

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Ron DeSantis**  
Governor

**Scott A. Rivkees, MD**  
State Surgeon General

**Vision:** To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

# 9/18/20 COVID19 Update - Gulf County

## Weekly Snapshot: 9/11-9/17

\*updated every Friday

Positivity during this week: 4%

Positive tests this week: 10

Total tests this week: 251

Deaths reported this week: 1

Positivity = # of people who test positive in a week divided by all the people tested that week. Excludes people who have: previously tested positive, and all positive and negative inmate tests.

## Ongoing County Totals:

Unduplicated positive tests (rapid antigen and PCR): 865

Positive inmates: 264

Positive long term care (staff and residents): 14

Overall hospitalizations: 52

Total deaths: 14

Total Tests: 5,711

Negative tests: 4,841

State  
Positivity: 4%  
(as of 9/17)

Median Age  
in Gulf: 46

For the **full** County COVID-19 Data Summary, please visit:

[http://ww11.doh.state.fl.us/comm/partners/covid19\\_report\\_archive/county\\_reports\\_latest.pdf](http://ww11.doh.state.fl.us/comm/partners/covid19_report_archive/county_reports_latest.pdf)

Available hospital bed capacity, including ICU capacity in neighboring counties, can be found using this

link. <https://bi.ahca.myflorida.com/t/ABICC/views/Public/HospitalBedsCounty?:isGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&embed=y>

For Daily Gulf County COVID-19 Updates straight to your phone: text GULFCOVID to 888777

Florida Department of Health in Gulf County: 850-227-1276

Florida Department of Health in Franklin County: 850-653-2111

There is also a hotline available at **866-779-6121** or email [COVID-19@flhealth.gov](mailto:COVID-19@flhealth.gov).

Follow the [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) website for the latest guidance on COVID-19 and check out [Floridahealth.gov](https://www.floridahealth.gov) to keep up with state-specific updates.

### WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN TODAY'S UPDATE:

- Gulf County COVID-19 Profile Report (see link above)
- Updated County Health Department Message (see below, page 2)

## A MESSAGE FROM YOUR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

### **Need information following Hurricane Sally?**

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sally, some residents are dealing with flooding in their homes and businesses. For updated alerts and post-storm information, please visit the Gulf/Franklin County Community Health Improvement Partners Facebook Page clicking [here](#) or by visiting your local Emergency Management Facebook page.

### **Have you made the pledge to protect Gulf County?**

We are proud to announce that almost 30 local businesses have pledged to protect Gulf County from the spread of COVID-19. Has your business signed the pledge yet? Gulf County is committed to creating a clean, safe and healthy environment for residents and visitors as we reopen our businesses and organizations following COVID-19 restrictions. Join us and take the Pledge to Protect by emailing your interest to [Concierge@VisitGulf.com](mailto:Concierge@VisitGulf.com) For more information visit [Pledge to Protect](#).

### **COVID19 relief funding is here to help!**

If you or someone you know has been financially impacted by COVID-19, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act may be able to help. The Gulf County Board of County Commissioners through the Gulf County S.H.I.P Program has received Corona Virus Relief Funds. Contact Apalachee Regional Planning Council at 850-448-6211 x 113 or go to [http://gulfcounty-fl.gov/county\\_government/s\\_h\\_i\\_p](http://gulfcounty-fl.gov/county_government/s_h_i_p) to fill out an online application. For additional information and qualification guidelines AND to submit the completed application, contact Amber Zies at (407) 310-0198 or at [azies@arpc.org](mailto:azies@arpc.org) or Donald Morgan at (256) 458-0232 or at [dmorgan@arpc.org](mailto:dmorgan@arpc.org).

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## **QUARANTINE/ISOLATION FACTS**

**The quarantine period is important.** We need close contacts to a positive case to quarantine for 14 days from the date of their exposure to the positive individual. Getting a test that is negative during the quarantine period does not stop the clock. We have seen many individuals develop infection on the second week of quarantine, so it is really important to stay quarantined for the full 14-day period. Household quarantine can be a little more stretched since it can be very difficult for a positive individual to properly isolate from everyone else. If you live in the same household as a positive case unable to properly isolate, you need to quarantine while the person is sick and once this individual is no longer infectious, that's when your quarantine 14 period will start.

**I tested positive for COVID19. When can I be around others (no longer infectious)?** If you tested positive for COVID19, you need to stay at home and isolate per the guidance provided by public health officials. If you think or know you had COVID-19, and had symptoms, you can be with others after at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared AND at least 24 hours has passed with no fever without fever-reducing medication AND symptoms have improved. If you tested positive for COVID-19 but had no symptoms, you can be with others after 10 days have passed since your test. If you develop symptoms after testing positive, follow the guidance above that includes fever and symptoms improving. Follow this link to stay tuned on updates: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html>

## **CLOTH FACE COVERS/MASK**

### **Some Masks Protect Better than Others**

There was a recent study published by Duke University about mask effectiveness. Some masks work better than others. The usage of more effective masks can make a difference in reducing the transmission of this virus. This study looks at respiratory droplets that people are exposed to or that they expel into the air.

This study has been highlighted on nightly news outlets, like this one:

<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/08/11/study-bandanas-and-neck-gaiters-not-effective-as-surgical-face-masks.html>

A copy of the full study can be found using this link:

<https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/early/2020/08/07/sciadv.abd3083>

### **Why wear the mask in public?**

Answer: My cloth face covering protects you. Your cloth face covering protects me. Although not a 100% guarantee, the use of masks has been proven using actual case investigations to dramatically reduce the spread of the virus. People who are infected can spread the virus before they develop symptoms or in the absence of symptoms. Wearing a cloth face covering may help prevent the spread of the virus by people who are infected and do not know it. Use of cloth face coverings continues to be a recommendation long-term prevention measures such as vaccines are being developed.

Cloth face coverings do not replace other protective measures. CDC still recommends that you stay at least 6 feet away from other people (social distancing), wash your hands frequently, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth....and your face covering. Cloth face coverings should not be placed on children under age 2.

### **If you or someone you love needs a cloth mask, please call 850-340-3016.**

The CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.

For information on how you can make a facemask at home, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html> and watch this video <https://youtu.be/tPx1yqvJgf4>.

### **TESTING**

If you suspect you might have COVID19, please do not travel here. Please get a COVID19 test (nasal swab for active infection) in your community and know your results before you arrive. Stay home when you are sick and follow CDC guidelines. Visitors are also responsible for helping to keep our communities safe and healthy.

Call your health care provider first or if you are symptomatic to determine the need for testing. If a person thinks they have COVID-19, they should call their health care provider before going to their office so the provider can take precautions to prevent exposing other people. In some cases, they are going to meet you in the parking lot. It's just a precaution. We are really trying to keep our healthcare workers safe. Other patients safe. Review your signs, symptoms and travel history with your physician. Your provider is going to evaluate you for possible causes and rule out other respiratory illnesses (ex. Flu) before testing for COVID-19.

### **COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT EXPANDED TESTING PLAN**

Florida Department of Health in Gulf County will provide FREE COVID-19 testing in Port St. Joe and Wewahitchka. Please call (850) 227-1276 to make an appointment.

### **ANTIBODY TESTING**

For questions about antibody testing, contact the Florida Department of Health: Gulf (850) 227-1276.

CDC information about antibody testing can be found using this link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/serology-overview.html>

For a helpful guide, please see: [http://ww11.doh.state.fl.us/comm/\\_partners/action/antibody\\_testing.pdf](http://ww11.doh.state.fl.us/comm/_partners/action/antibody_testing.pdf)

## COVID-19 REINFECTION

Available information from the CDC shows immunity for 90 days. There are no confirmed reports to date of a person being re-infected with COVID-19 within 3 months of initial infection.

A person who has had and recovered from COVID-19 may have low levels of virus in their bodies for up to 3 months after diagnosis. This means that if the person who has recovered from COVID-19 is retested within 3 months of initial infection, they may continue to have a positive test result, even though they are not spreading COVID-19. Meaning, they are no longer infectious to others. However, additional research is ongoing.

Therefore, if a person who has recovered from COVID-19 has new symptoms of COVID-19, the person may need an evaluation for reinfection, especially if the person has had close contact with someone infected with COVID-19. The person should isolate and contact a healthcare provider to be evaluated for other causes of their symptoms, and possibly retested.

More information can be found here: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/duration-isolation.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Fstrategy-discontinue-isolation.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/duration-isolation.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Fstrategy-discontinue-isolation.html)

## MENTAL HEALTH

COVID-19 have you feeling STRESSED/ANXIOUS/DEPRESSED/UNSURE? NEED SUPPORT? CALL 850-270-8911, available 9-5pm EST. If you are in need of immediate mental health services call one of the agencies below available 24/7:

- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- SAMSA Disaster Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 or the Crisis Text Line: Text "HOME" to 741-741
- Florida Blue launched a 24-hour, free emotional support helpline for all Floridians. Any Floridian – even if uninsured or insured by another plan – can call 833-848-1762 for support in managing feelings of stress, anxiety, grief or fear related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Counselors cannot provide information on COVID-19 testing or treatment.
- Big Bend Community Based Care oversees a wide network of community partners in the fields of mental health counseling, substance use disorder treatment and child protective services throughout an 18-county area in Northwest Florida, from Escambia to Madison counties. Florida residents can call the agency's hotline at 1-888-95-GetHelp or 1-888-954-3843 at any time, day or night, and staff a member will help connect them to a provider in their community, regardless of whether they have health insurance. For more information about Big Bend Community Based Care, visit [BigBendCBCGetHelp.org](http://BigBendCBCGetHelp.org).

## WORKPLACE RESOURCES

We get asked a lot about daily health screenings for employers. The CDC has updated strategies and recommendations for employers responding to COVID-19, including those seeking to resume normal or phased business operations. Recommendations to [Prepare Your Small Business and Employees for the Effects of COVID-19](#). In addition to regular temperature checks, the follow questions can be asked to employees:

### Daily Health Questionnaire

- Do you or anyone in your household have any of the following symptoms? (fever 100.4 or above, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, congestion, runny nose, nausea, vomiting, new loss of taste or smell)
- Have you or anyone in the household traveled outside of the country or to any highly affected areas in

the United States in the past 14 days?

- Have you had direct contact (within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes) with anyone who has tested positive with COVID-19 within the last 2 weeks?
- Is there anyone in your household under instructions to self-isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19?

## **RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

There are several resources available for rural residents and business coping with the impact of COVID-19. Please visit the Rural Development Coronavirus Response page: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/coronavirus>

## **REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE**

We encourage any Floridian whose employment has been negatively impacted as a result of COVID-19 to visit FloridaJobs.org and click on Reemployment Assistance Service Center to learn more about the program and watch a short video on how to apply. Click [here](#) for a direct link to instructions on how to apply for Reemployment Assistance. Select the hyperlink to download and view the [Reemployment Assistance Resource Guide](#).

If you can't apply by email you can pick up a paper application and submit it by mail. Below is the following pick up locations for paper applications in Gulf County. For more information call 850-229-1641.

- Port St. Joe – CareerSource, 401 Peters St.

For a guide to frequently asked questions regarding Re-employment Assistance, visit [http://www.floridajobs.org/Reemployment-Assistance-Service-Center/reemployment-assistance/claimants/claimant-faqs-\(new\)](http://www.floridajobs.org/Reemployment-Assistance-Service-Center/reemployment-assistance/claimants/claimant-faqs-(new)).

For information regarding assistance with utilities, rent/mortgages, food pantries, and other local disaster assistance, visit <https://www.211.org/>

## **CATHOLIC CHARITIES-BAY/ GULF/ FRANKLIN COUNTIES:**

Financial Emergency/Hardship: 850-763-0475

1. Call First Monday of each month after 9am for screenings
2. An initial screening will take place on the phone to complete the application process and receive an appointment. a. Proof of need will be required: past due utility bill, proof of check stub from place of employment (before and after date affected).

## **FOOD PANTRY LOCATIONS**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the Month-WIG Community Center, 401 Peters St., Port St. Joe
- Farm Share distribution will be the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of month at 4:00pm. Drive-thru pick up on a first come, first serve.
- Second Harvest of the Big Bend: 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month from 9:30-11:30, Honeyville Community Center, 240 Honeyville Park Road. (3 family per vehicle limit – all families do not have to be present to receive food. Please, no children. Prepare for long wait times. Please ensure trunk/bed of vehicle has space available. Do not get out of your vehicle. Lower tailgates/lift trunks prior to turning in.

## **TRAVEL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cases of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) have been reported in all states, and some areas are experiencing community spread of the disease. Travel increases your chances of getting and spreading COVID-19.

**CDC recommends you [stay home](#) as much as possible, especially if your trip is not essential, and [practice social distancing](#) especially if you are at [higher risk of severe illness](#). Don't travel if you are sick or travel with**

someone who is sick. For more information, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-in-the-us.html>

### **GOVERNOR UPDATES:**

To see ALL of Gov. DeSantis Executive Orders regarding COVID-19, visit: <https://www.flgov.com/covid-19/>

#### **DBPR REOPENS BARS**

Beginning Monday, September 14<sup>th</sup> DBPR issued [Emergency Order 2020-10](#) which will allow alcohol vendors to operate pursuant to Phase 2 of Florida's Safe. Smart. Step-by-Step Plan for Recovery.

#### **HURRICANE MICHAEL HOMEBUYER PROGRAM**

On 8/17/20, Governor Ron Desantis announced the relaunch of the Hurricane Michael Homebuyer Program. To view the details, visit <https://www.flgov.com/2020/08/17/governor-ron-desantis-announces-relaunch-of-hurricane-michael-homebuyer-program/>.

#### **EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 20-192 – Extension of EO 20-68**

On August 5, 2020, Gov. DeSantis extended EO 20-68, as extended by EO 20-112, 20-139 and 20-166, should read as follows: The Department of Business and Professional Regulation shall ensure all restaurants implement employee screening protocols pursuant to guidance developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [https://www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/orders/2020/EO\\_20-192.pdf](https://www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/orders/2020/EO_20-192.pdf)

#### **FORECLOSURES & EVICTION RELIEF**

On July 29, the Governor also issued order 20-180 (extending Executive Order 20-159), providing targeted, temporary relief from certain mortgage foreclosures and until September 1, 2020. To view the complete order, visit: [https://www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/orders/2020/EO\\_20-180.pdf](https://www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/orders/2020/EO_20-180.pdf)

#### **PHASE 2: PLAN FOR FLORIDA'S RECOVERY**

On June 3, 2020 Gov. DeSantis announced Phase 2: Safe. Smart. Step-by-step Plan for Florida's Recovery. To view the complete order, visit: [https://www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/orders/2020/EO\\_20-139.pdf](https://www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/orders/2020/EO_20-139.pdf)  
For the Florida Phase 2 Informational Flyer visit: <https://bit.ly/2AdBZlq>  
Click [here](#) to see Gov. DeSantis presentation on Florida's Plan for Recovery.

#### **UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION**

On April 16, Governor DeSantis issued [EO 20-104](#) which suspends the requirement that Floridians must recertify reemployment assistance status every two weeks.

### **LOCAL UPDATES:**

#### **GULF COUNTY COVID-19 RELIEF FUND**

If you have been affected by COVID-19, lost your job, are facing eviction, foreclosure, or need assistance paying your utility bills due to COVID-19, please contact Apalachee Regional Planning Council at 850-448-6211 x 113 or go to [http://gulfcounty-fl.gov/county\\_government/s\\_h\\_i\\_p](http://gulfcounty-fl.gov/county_government/s_h_i_p) to fill out an online application.

#### **GULF COUNTY HURRICANE HOUSING RECOVERY PROGRAM**

Were you a victim of Hurricane Michael? Do you need repairs to your home, or could you benefit from a one-bedroom mobile home? Is the income for your household very low? Contact the Gulf County SHIP Program at 850-229-6125 or visit: [http://gulfcounty-fl.gov/county\\_government/s\\_h\\_i\\_p](http://gulfcounty-fl.gov/county_government/s_h_i_p), look for the Hurricane Housing Recovery Program-Phase 3 Application.

## PLEDGE TO PROTECT:

Coronavirus doesn't take a vacation, but it does travel. We know many businesses in Gulf County are stepping up to protect their employees and their staff. It hasn't been easy for them. They've survived Hurricane Michael and are now operating their business through a pandemic. Many have taken extra measures to protect their employees and customers. This deserves recognition and we are asking our businesses in Gulf County to take the Pledge to Protect!

Visit Pledge to Protect at <https://www.visitgulf.com/pledgetoprotect/>



### What is Pledge to Protect?

Pledge to Protect is a voluntary program in which Gulf County tourism businesses commit to clean and healthy standards for their guests and employees to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

By taking the Pledge to Protect, businesses are committing to:

- Proper Use of Personal Protective Equipment
- Routine Cleaning and Disinfecting of Surfaces and Equipment
- Practicing Social Distancing and Minimized Contact
- Enforcing Any Sick Employees to Stay Home

Special thanks to the Gulf County Tourism Development Council for the creation of the logo, webpage and incentive promotion design and support. This project has been approved by the Gulf County Board of County Commissioners.

**CITY OF PORT ST. JOE:** An Emergency Declaration of the city of Port St. Joe, Florida; recognizing the national, state and local state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic; requiring the use of facial covering or mask in public settings within the city limits of Port St. Joe, Florida where CDC social distancing guidelines cannot be followed; providing for effective date and sunset date. Adopted, July 21, 2020.

**GULF COUNTY COURTHOUSE:** Mask are now required to enter the Gulf County Courthouse. This is mandatory, per the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Florida and the Chief Judge of the 14th Judicial Circuit. This means everyone, without exception.

### HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Starting May 28, 2020, the Franklin and Gulf County Health Departments will resume full clinic services. This includes annual physical exams, well woman exams, Florida Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, and other routine appointments. Some services will continue to be done curbside or over the phone to decrease unnecessary exposure. Please call 850-227-1276 to schedule an appointment! **Please do not bring visitors with you to your appointments.**

**Florida Department of Health issues Public Health Advisory:** The Dept. of Health recommends all individuals should wear masks in any setting where social distancing is not possible unless a child is under the age of two, encourage elderly and vulnerable populations to limit interactions outside of the home, and urges all individuals to refrain from participating in gatherings of more than 10 people. These advisory serves to update the Public Health Advisories filed on March 25, 2020, and June 20, 2020. For more information please visit:

<http://www.floridahealth.gov/newsroom/2020/07/072420-1446-covid19.pr.html>

## **LIBRARIES**

Both Gulf County libraries remain closed until further notice. Curbside pick-up now available THREE days a week Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Please call or visit NWRLS.com to place holds on library items.

## **SUPPORTING CHILDREN THROUGH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

COVID-19 has upended children's daily lives, resulting in added stress and uncertainty. Studies show that adversity during childhood, including adversity stemming from natural disasters, can have lasting impacts on children's social emotional health. Fortunately, families can take steps to support and protect children's emotional well-being during the COVID-19 crisis. For more information visit the Nat'l Institute for Children's Health Quality site at [Article: Supporting Children's Health During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Here are some clear, concrete tips for physically distancing while staying emotionally and socially connected <https://preventchildabuse.org/coronavirus-resources/>

**The Germ that Wears a Crown: A Story About the Coronavirus:** This is a story, coloring & activity book from FSU Center for Child Stress & Health to help children cope with COVID-19. The book teaches children about the virus, social distancing and how to express and manage strong emotions. Visit <http://fsustress.org/ebook.html> to download a free copy!

## **STAY INFORMED:**

To get the latest information, visit [FloridaHealth.gov](http://FloridaHealth.gov) and follow on Social Media:

Florida Department of Health: [Twitter @HealthyFla](#) -or- [Facebook Florida Department of Health \(DOH\)](#)

Gulf/Franklin County Community Health Improvement Partners: [Facebook Gulf/Franklin County Community Health Improvement Partners](#)