



**Portage County
Emergency
Management
APP**

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Portage Prepares is a Program of Portage County Commissioners.



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 24, 2020

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PORTAGE COUNTY GOVERNMENT WORKING TO STOP SPREAD OF COVID-19

RAVENNA, OH – Portage County Government is mustering all of its resources, power and employee talent as a united front to fight the spread of the coronavirus in the county.

“Portage County will continue to provide and maintain essential services,” stated County Commissioner Kathleen Clyde, “while also doing all we can to protect the safety of those in our community.”

Following federal and state leaders, Portage County Commissioners declared a state of emergency last week and passed temporary emergency leave and temporary telework policies for county employees not essential on-site. Today the Board of Commissioners adopted a limited access plan to close the Administration Building to the public, except by appointment when necessary. Please see the attached listing to still access essential county services available at the Administration Building.

As of March 24, 2020, there are four Portage County residents who have tested positive for COVID-19.

The Portage County Health District has been on high alert for several weeks. The agency opened a Joint Information Center with Portage County Emergency Management, the City of Kent Health Department, local universities, local school districts, UH Portage Medical Center, and AxessPointe to deliver prevention education to county residents with a unified message and focused delivery through traditional media and social media.

Local health districts and law enforcement have been tasked with enforcing the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director’s order to “Stay at Home” and previous amended executive order to limit and/or prohibit mass gathering and the closure of venues, and Governor Mike DeWine’s state of emergency declaration demanding social distancing in the state of Ohio for preventing the spread of COVID-19 order under the communicable disease statutes. Portage County Health District is collaborating with local law enforcement and state officials to determine the mechanism to implement these requirements.

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“We ask that our business owners review the spirit and intent of the order(s) for the health and safety of their employees and the community,” stated Becky Lehman, Public Information Officer for Portage County Health District.

The county health department is also responsible for the many tasks that go into monitoring reported cases; investigating potential cases; contact tracing for possible cases that had contact with a positive patient; and answering hundreds of calls from the public about the virus, symptoms, testing, treatment and now the Stay At Home Order; all the while continuing to educate the public.

Portage County Emergency Management Director Ryan Shackelford, who has been working along side the health departments and commissioners, officially opened the Emergency Operations Center. He activated the Incident Management Assistance Team to provide a bare bones staff in the office.

“The EOC is the focal point of collaboration of all stakeholders involved. While we may be working virtually and through conference calls, all local stakeholders are collaborating to bring resolution to this emergency,” said Shackelford.

Through the EOC structure, the county is addressing areas of concern in the response, including partnering with elected and non-elected officials, hospital, health departments, Mental Health & Recovery Board, Jobs and Family Services, Family and Community Services, PARTA, amateur radio, American Red Cross, public works, law enforcement, fire departments, the County Coroner’s office and various other non-profit organizations that maybe called on to help senior citizens as well as vulnerable populations. The group has been working virtually.

A county-wide plan has been adopted for the COVID-19 response with daily situational reports bring generated. The agency has been in contact with local governments to start the process of documenting response activities for later reimbursement.

Portage County EMA has been designated by the state as the entity to collect and distribute donated Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for reallocation to healthcare and safety forces to prevent shortages as much as possible. The agency has also been working with Family and Community Services to ensure food is available for senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

Find local information about the response at EMA’s social media, “Portage Prepares.” On Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/PortagePrepares/> and on Twitter at @PortagePrep.

The Mental Health & Recovery Board of Portage County and its direct services agencies have been reaching out to the public with education and information about access to services if residents are troubled by the current emergency or mental health issues. The agencies include Coleman Professional Services, Townhall II, Children’s Advantage and Family and Community Services. Find the MHRB information at <https://www.mental-health-recovery.org/>.

The limited access to county buildings including JFS, means the clients of Portage County Jobs and Family Services who have emergencies or need to make a cash child support payment should access an agency representative via telephone by contacting 330-297-3750. For those that do not want to wait on hold and need to follow up or get information on securing one of the essential services, they can email JFS at Portage_PA@JFS.ohio.gov.

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Portage County JFS will continue to update the community on our services and other vital community services via our webpage at <https://www.co.portage.oh.us/JFS> or our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pcjfs/>.

Paper applications and postage paid envelopes will also be made available at the entrance of the Administration Building. Residents can place completed applications in the drop box in the parking lot or can be mailed to the agency in the postage paid envelope that is provided.

Residents looking for unemployment information should visit:
<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/home/Resources-for-Economic-Support/econ>.

For the latest information about the coronavirus response in Portage County, visit the Portage County Health District website at www.portagehealth.net . For information about the State of Ohio response, go to the website of the Ohio Department of Health at <https://odh.ohio.gov/> or Governor Mike DeWine at <https://governor.ohio.gov>.

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