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STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
**GOVERNOR NED LAMONT**

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## **Governor Lamont Provides Update on Connecticut's Coronavirus Response Efforts**

Posted on March 17, 2020

### **Key Points:**

- Since yesterday, an additional 27 Connecticut residents tested positive, bringing the total positive cases reported in the state to 68.
- Governor Lamont today signed another executive order taking actions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, this one:
  - Makes modifications to the governor's previously enacted waiver of the 180-day school year to grant broader flexibility to school districts.
  - Allows police departments to limit or eliminate fingerprinting for background checks.
  - Extends expiration dates for permits, licenses, and other credentials administered by the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection.
  - Suspends the requirement that public assistance benefit overpayments be immediately recouped.
  - Suspend in-person hearing attendance requirements for certain hearings conducted by the Department of Social Services.
- Department of Economic and Community Development is launching the COVID-19 Business Emergency Response Unit to aid businesses in economic recovery.
- Department of Banking issued guidance to state-chartered banks and credit unions.
- Connecticut Hospital Association is working with the Department of Public Health to ensure adequate hospital space to meet the needs of patients.
- As blood drives have been canceled nationwide to mitigate the spread of the virus, the Red Cross of Connecticut is seeking donors to call ahead and make appointments that will allow for social distancing.

- The Office of Early Childhood is actively working to ensure childcare remains available for healthcare staff and first responders.
- The Department of Motor Vehicles is suspending in-person visits at all of their branches. Certain deadlines are being extended, and customers are also encouraged to conduct transactions online.
- The Department of Revenue Services is suspending in-person visits at all of their offices.
- The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection is suspending enforcement activities at bottle collection facilities, giving stores discretion to shut them down. They are also suspending in-person visits at their main office.
- Attorney General Tong has received 71 complaints about price gouging on basic supplies.
- The Department of Social Services has suspended in-person visits at all of their facilities.

(HARTFORD, CT) – As the State of Connecticut continues taking actions in response to the global spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), Governor Ned Lamont provided the following updates as of 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 17, 2020:

#### **Data updates on testing in Connecticut**

Since yesterday's update, an additional 27 Connecticut residents have tested positive, bringing the total number of positive cases reported in Connecticut (including presumptive positive) – from both the State Laboratory and private laboratories – to 68. The new cases since yesterday include 19 more in Fairfield County, 3 more in Hartford County, 1 more in Litchfield County, and 4 more in New Haven County.

A county-by-county breakdown of the total positive cases statewide includes:

- Fairfield County: **48**
- Hartford County: **7**
- Litchfield County: **5**
- New Haven County: **8**

#### **Governor Lamont signs sixth executive order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19**

On Tuesday afternoon, Governor Lamont signed another executive order – the sixth since he enacted the [civic preparedness and public health emergency declarations](#) – that builds upon his efforts to encourage mitigation strategies that slow down transmission of the virus.

Governor Lamont's [Executive Order No. 7E](#) enacts the following provisions:

- **Modifies previously enacted waiver of 180-day school year:** As a result of evolving circumstances, this order modifies [Executive Order No. 7](#) to account for the potential impact on schools that may be subject to longer-term cancellation of in-school classes and permits schools, upon reopening in the spring of 2020, to close school on their normally scheduled end-dates, so long as local and regional boards of education provide opportunities for continuity of education to all students to the greatest extent possible consistent with federal and state guidance.

- **Suspension of required fingerprinting availability:** The order suspends a state law that requires employees of a municipal police department or the State Police to collect the fingerprints of a person requesting such fingerprinting for a criminal history records check, and permits police department fingerprinting hours to be limited or eliminated to limit the transmission of COVID-19. Barracks will remain open to the general public for other business.
- **Extension of time period for permits:** The order modifies state statutes covering expiration dates for permits, licenses, and other credentials administered by the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection and authorizes the agency's commissioner to extend those dates as he deems necessary in his sole discretion to protect public safety.
- **Suspension of the requirement that public assistance benefit overpayments be immediately recouped:** The order authorizes the Commissioner of Social Services, to the extent permitted by federal law, to temporarily suspend recoupment of non-fraudulent overpayments for public assistance programs for the duration of the pandemic emergency.
- **Suspension of in-person hearing attendance at Department of Social Services fair hearings:** The order modifies state statutes to authorize the Commissioner of Social Services to suspend any requirement that an aggrieved person authorized by law to request a fair hearing of a decision of the commissioner appear in person at such hearing.

In addition, Governor Lamont clarified that the executive order he issued [yesterday](#) prohibiting gatherings of 50 people or more does not apply to food banks, mobile food distributors, and farmers' markets. These activities are considered essential services and not subject to the restrictions in the order.

**\*\*Download: [Governor Lamont's Executive Order No. 7E](#)**

#### **Department of Economic and Community Development launches COVID-19 business response unit**

The Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) is launching the COVID-19 Business Emergency Response Unit, which will be dedicated to helping businesses in Connecticut navigate the resources available to them during this crisis. Small businesses seeking guidance can reach this unit by calling 860-500-2333.

In addition, DECD and Advance CT, a nonprofit organization that works to advance economic competitiveness in Connecticut, today began distributing a comprehensive survey to businesses to get information on what types of resources they need throughout the duration of this pandemic. This will help the state gather important information on the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses interested in participating in this survey can access it [here](#).

Yesterday, Governor Lamont [announced](#) that the U.S. Small Business Administration approved his request to provide disaster relief to Connecticut's small businesses and nonprofits that are negatively impacted by the pandemic.

#### **Department of Banking issues guidance to state-chartered banks and credit unions**

Facing uncertain financial markets during a quickly-sliding economy, today Banking Commissioner Jorge Perez [issued guidance](#) to Connecticut state-chartered financial institutions on ways to provide relief to assist Connecticut consumers and small businesses in response to COVID-19.

The guidance urges Connecticut state-chartered banks and credit unions to work with borrowers consistent with safe and sound banking practices. These efforts can include easing credit terms for new loans, waiving overdraft fees, waiving late fees for loan balances, increasing the number of allowed money market withdrawals, waiving CD early withdrawal penalties, and offering payment accommodations such as allowing borrowers to defer some payments or extending the payment due dates. The department also asks institutions to communicate with their partner companies, like servicers and collection agencies, so consumers and small businesses know all possible accommodations.

### **Preparing for space needs of hospitals**

The Connecticut Hospital Association is working with the Connecticut Department of Public Health and others to prepare for space needs in hospitals. They're exploring the best ways to restructure space in their facilities in order to accommodate patients safely, as some patients require things like negative pressure rooms. These efforts are in order to ensure that people receive treatment and the spread of COVID-19 is mitigated.

### **As blood drives have been canceled, Red Cross of Connecticut asks donors to schedule appointments**

To mitigate the spread of the virus and reduce gatherings of large groups of people, the American Red Cross has canceled nearly 2,700 blood drives throughout the country. More than 80 percent of the blood the Red Cross collects come from donation drives, and these cancellations have resulted in some 86,000 fewer blood donations.

The Red Cross of Connecticut is asking people in the state to consider donating blood by calling ahead to one of their offices and scheduling an appointment that will allow them to encourage safe social distancing while still ensuring blood donations are being received.

Individuals interested in donating blood can schedule an appointment by visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org), using the [Red Cross Blood Donor App](#), calling 1-800-RED-CROSS, or enabling the Blood Donor Skill on any Alexa Echo device.

### **Office of Early Childhood working to ensure childcare for healthcare staff and first responders**

Our communities rely on child care providers to support families, particularly those who play a critical role during this public health emergency. The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) is working to make child care available for healthcare staff and first responders in particular. On Monday, OEC posted 37 waivers for child care facilities in order to ensure child care is flexible. The agency is actively working with several hospitals to provide stand-up child care for their workers and hopes to expand this effort.

Families are encouraged to look to trusted friends, neighbors and family members, who are not in a high-risk category - for child care. Anyone in need of child care is encouraged to dial 2-1-1 and they will be directed to resources in their area.

OEC is sending out guidelines today to child care programs and families throughout the state to help ensure everyone remains safe during this period.

### **Department of Motor Vehicles suspends in-person visits**

The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) is closing all branch offices to the public for the transaction of business effective at the close of business on Tuesday, March 17. Employees will continue to report to their work locations, unless otherwise instructed, and will assist with transactions that are completed online, through the mail, and by interactive voice recognition.

Customers seeking further information should visit [www.ctdmv.info](http://www.ctdmv.info) for daily status updates.

#### **Department of Revenue Services suspends in-person visits**

The Department of Revenue Services (DRS) is suspending in-person visits from the general public to their offices effective at the close of business on Tuesday, March 17. The agency will continue to provide online service to customers. Information about tax filings and the Taxpayer Service Center can be found on the DRS website at [ct.gov/drs](http://ct.gov/drs). Services are also available via telephone by calling 860-297-5962.

#### **Department of Energy and Environmental Protection suspends enforcement of bottle collections, suspends public visits to offices**

To help mitigate the spread of the virus, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is suspending its enforcement activities at bottle collection facilities, however it is not requiring that these facilities shut down. This will enable stores the discretion to have more of their staff focused on stocking shelves with needed food and supplies.

DEEP is also suspending in-person visits by members of the public at their main office in Hartford effective immediately.

#### **Attorney General Tong provides update on price gouging complaints**

Attorney General William Tong today **announced** that the Office of the Attorney General has received 71 complaints regarding large price hikes on basic supplies like hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes and toilet paper since Governor Lamont declared civil preparedness and public health emergencies on March 10.

The office has received reports of 7.5 oz hand sanitizer bottles retailing for more than \$25 and 2 oz bottles of hand sanitizer selling for \$10 at local gas stations and stores. Consumers have also reported price hikes on basic necessities like toilet paper and disinfectant wipes. In some cases, consumers have reported 30-packs of toilet paper retailing for \$39.99 and three-packs of disinfectant wipes selling for nearly \$40.

Anyone who suspects price gouging should file a complaint with the Office of the Attorney General online at [www.dir.ct.gov/ag/complaint](http://www.dir.ct.gov/ag/complaint). If consumers are unable to file a complaint online or via email, they can call the Office of the Attorney General at 860-808-5318.

#### **Department of Social Services suspends in-person visits at all facilities**

Department of Social Services (DSS) field offices are now closed to the public as a protective measure for the safety of customers and staff. DSS staff are working and the agency is continuing to provide services.

DSS customers can access benefit and application information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at [www.connect.ct.gov](http://www.connect.ct.gov) and [www.ct.gov/dss/apply](http://www.ct.gov/dss/apply). Customers can also call 1-855-6-CONNECT (1-

855-626-6632). Full information on ways to contact DSS online, by phone, by mail, and at office dropboxes is at [www.ct.gov/dss/fieldoffices](http://www.ct.gov/dss/fieldoffices).

### **Providing information to Connecticut residents**

For the most up-to-date information from the State of Connecticut on COVID-19, including guidance and other resources, all residents in the state are encouraged to visit [ct.gov/coronavirus](http://ct.gov/coronavirus).

Individuals who have general questions that are not answered on the website can also call 2-1-1 for assistance. The information line is available 24 hours a day and has multilingual assistance and TDD/TTY access for those with a hearing impairment. The hotline only intended to be used by individuals who are not experiencing symptoms but may have general questions related to COVID-19. Anyone experiencing symptoms is strongly urged to contact their medical provider to seek treatment.

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