



April 17, 2020

SPECIAL EDITION - 6



New guidance was announced by both President Donald Trump and Governor Greg Abbott this week in an effort to balance the need for public safety and moving our economy forward. Governor Abbott provided an outline to begin the process of strategically lifting the state executive orders to reopen the state economy.

Thank you for all you are doing to help stop the spread of COVID-19 in Texas. Our efforts and sacrifices have started curbing the spread of the disease. We are all in this together, and together we will emerge stronger than ever. Stay safe and stay well.



COVID-19 STATS

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is [tracking COVID-19 cases](#) and updates its site with the latest information each day by noon (CST). As of today,

- Texas has 17,371 confirmed cases of COVID-19;

- There are 505 confirmed cases of COVID-19 involving Collin County residents; and
- There are 2,066 confirmed cases of COVID-19 involving Dallas County residents.

FEDERAL UPDATES

Opening Up America Again was unveiled by President Donald Trump providing guidelines to state and local officials for reopening their economies and helping people get back to work while protecting American lives. The President offers a three-step approach for opening our local communities, states, and country slowly and safely.

In his plan, the President stressed the importance of adhering to the guidelines to continue social distancing, avoiding groups of more than 10 people, and limit non-essential travel. States may manage these guidelines based on the caseload data within their states and communities.

STATE OF TEXAS UPDATES

GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Governor Abbott issued three **Executive Orders** today including:

- Closing school buildings for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year for in-person education. This will mean students, teachers, and families will continue remote learning for K-12 school. Texas colleges and universities will also keep their facilities closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year.

- **Loosening restrictions on medical procedures** not related to the COVID-19 crisis starting April 22, 2020. Doctors will be able to schedule some additional medical procedures for patients provided that the hospital they work from has sufficient capacity, and the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) is not impacted for treating COVID-19 patients. I signed a letter with my Senate colleagues to the Governor this week requesting more flexibility in his previous executive order so that patients can access the health care they need.
- Implementing **Retail-To-Go** to reopen select businesses starting Friday, April 24, 2020 with more announcements to follow in the near future.
- Establishing a **Strike Force to Reopen Texas** comprised of a team of nationally recognized business and community leaders as well as medical experts who will “advise the Governor on safely and strategically reopening the State of Texas.”

Governor Abbott also directed Texas state parks to re-open April 20 for visitors wearing face masks, remaining at least 6 feet apart from people not in their party, and limiting gatherings to five or fewer individuals.

The key to lifting future executive orders will be the caseload data on the number of COVID-19 patients within the state and individual communities. Social distancing, limiting non-essential travel, and limiting gatherings will still be encouraged to control the spread of COVID-19 once businesses begin to re-open. The grocery stores, pharmacies, and retail stores that I have seen currently employ measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 by reducing their hours of operation, thoroughly cleaning the stores throughout the day, and placing markers in the store to ensure physical separation.

EXTENDED UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

My office is receiving emails frequently from individuals seeking to connect with the [Texas Workforce Commission](#) (TWC) for unemployment benefits. The volume of unemployment claims over the last month is exceptionally high, and the Commission is increasing its efforts to process all of the claims. If you need assistance, please contact my office, and we will work to get you connected to the right individuals at the TWC who handle the processing of the applications and eligibility determination.

TWC provided the following graphic to help those whose employment was affected by the COVID-19 crisis determine eligibility for extended unemployment benefits. For those who applied for unemployment benefits but lacked the necessary wages to qualify, no action is needed. TWC will determine eligibility under the new stimulus bill and notify applicants by mail or electronic correspondence of eligibility. TWC is currently upgrading and expanding their online system to adapt to the new federal legislation and system volume. My staff is assisting the TWC with collecting information for unemployment applications and determining the nature of requests from my constituents to help connect them with the appropriate TWC employees.

Extended Unemployment Benefits in Texas

Chart of Weeks of Benefits in Texas

If you are eligible for a benefit extension after you exhaust your unemployment benefits, TWC will mail, and email if we have the claimant's email address, information to you about the additional benefits you may receive. Make sure TWC has your current address and email address. Find a summary about the benefit extensions below.

Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC)

100% federally funded

<p>REG Up to 26 Weeks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eligibility rules (past wages, qualifying separation) still apply Waiting Week waived Work search waived <p>Apply for Benefits at ui.texasworkforce.org</p>	<p>PEUC Up to 13 Weeks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies to claims dated on or after July 8, 2018 Exhausted all entitlement to Regular UI benefits Not eligible in another state Must exhaust benefits by December 20, 2020 Last payable week December 26, 2020 	<p>PUA Up to 39 Weeks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals not monetarily eligible for regular benefits may qualify Benefits may be reduced by number of weeks on REG or EB Last payable week is December 26, 2020 	<p>FPUC \$600 per Week</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to benefit payment all receiving a payment First payable week, BWE April 4, 2020 Last payable week July 25, 2020
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