Spaces.** Avoid closed spaces with poor ventilation that could allow contagious droplets to linger in the air.
2. **Crowded Places.** Avoid crowded places with many people nearby; the greater the number of individuals in an area, the greater the chances of COVID-19 spreading from person-to-person.
3. **Close-Contact Settings.** Avoid close-range conversations and stay at least six-feet from others.

Florida Department of Health in Bay County

DOH-Bay is testing anyone with symptoms of COVID-19. For screening, please call DOH-Bay at (850) 872-4455 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and follow the prompts. Testing is by appointment only. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, new loss of taste or smell, vomiting or diarrhea, and/or sore throat. The CDC has a symptom checker available at [CDC.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus). For additional testing options and information, visit [Bay.FloridaHealth.gov](https://www.flhealth.gov).

There are three ways to obtain test results from tests taken with DOH-Bay; phone, in-office, and email. Please see below for instructions:

Phone: Call (850) 872-4455 and follow the prompts to COVID test results prompts and request the status with the representative. You will be provided with the option to obtain your results in person (if negative) or electronically (negative or positive).

Office: If you come to our office, do not get out of your car. Please call (850) 872-4455 and follow the COVID test results prompts. Please let us know you are in the parking lot and we will deliver your results to you in your vehicle.

Email: You can make your request by emailing baymedicalrecords@flhealth.gov. After you complete the authorization form, you will need to respond with a picture of your photo ID and we will send your result to you via an encrypted email. The email must be viewed on a desktop or laptop PC as the encryption is not mobile friendly.

Immunizations, including back to school shots, are by appointment only. Please call (850) 872-4455 to schedule an appointment for child vaccines, adult vaccines, religious exemption, immigration vaccines, and international travel vaccines. If you need out of state records transferred to Florida 680 Form, 680 Form, or College Forms you do not need an appointment. You can request these services via email at baymedicalrecords@flhealth.gov. A call back will be provided when these forms are ready.

City of Panama City Beach

The Panama City Beach City Council amended last week's emergency order requiring employees of indoor businesses, including restaurants, bars, retail and indoor amusements, to wear masks. The new ordinance requires customers and employees in businesses to wear a face mask. This goes into effect on

Monday, July 27 at 5 p.m. The first offense is education and a mask is provided, the second offense is a \$50 fine, and the third and subsequent offenses are a \$100 fine. More details can be found at the City of Panama City Beach's website at <http://www.pcbgov.com/>.

Bay District Schools

Bay District Schools is expanding options for enrollment to include the option for digital learning five days a week assigned to their teacher of record/scheduled classes. This option provides opportunities for students to continue to learn at home while remaining registered at their enrolled school. This model is designed for families who don't feel comfortable sending their children back to school but ultimately plan to rejoin their enrolled school in the future.

Bay District School Superintendent Bill Husfelt is recommending to the School Board to consider moving the first day of school back to August 20. District leadership believes this delay in start will give teachers time for training, professional development, and support to shift to this innovation teaching model that include in-person and virtual students. They also believe the delay will give families time to ponder the new option to determine what is best for their student(s).

Please visit Bay District School's reopening website for more information at <http://www.bay.k12.fl.us/school-reopening>. You can also call (850) 767-HELP for any questions not addressed by the website.

Bay County

Bay County and its city and healthcare partners have launched a public information campaign aimed at encouraging people to take voluntary action to slow the spread of the COVID-19. The \$50,000 effort is funded via the CARES Act and will utilize a variety of media channels, including television, print billboards, radio, digital and social media to ask the public to "Be a Hero" in the fight against COVID-19. The "Be a Hero" campaign aims to encourage the public to adhere to the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), particularly regarding social distancing, protecting vulnerable populations, mask wearing when distancing is impossible and personal hygiene. To view and share the campaign materials, visit www.baycountyfl.gov/604/BE-A-HERO and use #BeAHero.

Ascension Sacred Heart Bay

Ascension Sacred Heart Bay is suspending patient visitation with exceptions may be made for:

- Pediatric patients: One parent or legal guardian
- Patients with disabilities or impairments or who are elderly: One visitor.
- Patients receiving end-of-life care: One visitor. The phone number for questions about end-of-life visitor restriction exceptions is 850-747-6224.
- Surgical patients: Patients requiring surgery or other medical procedures may have one visitor if the patient also meets one of the exception criteria -- meaning the patient having surgery is a pediatric patient, receiving end-of-life care, or a patient who is elderly or has impairments.
- Emergency Department Patients: Likewise, a patient who comes to the Emergency Department may have a family member or friend stay with the patient, but only if the patient meets one of the exception criteria.

All visitors must be at least 18 years of age.

Ascension Sacred Heart Bay will continue to require all staff and visitors to wear a mask inside the hospital. We also will continue to screen all permitted visitors, including temperature checks.

Gulf Coast Regional Medical Center

Gulf Coast Regional Medical Center is temporarily deferring the scheduling of elective surgeries as a measure to increase our hospital bed capacity. This measure will be implemented as part of established hospital surge plan and is being done to ensure our care teams can continue to deliver safe, effective, and compassionate care to our patients experiencing both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 health concerns. Gulf Coast Regional will continue with urgent and emergent surgery.

Gulf Coast Regional has implemented additional safety measures due to the current COVID-19 environment in Bay County.

- Emergency Room - No visitors (Exceptions will be made for pediatric patients)
- Pediatric patients, PICU and NICU - One (1) parent or guardian per patient. Parent can stay overnight.
- Labor & Delivery/Mother/Baby - One (1) support person, per patient for the duration of the stay. Support person can stay overnight.
- Hospice or palliative care patients - One (1), adult support person, 18 years or older, per patient.
- Surgical/Outpatient Services - No visitors. Family member will be called to pick up
- CATH Lab - No visitors. Family member will be called to pick up

Please note, any visitor who screens POSITIVE for respiratory illness will not be allowed to enter.

No Exceptions.

Main entrance Visitation Hours:

- Monday – Friday: 5:30am – 6:00pm
- Saturday – Sunday 7:00am – 6:00pm

Bay County Sheriff's Office

The Bay County Sheriff's Office has opened lobby doors for normal operations. Those needing fingerprints are asked to call 747-4700 to make an appointment and must wear a mask. Bay County Sheriff Tommy Ford has established stations with decontamination equipment for patrol cars at the Bay County Jail and the main office. Temperature-checking kiosks are at the Bay County Jail, BCSO substations, and the main office for employees to use upon arrival to work. Employees are required to check their temperatures once more during the workday. COVID-19 Testing for employees is being offered most every week at the main office. Hand sanitizer, gloves, masks, and disinfectant spray effective against viruses and bacteria are available for all employees.

Mental Health

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people of all ages. Fear and anxiety about the unknown can sometimes feel overwhelming to adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger. If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others call Bay County's Crisis line at (850) 522-4485.

Public Services

The United Way of Northwest Florida is providing information on public services and resources available in our area including food banks. Please visit their dedicated webpage at <http://unitedwaynwfl.org/covid-19/>. You may also utilize their 211 service for referrals, just call 211 from any phone or visit <https://211nwfl.communityos.org/>.

Rebuild Bay County may have resources available to assist persons in need. Visit <https://rebuildbaycounty.org/> for more information.

Convalescent Plasma and Blood Donations

OneBlood says they are experiencing a 500% increase in hospital orders for COVID-19 convalescent plasma. Convalescent plasma (CPP) is plasma collected from people who have recovered from the coronavirus. People who recover from coronavirus infection have developed antibodies to the virus that remain in the plasma portion of their blood. Transfusing the plasma that contains the antibodies into a person still fighting the virus can provide a boost to the patient's immune system and potentially help them recover.

The experimental treatment is approved by the FDA to be used on an emergency basis and is called COVID-19 convalescent plasma. Patients who meet the FDA criteria can receive convalescent plasma.

OneBlood is working closely with the Florida Department of Health and directly with their hospital partners and physicians to identify people who have recovered from COVID-19 to be potential donors.

There is also always a need for blood donations. OneBlood is testing all blood donations for coronavirus antibody. Results will be available online within 24 to 48 hours. Appointments are recommended. To learn more visit www.oneblood.org.

For More Information

For text alert updates from the Florida Department of Health in Bay County, text "bayhealth" to 888-777. For additional information specific to Bay County, visit <http://bay.floridahealth.gov/> or BayHealthCOVID19.com. Contact the Citizens Information Center seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at (850) 248-6090, or email ask@baycountyfl.gov.

To find the most up-to-date information and guidance on COVID-19, please visit the Department of Health's dedicated COVID-19 website at FloridaHealthCOVID19.gov. For any other questions related to COVID-19 in Florida, call (866) 779-6121. The Call Center is available 24 hours per day or email COVID-19@flhealth.gov.

The free *StrongerThanC19* app is available to both iOS and Android users and can be downloaded from the Apple or Google app stores. The *StrongerThanC19* app and [website](#) are designed to gather information to help the Department of Health track and slow the spread of COVID-19 in Florida; they are not intended to be used as a symptom checker designed to dispense medical advice.