

COVID-19 Update

Talbot County Emergency Services
Clay Stamp, Director, Asst. County Manager
www.talbotdes.org



Talbot County Health Department
Dr. Fredia Wadley, Health Officer
www.health.marylandg.gov/talbotcounty

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Easton, MD – Talbot County has convened an Operational Working Group made up of officials from the Talbot County Health Department, Talbot County Emergency Services, Talbot County Government, Talbot County’s towns, University of Maryland Shore Regional Health, and law enforcement agencies. This group is monitoring this evolving situation closely and will release information each week day to share any updates affecting the citizens of Talbot County.

Governor Larry Hogan declared a state of emergency and a catastrophic health emergency to help control and prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus in the state of Maryland. On March 12, he issued an executive order banning all public gatherings of 250 people or more and recommended social distancing in smaller gatherings. He also activated the National Guard into a heightened state of active duty to carry out any necessary emergency functions.

“We are following the lead of Governor Hogan on this issue and are taking proactive and reasonable measures to protect our citizens,” says Talbot County Council President Corey Pack. “We know this is a difficult time for our community, but we must all do our part for the good of Talbot County and all of our people.”

The Operational Working Group for this emerging infectious disease is a modified group of the county’s Emergency Operations Committee (EOC) that typically convenes in emergency situations, says Clay Stamp, Talbot County’s Director of Emergency Services and Assistant County Manager. In addition, a private sector group has also been convened to address issues affecting the business community.

“Talbot County utilizes its close partnerships among agencies on a daily basis to make sure that residents are safe and aware of what is happening around us,” Stamp says. “The coordinated decisions we are making and strategies we are using moving forward are in the best interest of the community. A prepared community is a safe community.”

Though Maryland currently has 15 confirmed cases, there are no confirmed cases in Talbot County at this time. Officials are attempting to strike a balance between overreacting and underreacting, while also making sure that their actions are reasonable and prudent.

“Closures and cancellations are designed to slow the spread of this virus,” says Talbot County Health Officer Dr. Fredia Wadley. “We are especially concerned about our senior citizens and those with compromised immune systems. We are taking the precautions necessary to protect all of our citizens.”

Following is a summary of the measures Talbot County has taken in response to this emerging situation.

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University of Maryland Shore Regional Health Update

- Enacted a Modified Visitor Policy, which was effective at 7 a.m. March 11, which states:
 1. All visitors must check in at the designated entrance or front desk of any hospital or outpatient facility that they enter. For the three hospitals, the Emergency Departments are the designated entrance. All other entrances will be locked while the Modified Visitor Policy is in place.
 2. No one under the age of 18 (except if the parent of a patient) is permitted to visit the hospital or any outpatient areas, including the waiting areas and common spaces.
 3. Only 1 adult visitor is allowed per patient for all areas of the hospital and outpatient facilities.
 4. Visitors may be screened for flu-like symptoms—runny nose, fever, cough—and are not permitted to visit the hospital if symptoms are present.
 5. Visitors with international travel may not visit for 14 days after arrival into the U.S.
- All support groups, meetings, classes and events scheduled in any hospital or outpatient facility have been cancelled until further notice.
- All volunteers have been sent home until further notice.
- All hospital gift shops located within the hospitals have been closed until further notice.
- All employees are discouraged from traveling out of state until further notice.
- All face-to-face meetings will be moved to be conducted via email or phone until further notice.
- All work-related travel has been prohibited until further notice.
- Non-essential staff are being given the tools to and are being encouraged to work from home until further notice.

Talbot County Department of Corrections

- Essential court appearances will be conducted via video connection rather than physical transport.
- All volunteer activities and programs provided by outside providers are cancelled until further notice.

Talbot County Department of Emergency Services

- The Department of Emergency Services is currently inventorying equipment to ensure that staff is equipped with the proper personal protective equipment needed to work in a safe environment and respond to calls.

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- All 911 Dispatchers are following protocols to query calls to be sure that pertinent information is collected and relayed to the appropriate responding agency.
- Emergency medical clinicians are taking steps to ensure that they and patients are protected and able to efficiently respond to calls.
- Emergency Management is working to ensure our partners are engaged, communication lines are open, and we are able to receive resources needed in order to continue daily and essential operations.

Talbot County Free Library

- The health and well-being of our community and staff is the Talbot County Free Library's top priority.
- Out of an abundance of caution, effective Saturday, March 14, the Talbot County Free Library will cancel all library public programming and outreach activities at both branches up to and including Friday, March 27.
- In addition, the library is cancelling all story times at both branches through Wednesday, April 15.
- Groups may still use our meeting rooms at this time and bookings for future reservations are still being taken.
- Some computers will selectively be taken out of service to encourage social distancing.

Talbot County Health Department

Health Officer Dr. Fredia Wadley says, "People are asking why we doing all these closures and cancellations with only 15 cases in Maryland. These cautionary responses are intended to slow the spread of the virus so health care facilities don't become overwhelmed."

- People with mild illness should stay at home and monitor their symptoms.
- If you have symptoms and have concerns of exposure, call your primary care provider to discuss and receive instructions for care. If you have a known exposure and are experiencing symptoms of fever, cough, and shortness of breath that requires medical attention, call the hospital prior to arriving or notify the emergency medical services of your exposure.
- Testing is not available at the health department at this time. Call your primary care provider for availability of testing.
- People 60 and over or people with chronic medical conditions or weakened immune systems should avoid crowds, stay away from others who are sick, and stay home as much as possible.
- If you have other questions or concerns, please call the Talbot County Health Department at 410-819-5600.

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Talbot County Public Schools

Pursuant to the decision announced by State Superintendent Dr. Karen Salmon during Governor Hogan's press conference, all Maryland public schools will be closed from Monday, March 16 through Friday, March 27. At this time TCPS Staff is initiating the following:

- Cleaning and disinfecting all buildings and buses.
- Contacting parents to come into schools to pick up medications.
- Working with Sodexo and CarePacks to set up meal distribution sites. CarePacks has also indicated they will utilize volunteers to deliver meals.
- Ensuring that students in grades 6-12 take home laptops and chargers.
- Assembling materials to be sent home with elementary students.
- Forming strategies to provide work opportunities for staff who do not receive compensation when schools are closed.

"The decisions made concerning the handling of COVID-19 within TCPS will be consistent with our values – placing health and safety above all – and will represent our best judgement as we adapt to this rapidly changing situation," said Dr. Kelly L. Griffith, Superintendent. "I appreciate everyone's understanding and patience as we navigate this uncharted territory."

Talbot County Senior Center

- Talbot County Senior Centers are currently closed and will remain closed for all senior activities, as well as evening and weekend activities until further notice.
- Meals on Wheels participants will continue to receive their scheduled delivery for the foreseeable future.
- Those who are regular participants at daily lunch are also eligible to receive up to six meals per week until the Centers are reopened.
- The Senior Center has limited capabilities to provide meals to anyone 60 years of age or older who does not fall into either of these categories. To determine your eligibility please contact Childlene R. Brooks, Manager of Brookletts Place at 410-822-2869, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m.
- We will continue to monitor our Meals on Wheels clients and daily participants to determine their needs and health status.
- If needed, our staff will provide home visits to any eligible senior who is not exhibiting any symptoms of the coronavirus.
- Call the Talbot County Senior Center at (410) 822-2869 for more information.
- "Our Public health officials tell us that senior citizens are more vulnerable to coronavirus, so we are taking this step to reduce their chances of infection and to keep them safe," stated Gary Gunther, Executive Director, Upper Shore Aging Inc.

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Talbot County Department of Social Services

- Currently providing services as usual.
- Clients are encouraged to consider using the DHS online portal when possible. To access the myDHR website, go to <https://mydhrbenefits.dhr.state.md.us/>.
- "In keeping with the Governor's encouragement of social distancing to minimize the spread of COVID-19, we encourage customers to consider using the DHS online portal (MyDHR) when possible to apply for benefits and consider whether their questions can be answered by phone," says Director Linda Webb.

YMCA of the Chesapeake

- All locations currently remain open.
- Seniors and those with compromised immune systems should take active measures to protect their health.

Where to Find More Information

- **CDC COVID-2019 Website:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- **Talbot County COVID-19 Information** www.talbotdes.org/covid19.asp
- **Maryland Department of Health Website:** <https://health.maryland.gov/pages/home.aspx>
- **Talbot County Health Department Website:** <https://health.maryland.gov/talbotcounty/Pages/home.aspx>
- **Talbot County Health Department Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/TalbotHealthMaryland/>
- **Talbot County Department of Emergency Services Website:** <http://www.talbotdes.org/default.asp>
- **Talbot County Department of Emergency Services Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/talbotdes>