



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Public Health Recommendation for the Use of Face Coverings in Public Settings

Kalamazoo, MI – The Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department (HCS) is following the recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS) and is strongly encouraging people to use face coverings while in public settings especially where social distancing is difficult to maintain.

The use of simple cloth face coverings may slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others.

“I do not want people to have a false sense of security when they wear a face covering in public. People should still adhere to all of the other CDC and MDHHS guidelines such as maintain six feet away from people, wash your hands, and cover your cough and sneeze,” said Jim Rutherford, Kalamazoo County Health Officer. “Recommending people to wear face coverings in public does not mean they are immune to COVID-19. It means you are choosing to protect everyone that is around you in case you may be infected with COVID-19 but not showing any symptoms.”

Given the current shortage of critical supplies, HCS is encouraging people to make their own cloth face coverings and continue to reserve the N95 and surgical masks for the healthcare workers and first responders. Cloth face coverings can be fashioned from household items or made at home from common materials at low cost. The CDC has issued [Sew and No Sew Instructions](#) on their website.

Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

HCS is also making an urgent appeal for residents to donate much-needed personal protective equipment (PPE) and supplies to combat COVID-19. The donated products will add to the County inventory designated for preparedness efforts, and will be sent to facilities throughout the County according to need.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

311 E. Alcott St. | Kalamazoo, MI 49001

Phone: 269.373.5200 | www.kalcounty.com/hcs

New and unused items that will be accepted include:

- Disposable surgical or home-sewn masks
- Commercial or Medical-Grade Respirator masks: (N95, R95, P95, N100, or P100)
- Disposable gowns and/or water-repellant fabric gowns or coveralls
- Nitrile gloves in all sizes (no Latex)
- Eye protection, including face shields and safety goggles.
- Hand sanitizer* (with at least 60% alcohol)
- Cotton or cotton/poly blend fabric (in at least half yard pieces up to full bolts)
- Sanitizing wipes* and cleaners that are antimicrobial or bleach based
- Medical thermometers (forehead or infrared only; no old mercury).

**These items must be new, unopened and not expired.*

“As we continue to respond to COVID-19 pandemic in our county and prepare for an increase in positive reported cases, we know PPE and the other items will be needed,” said Rutherford. “PPE is in critical short supply. We’re asking the community to check their basements, garages, and other areas in their home for any unused supplies that they could donate to help our health care workers.”

On March 21, 2020, HCS issued a press release calling on people who sew to make face masks. Since then, HCS has received over 2,900 home-sewn masks for first responders, hospitals, shelters, long-term care facilities and other front-line staff.

People can still make and donate home-sewn masks. The fabric must be breathable material. Any pattern is acceptable and HCS includes three sample patterns on their website at www.kalcounty.com/hcs/covid19.php, under the Questions section. Home-sewn masks and other critical PPE donations can be dropped off at the Health & Community Services Department (311 E. Alcott Street), Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Information about the COVID-19 is rapidly changing. For general questions about COVID-19, call the state hotline at 1-888-535-6136. The state hotline is open seven days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. People may also call the Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department COVID-19 Call Center at 269-373-5200 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html, www.michigan.gov/coronavirus, and www.kalcounty.com/hcs/covid19.php.

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Kalamazoo County Government
Health & Community Services Department

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