JEFFERSON COUNTY UNIFIED COMMAND CENTER UPDATE FOR NOVEMBER 18, 2020

Birmingham, AL – The Jefferson County Unified Command Center (JCUC) and its partner agencies continue to help provide information, goods and services to the people of Jefferson County throughout the COVID-19 pandemic response. Dr. Mark Wilson, Jefferson County Health Officer, and Jim Coker, Director of Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency serve as the co-leaders of the Unified Command Center.

Thanksgiving
Cases of COVID-19 continue to rise dramatically across Alabama and the entire United States. Thanksgiving and Christmas will be particularly challenging this year as these gatherings have the chance to greatly increase the spread of COVID-19. Given the amount of COVID-19 circulating in the community, even small gatherings can result in a large degree of spread of COVID-19.

Recommendations:

- Limiting Thanksgiving and Christmas gatherings to those family members inside your household.
- Consider using digital platforms to find new ways to be together on the holiday.
- Gatherings should be limited to fewer than 10 people.

If a gathering will occur, we would recommend the following:

- Know before you go. Get a COVID-19 test prior to attending an event. This is not a perfect way to prevent infection, but it certainly helps when performed with the information below.
- Prior to attending the event, all members should quarantine away from others for 14 days. This would include not attending any other gatherings outside of your home, severely limiting interactions with co-workers, and limiting trips outside of the home to only what is absolutely necessary. This will decrease the chance of someone introducing the virus into a larger group gathering.
- Hold gatherings outdoors in the open air or open windows indoors to increase air circulation
- Ensure that all attendees are wearing masks when not eating.
- When eating, make sure people can be spaced apart at least 6 feet while they remove their mask to eat.
- Instruct all attendees to stay home if they are sick or concerned they are becoming sick.

For more information, please review guidance from the CDC found here.

Risk of Spreading COVID-19 with Gatherings
Gatherings of multiple people outside of your immediate household continue to pose a high risk of spreading COVID-19 to a large number of people. Scientists at the Georgia Institute of Technology have posted a calculator to determine the risk one person at the event can transmit COVID-19. This information can be found here.
Risk of having at least one person who can transmit COVID-19 at gatherings in Jefferson County:

10 people: 17% or about 1 out of 5
15 people: 24% or about 1 out of 4
25 people: 37% or about 2 out of 5
50 people: 61% or about 2 out of 3

As we approach the winter holidays, families need to make plans to have limited gatherings and preferably with members of their household. Daily case counts continue to rise with COVID-19, and hospitalizations have started to rise significantly. To maintain the ability of our healthcare system to care for each and every patient, every effort should be made to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Key strategies are:

1) Wearing a facial covering while outside of your household,
2) Maintaining a minimum of 6 feet of distance between people from outside of your household
3) Washing your hands with alcohol hand gel or soap and water regularly
4) Avoiding large gatherings which can easily and rapidly spread COVID-19.

Holiday Travel Tips from the Birmingham Airport Authority

The Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport is ready to welcome holiday travelers. Multiple layers of protection are in place so travelers can feel confident and safe when they fly BHM. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, BHM has deployed enhanced cleaning protocols and upgraded its disinfecting and cleaning solutions to instill confidence and offer peace of mind for travelers.

The airlines have also implemented several changes to their operations to ensure passenger safety such as cleaning all high-touch areas before every flight, and requiring passengers and employees to wear face coverings. High-Efficiency Particle Filter (HEPA) filtration systems are also being used on aircraft to clean air of 99.9% of particles including bacteria and viruses, refreshing cabin air every few minutes.

In addition, TSA has implemented several changes to its security screening process at checkpoints nationwide to reduce the potential for cross-contamination in an effort to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

What travelers can do to travel safely + helpful tips to remember:

- Wear a face covering.
- Use technology when possible to reduce touchpoints such as mobile-boarding and paying with your smartphone.
- Be familiar with your airline’s policies and TSA’s new procedures such as scanning your own boarding pass, placing food in a separate bin, and placing items from your pockets directly into your carry-on bag to reduce touchpoints.
- Don’t travel if you are sick.
JCDH Offering Free Flu Shots

The Jefferson County Department of Health is offering free flu shots (while supplies last) to Jefferson County residents 6 months of age and older. Flu shots are available Monday – Friday, 1:00 PM – 6:00 PM at the JCDH Annex Building located at 401 14th Street, South; Birmingham, AL 35233. **No appointment is necessary.** Please visit [www.jcdh.org/flu](http://www.jcdh.org/flu) to access and complete the mandatory paperwork to receive the vaccine, or use the QR Code. Be aware, inclement weather conditions including heavy rain may cause temporary closures of the drive-thru clinic. We will post closures on social media and our website. All drivers and passengers must remain in their vehicle. No walk-ups allowed. JCDH staff will be on-site to direct traffic flow and provide instructions. Please wear a mask to protect our healthcare workers. For more information, please call (205) 588-5234.

JCDH Hosting Pediatric COVID-19 Drive Thru Testing

The Jefferson County Department of Health is providing pediatric COVID-19 testing to children from birth to 18 years of age. **The self-collection nasal swab method will be used at this testing site.** Testing is available Monday – Friday from 1:00 PM – 7:00 PM. **Appointments are required. Please register at [www.jcdh.org/healthhub](http://www.jcdh.org/healthhub) to schedule an appointment.** Testing will be held at the JCDH Annex Building located at 401 14th Street, South; Birmingham, AL 35233. The lab will bill Insurance for the cost of the test. Please have insurance information available. Persons with no insurance will not be billed. Be aware that inclement weather conditions including heavy rain may cause temporary closures of the drive-thru clinic. Persons will be notified if this occurs. All drivers and passengers must remain in their vehicle. No walk-ups allowed. JCDH staff will be on-site to direct traffic flow and provide instructions.

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