4/24/2020

The State of Florida Issues COVID-19 Updates 04/24/20

The State of Florida is responding to COVID-19. In an effort to keep Florida residents and visitors safe and aware regarding the status of the virus, the Florida Department of Health will issue this update every day, seven days per week.

Governor Ron DeSantis is in constant communication with Florida Division of Emergency Management Director Jared Moskowitz and State Surgeon General Dr. Scott Rivkees as the State of Florida continues to monitor and respond to the threat of COVID-19.

Today, Governor DeSantis held a press conference where he announced that Aerion Supersonic, an aerospace company focused on high-speed flight, has selected Melbourne, Florida as the location for their new global headquarters.

- Aerion will invest over $300 million into the new campus at the Melbourne Airport where the company will design and build the new AS2 supersonic business jet which is the world's first practical, efficient, and environmentally responsible supersonic business jet that can fly at speeds up to Mach 1.4, or 1,000 mph.
- The new headquarters will also be home to over 650 new high-paying jobs.

In an effort to increase testing, Governor DeSantis has directed Surgeon General Dr. Scott Rivkees on an emergency temporary basis to allow licensed pharmacists in Florida to order and administer COVID-19 tests.

Governor DeSantis also thanked the members of the Re-Open Florida Task Force who held 20 hours of calls this week to discuss how Florida can begin to emerge from the impacts of COVID-19.

Recent actions the state has taken to respond to COVID-19:

- This week, the Division is making another major push of PPE, targeted to long-term care facilities and rural communities. This includes:
    - 6 million masks,
    - 2.9 million gloves
    - 500,000 face shields
    - 200,000 shoe covers
    - 60,000 containers of hand sanitizer.
- With that push, the Division will have distributed:
    - More than 14.5 million masks
    - More than 9 million gloves
    - More than 1.2 million face shields
    - More than 1 million shoe covers

    - 330 thousand gowns
    - More than 200 thousand containers of hand sanitizer
    - 49 thousand goggles
    - 38 thousand coveralls
    - 18 thousand Tyvex suits
- As of April 24, approximately 2,895 Florida National Guardsmen (FLNG) are currently deployed to support Florida's response to COVID-19.
- FLNG's has expanded its support to mobile testing teams and the community-based and walk-up test sites. To date, the FLNG has assisted in the testing of more than 76,880 individuals for the COVID-19 virus.
- FDOT is leading the coordination of DOH and the Florida Highway Patrol to implement Executive Order 20-86. To date, more than 9,600 traveler forms have been collected at the I-10 and I-95 checkpoints.
- FDOT continues to coordinate with public use airports, DOH and law enforcement to implement Executive Order 20-80. To date, more than 17,100 traveler forms have been collected at public use airports across the state.
- DOEA and the Area Agency on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas County discussed Florida's restaurant initiative on a call hosted by the Administration for Community Living (ACL) for State Units on Aging across the nation.
- DOEA disseminated National Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day information to all Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) as part of its response to the mental health needs of older adults.

Additional actions the state has taken to respond to COVID-19:

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

- The Florida Department of Health (DOH) worked with local communities to establish additional walk-up testing sites in Palm Beach, Hillsborough, Miami-Dade, Duval, Orange and Leon counties.
- At the direction of Governor DeSantis, State Surgeon General Dr. Scott Rivkees declared a Public Health Emergency for COVID-19 in Florida.
- Governor DeSantis announced that the state ordered an additional 2,500 test kits to supplement the adequate resources already available to test for COVID-19. These additional test kits will enable the Department of Health, working with Florida health care providers, to test up to an additional 625,000 individuals. The Governor also suspended non-essential in state and all out-of-state travel for state employees for 30 days.
- Established a public call center for questions regarding COVID-19. The call center launched Monday, March 2, and is open 24/7.
- Established mechanisms for monitoring and coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding epidemiological activities.
- Distributed CDC Interim Guidance for public health personnel evaluating Persons Under Investigation (PUI) and asymptomatic close contacts of confirmed cases at their home or non-home residential settings to CHDs.
- Approved and disseminated an updated Clinician Screening Tool for identifying COVID-19 PUIs.
- Implemented testing at all three State Public Health Laboratories.

- Distributed updated laboratory guidance regarding implementation of testing at State Public Health Laboratories.
- Implemented private lab testing.
- Developed and disseminated pandemic planning guidance.
- Advised CHDs and HCCs to retain expired personal protective equipment until further notice.
- Florida Department of Health is coordinating on mobile field hospital planning.
- DOH strike teams have completed assessments for 3,874 long term care facilities to determine immediate unmet needs and promote appropriate infection control practices.
- DOH strike teams have responded to long term care facilities with COVID-19 positive patients.
- DOH continues to work toward increasing capabilities at drive through, walk up and mobile COVID-19 testing sites.

FLORIDA DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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- With that push, the Division will have distributed:
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- Find more information on DEM's response to COVID-19 here.

FLORIDA AGENCY FOR HEALTH CARE ADMINISTRATION

- On April 14, AHCA issued Emergency Order AHCA 20-002 to temporarily suspend nursing home and Intermediate Care

Facility assessment payments for March 2020 to help alleviate financial burdens. This EO suspension aims to alleviate financial burdens incurred at these facilities due to COVID-19.

- The Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) has created new temporary Personal Care Attendant program to help long-term care facilities fill staffing shortages. The program provides an 8-hour training on assisting with direct care so that personal care attendants can temporarily perform additional duties.
- AHCA has been working with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to ensure current Medicaid recipients maintain benefits during the state of emergency. Medicaid application deadlines have also been extended.
- AHCA has made on-site visits to more than 900 long-term care and residential facilities since the onset of the COVID-19 emergency. Additionally, AHCA has made over 5,000 telephone calls to residential providers statewide to assess infection control and prevention strategies, ensure county health department and local emergency operations center contact information are up to date, and assess supplies (specifically PPE).
- Find more information on AHCA's response to COVID-19 here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

- The Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) has updated its dedicated compliance complaint form to include an option for reporting vacation rental compliance concerns. The Department's Division of Hotels and Restaurants continues to monitor, review, and assign complaints received through this form for follow-up by division inspectors.
- Find more information on DBPR's response to COVID-19 here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- Per the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) request, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) approved Florida's waiver to permit the state to launch a pilot project that will allow families to purchase groceries online with their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. DCF will continue to work closely with the USDA and participating retailers to implement this project by April 21, 2020.
- Under Governor DeSantis' direction, DCF has temporarily increased SNAP recipients' benefit amount to the maximum monthly allotment based on household size.
- DCF worked with DOH to develop precautionary protocols for child welfare professionals and adult protective investigators who may have to make in-person visits to ensure the safety of those vulnerable populations.
- Find more information on DCF's response to COVID-19 here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

- The Florida Department of Corrections (FDC) is closely aligned with the CDC Interim Guidance on Management of COVID-19 in Correctional and Detention Facilities.
- New inmate commitments from county jails undergo additional screening and 14-day quarantine before placement within the general population.
- FDC has suspended visitation and volunteer programs at all correctional institutions statewide.
- FDC correctional officers are authorized to wear approved face coverings or masks while working.
- Find more information on FDC's response to COVID-19 here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

- Beginning April 20, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) will provide daily updates on the efforts made to address the challenges to Florida's Reemployment Assistance program in response to COVID-19. This includes a new State Reemployment Assistance Claims Dashboard that will be updated daily to reflect the total number of Reemployment Assistance Claims submitted, verified, processed, and paid.
- Governor DeSantis issued Executive Order 20-104 waiving the requirement for Floridians to claim their weeks for Reemployment Assistance.
- The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) announced more than 1,000 small businesses have been awarded more than $49 million from the Florida Small Emergency Bridge Loan.
- Governor DeSantis has waived the work search and work registration requirements for individuals requesting Reemployment Assistance benefits, as well as the waiting week for receiving benefits. For more information, see the Reemployment Assistance Frequently Asked Questions.
- The Business Damage Assessment survey is activated and continues to accept surveys to assess the impact of COVID-19 on Florida's local business operations and determine the appropriate actions for recovery.
- Find more information on DEO's response to COVID-19 here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- The Department of Education's Office of Early Learning, in coordination with local early learning coalitions, has prioritized and increased access to childcare services for first responders and health care professionals by creating an expedited referral process to swiftly provide priority access.
- Florida College System institutions and private institutions across the state have donated more than 130 ventilators typically used in medical training programs to local hospitals, community medical centers and other facilities.
- Since April 1, 2020, when the Department of Education announced the waiver of certification exam fees, more than 31,000 educators have signed up to take the Florida Teacher Certification Examination using the waiver. This translates into over 62,000 actual exam registrations for a savings value of more than $8 million for Florida educators.
- Governor DeSantis and Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran have recommended extending distance learning for all Florida K-12 public and private schools through the end of the 2019-20 academic year. The Department of Education has compiled dozens of free distance learning resources on its emergency response page here.
- Governor Ron DeSantis and Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran announced that 32,614 laptop computers are being distributed to 34 mostly small, rural school districts throughout Florida and the Florida A&M University Developmental Research School.
- The Florida Department of Education (DOE) has delayed the deadline for teacher certification requirements and offered a fee waiver for testing. More than 22,000 teachers have taken advantage of the fee waiver so far.
- The Florida Virtual School has created the Online Learning Community with engaging and informative content for teachers and parents of K-12 students.
- Governor Ron DeSantis and Commissioner of Education Richard Corcoran recommended that all Florida public and private K-12 schools continue distance learning and keep school campuses closed through June 3, the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year.
- Find more information on The Department of Education's response to COVID-19 here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ELDER AFFAIRS

- Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA) and the Area Agency on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas County discussed Florida's restaurant initiative on a call hosted by the Administration for Community Living (ACL) for State Units on Aging across the nation.
- DOEA disseminated National Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day information to all Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) as part of its response to the mental health needs of older adults.
- DOEA has created a dedicated webpage for COVID-19 resources, including tips for caregivers, closure information for senior centers and adult day care centers, and alternative services for congregate meal sites.
- Pursuant to Executive Order 20-52 issued by Governor DeSantis, the Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA) issued Emergency Order 20-01 on March 31 pertaining to in-person guardian visitation requirements where COVID-19 response and mitigation measures prevent such visits.
- DOEA issued guidance for Emergency Order 20-01 on March 31 for Public and Professional Guardians to remain in compliance with Florida Statute 744.361(14).
- DOEA continues to provide technical assistance to Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) regarding meals, billing, data entry, shopping assistance, telephone reassurance, health and wellness programs, and the elder helpline.
- Find more information on DOEA's COVID-19 response here.

ENTERPRISE FLORIDA

- Enterprise Florida, Inc. (EFI) recently announced the suspension of initial fees for its Microfinance Loan Guarantee Program to support Florida's small business community impacted by COVID-19. Interested businesses must apply through a local lender. For further information please contact your lender or visit Enterprise Florida's website.
- See resources compiled by EFI for businesses impacted by COVID-19 here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

- Effective March 23, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has closed all Florida State Parks to the public. Park field staff are on site to maintain grounds.
- Effective March 24, public access to lands within DEP's Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas is closed. This includes state-owned uplands, such as beaches, islands, sand bars and emergent shoals within aquatic preserves. Vessel landings are strictly prohibited.
- On April 1, DEP issued an Emergency Final Order (EFO) granting a 30-day extension to the deadline for its regulated facilities to submit routine paperwork and reports.
- Find more information on DEP's response to COVID-19 here.

FLORIDA OFFICE OF FINANCIAL REGULATION

- The Office of Financial Regulation (OFR) has issued Emergency Order 2020-03 temporarily expanding the motor vehicle retail installment initial payment rule.
- OFR has provided guidance for consumer finance businesses and professionals.

- OFR has provided guidance and an operational update for Florida's securities businesses and professionals.
- OFR has provided informational guidance and an update to Florida's financial institutions.
- OFR has created helpful resource lists for businesses and individuals to contact their financial services providers:
    - Florida Financial Institution Resource List
    - Top 40 Mortgage Servicers Resource List
    - Additional Financial Information and Resources List
- OFR has issued Emergency Order 2020-02 extending certain filing deadlines for Florida's financial services providers.
- OFR has issued Emergency Order 2020-01 extending certain renewal deadlines for money services businesses.
- Find more information on OFR's COVID-19 response and available resources here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAY SAFETY AND MOTOR VEHICLES

- At the direction of Governor DeSantis, the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (FLHSMV) has issued an Emergency Order extending all Florida driver licenses, commercial driver licenses and identification cards that expire March 16 through April 30, 2020.
- The Florida Highway Patrol is assisting with the implementation and enforcement of Executive Order 20-86 at the direction of Governor DeSantis.
- Pursuant to Executive Order 20-52 issued by Governor DeSantis, FLHSMV Executive Director Rhodes has waived commercial truck hours of service regulations and other related regulations so that emergency supplies, equipment, commodities and resources can be moved more quickly and efficiently throughout the state.
- Find more information on FLHSMV's COVID-19 response here.

FLORIDA OFFICE OF INSURANCE REGULATION

- The Office of Insurance Regulation (OIR) has issued Informational Memorandum OIR-20-06M providing guidance on the use of technology to help combat the spread of COVID-19, including encouraging insurers to broaden access to care for telehealth services, and requesting Pharmacy Benefit Managers to transition to an electronic audit process in order to avoid unnecessary risk and maintain social distancing.
- OIR has issued Informational Memorandum OIR-20-05M reminding insurers of applicable statutes regarding workers' compensation insurance. Workers' compensation insurers are expected to comply with all of the provisions of Florida's Workers' Compensation Law.
- OIR has issued Informational Memorandum OIR-20-03M directing all insurers and other entities regulated by OIR to review and update their business continuity and/or continuity of operations plans. Companies are directed to immediately contact OIR if their continuity plans are activated and/or if business operations become compromised so it can work with insurers to avoid any disruption in consumer services.
- OIR has issued Informational Memorandum OIR-20-04M providing general guidance on the treatment of policyholders as part of the state's ongoing efforts to protect Floridians.
- OIR has issued Informational Memorandum OIR-20-02M as a reminder to all health insurers, health maintenance organizations, and other health entities to allow for early prescription refills.

- Find more information on OIR's COVID-19 response here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

- The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) has suspended visitation at all state-operated juvenile detention centers and juvenile residential commitment programs until April 30, 2020.
- DJJ has also instituted additional screening measures for essential personnel and vendors within juvenile facilities.
- Find more information on DJJ's COVID-19 response here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

- FDLE continues to monitor protests held across the nation in relation to COVID-19 stay-at-home orders for threats or violence.
- FDLE continues to work with the Florida Police Chiefs Association and the Florida Sheriffs Association to monitor law enforcement staffing impacts and staffing needs due to COVID-19.
- FDLE continues to work with all Florida law enforcement entities on obtaining PPE needs.
- FDLE and FHP continue to facilitate the escort of testing collection kits statewide.
- FDLE continues to work with the Florida Sheriffs Association and Florida Police Chiefs Association to provide support to FHP at I-10 and I-95 checkpoints.
- FDLE continues to work with ESF-16 partners on airport screening missions.
- Find more information on FDLE's COVID-19 response here.

FLORIDA LOTTERY

- Effective March 23, Florida Lottery Headquarters and district offices are closed to the public until further notice.
- Find more information on the Florida Lottery's COVID-19 response here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT SERVICES

- The Department of Management Services (DMS) launched a dedicated telework page to provide resources and tutorials for employees and employers operating in a remote work environment.
- At the Governor's direction, DMS Secretary Jonathan Satter issued an emergency order to ensure federal benefits granted through The Families First Coronavirus Response Act are available to employees.
- As directed in Executive Order 20-52, DMS has amended the state employee health plan benefits plan documents to expand covered telehealth benefits at no additional employee cost.
- Also directed in Executive Order 20-52, DMS has amended the state employee health plan benefits plan documents to cover immunizations at participating in-network retail pharmacies at no cost to the member during this public health emergency.
- Find more information on DMS' COVID-19 response here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS

- As of April 24, approximately 2,895 Florida National Guardsmen (FLNG) are currently deployed to support Florida's response to COVID-19.
- FLNG's has expanded its support to mobile testing teams and the community-based and walk-up test sites. To date, the FLNG has assisted in the testing of more than 76,880 individuals for the COVID-19 virus.
- FLNG continues to support the state's COVID-19 response through augmentation to airport screening measures, statewide logistics support, coordination, planning and operational mission sets.
- Find more information on DMA's response to COVID-19 here.

AGENCY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

- The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) are distributing washable face masks donated by The Family Care Council to providers and customers living in APD group homes.
- APD issued Emergency Order 20-03, which temporarily suspends face to face visits to administer the Questionnaire for Situational Information to determine the level of need of APD customers.
- Find more information on APD's response to COVID-19 here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

- The Department of Revenue has created a dedicated webpage for child support customers who have questions about the child support offset for Economic Impact Payments under the CARES Act. Under federal law, these payments are subject to federal offset for persons who owe past-due support.
- The Department of Revenue (DOR) has a dedicated COVID-19 webpage for tax-related questions and information.
- The Department also has a dedicated COVID-19 webpage for child support customers and alternative options for handling many child support case activities without visiting an office.
- Find more information on DOR's response to COVID-19 here.

CAREERSOURCE FLORIDA

- Paper reemployment assistance applications are available at career centers statewide. Florida's local workforce development boards are working with community partners, libraries, local legislators and other organizations for additional application distribution.
- CareerSource Florida has launched an integrated public and business outreach campaign, *Help is Here*, a comprehensive resource for employment and business services for impacted Floridians.
- For a list of the 24 local workforce development boards within the CareerSource Florida network and their contact information, please click here.
- Find more information on CareerSource Florida's response to COVID-19 here.

STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA

- The State University System (SUS) has directed all state universities to continue remote instruction through the end of

the spring semester.

- The SUS has directed that traditional on-campus commencement ceremonies will not be held in May. Instead, each university is directed to develop an alternate schedule or method of delivery.
- Find more information on SUS' response to COVID-19 here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

- Governor Ron DeSantis issued Executive Order 20-97, delaying elections in Pasco County at the request of Pasco County Supervisor of Elections Brian Corley.
- On April 6, Secretary of State Laurel M. Lee announced the issuance of an emergency order and emergency rules to extend annual report filing deadlines for business entities, as well as outline changes to the candidate petition and candidate qualifying processes.
- Find more information on the Florida Department of State's Response to COVID-19 here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

- Governor Ron DeSantis announced that the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is expediting several infrastructure projects throughout the state due to the reduction in traffic from COVID-19. Find more information about FDOT's accelerated projects here.
- FDOT is leading the coordination of DOH and the Florida Highway Patrol to implement Executive Order 20-86. To date, more than 9,600 traveler forms have been collected at the I-10 and I-95 checkpoints.
- FDOT continues to coordinate with seaports across the state to monitor port activity.
- FDOT continues to coordinate with public use airports, DOH and law enforcement to implement Executive Order 20-80. To date, more than 17,100 traveler forms have been collected at public use airports across the state.
- Find more information on FDOT's response to COVID-19 here.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

- The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) has restricted visitor access to its state veterans' homes until further notice, with the exception of essential visitors. In addition, admissions in our network of state veterans' homes are temporarily suspended.
- Veterans who are concerned they may have symptoms of COVID-19, flu or cold should call the VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center toll free at (877) 741-3400 before coming to a VA facility. Clinicians are available to provide 24/7 virtual care and support, including nurse advice and triage.
- To contact a teleworking FDVA Veterans' Claims Examiner, call (727) 319-7440 or email VSO@fdva.state.fl.us.
- Find more information on FDVA's response to COVID-19 here.

FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

- The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) continues to be in close communication with the Governor's Office, the Florida Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) regarding the most recent COVID-19 status and guidance.

- Find more information on FWC's response to COVID-19 here.

FLORIDA HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION

- As the Florida Housing Finance Corporation (Florida Housing) continues to be committed to the health and well-being of all Floridians, we have compiled a list of resources with relevant information for homeowners, residents, developers, apartment owners, management companies, participating lenders, Realtors and SHIP administrators regarding COVID-19.
- Find more information on Florida Housing's response to COVID-19 here.

VISIT FLORIDA

- VISIT FLORIDA's four welcome centers are closed until further notice. VISIT FLORIDA welcome center staff members have been trained to provide customer service support for the Department of Economic Opportunity and are assisting with the influx of inquiries and calls from impacted businesses and workers throughout the state.
- Find more information on VISIT FLORIDA's response to COVID-19 here.

VOLUNTEER FLORIDA

- As the lead agency for volunteerism and service, Volunteer Florida is working to support voluntary organizations across the state and nation by sharing resources, surveying needs and requesting that continuity of operations plans be created to avoid any service delivery disruption.
- Find more information on Volunteer Florida's response to COVID-19 here.

Updated: Friday, April 24, 2020