

Governor Bullock Directs the Closure of Public K-12 Schools for Two Weeks; Strongly Recommends Social Distancing Measures to Slow the Spread of COVID-19

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Governor Steve Bullock today announced a set of directives and guidance to slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect vulnerable Montanans, including closing of public K-12 schools, social distancing measures, and limiting visitation at nursing home facilities.

“As governor, it is my top priority to protect the health and safety of Montanans, particularly our most vulnerable, at a time when we face the potential for extraordinary health risks from coronavirus in our state,” said Governor Bullock. **“Social distancing is one of the most important primary protective measures to flatten the curve of this virus. I cannot underscore the seriousness of following these measures to help our neighbors, friends, and families.”**

Governor Bullock directed Montana’s public K-12 schools to close starting tomorrow, March 16 until March 27. During this time, schools will engage in planning to provide arrangements to provide free meals to students who need them, pursuant to a waiver obtained from the United States Department of Agriculture, and to provide for all other matters and services that students need in the event of future or ongoing closure. Schools will continue to receive all state funding during this two-week closure.

The state will work with schools during this period to evaluate and consider next steps as needed. The decision to close schools is to slow the spread and is not in response to an outbreak in schools.

“I recognize that our schools often serve as a lifeline for families and that this decision is going to have disruption on Montanans over the coming weeks. I’m committed to working with schools, communities and public health to minimize the impact. I encourage businesses to do everything they can to support families as well,” said Governor Bullock.

To mitigate the impact of school closures on families, Governor Bullock encourages all employers to be generous with their employee sick and paid leave policies during this time.

Governor Bullock is strongly recommending that the public limits all gatherings, especially those more than 50 people, in every community across the state. Governor Bullock is also recommending that individuals over the age of 60 or who are immunocompromised or with chronic health conditions do not participate in gatherings of more than 20 people. He also recommends that parents should avoid, if possible, placing children for childcare with grandparents or individuals over the age of 60 or immunocompromised persons.

Visitation in Montana’s nursing homes is suspended except for certain compassionate care situations. People who meet the exception for visitation will undergo a screening to determine whether they have traveled in the last two weeks, are residing where community spread is occurring, or if they have symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

In addition to taking part in regular briefing calls with the country’s governors and the White House, Governor Bullock has consulted with doctors and other public health authorities and school leaders to develop efforts to prevent spread of COVID-19 in Montana.

[Click to read Governor Bullock’s full directive to the people of Montana](#)