

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

7/24/20 COVID-19 UPDATE:

Your local health department is here to assist you with questions related to COVID-19 (new coronavirus).

GULF TESTING NUMBERS STATUS

Number of unduplicated COVID-19 tests so far: 3,003

Number of negative tests: 2,761

Number of positive tests: 238

Please note: The demand for the testing and designated laboratory, may cause a slight delay in reporting as reflected on the Florida COVID-19 Dashboard.

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

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.

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's NEW in today's update:

- New Data: Positivity Percentage for New Cases (Message from CHD Section, pg. 1)
- New Section: Quarantine/Isolation Facts (Pages 2-3)

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

We are closely monitoring the COVID-19 positivity percentage in Gulf and Franklin. For small counties, it is better to look at weekly trends vs. daily trends to paint a better picture of what is happening. The percent is based on the number of people who test positive in a week divided by all the people tested that week, excluding people who have previously tested positive.

Let's look at the past two weeks using surveillance data from Floridahealth.gov. We really want to keep the positivity percentage as low as possible. 20.6% is too high. Gulf needs to aim for 10% and then keep moving downward. We are hoping to get both counties below 5%. Gulf and Franklin cases are linked to whole household exposures, some businesses, funeral-related gatherings, and some have been healthcare worker related.

Take a closer look at the data:

GULF:

Week 1 - July 10-16:

Total number of COVID19 tests (nasal swab to test for active infection): 591

Total Positive: 43

Positivity: 7.3%

Week 2 – July 17-23

Total number of COVID19 tests (nasal swab to test for active infection): 548

Total Positive: 113

Positivity: 20.6%

FRANKLIN:

Week 1 – July 10-16

Total number of COVID19 tests (nasal swab to test for active infection): 608

Total Positive: 27

Positivity: 4.4%

Week 2 – July 17-23

Total number of COVID19 tests (nasal swab to test for active infection): 459

Total Positive: 31

Positivity: 6.8%

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. Symptoms are NOT required for testing. Please call (850) 227-1276 to make an appointment.

Free COVID19 testing POD at Honeyville Community Center (240 Honeyville Park Rd., Wewahitchka) on 7/27/20 from 9 AM – 3 PM Central.

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

QUARANTINE/ISOLATION FACTS

A great resource to answer many frequently asked questions can be found on the CDC website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

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, 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. We explain all of this to every close contact identified and can provide quarantine orders to each individual.

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> Depending on your healthcare provider's advice and availability of testing, you might get tested to see if you still have COVID-19. (Ex. residents of a nursing home.) If you are tested, you can be around others when you have no fever, respiratory symptoms have improved, and you receive two negative test results in a row, at least 24 hours apart.

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.

CLOTH FACE COVERS/MASK

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 (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies) especially in areas of significant community-based transmission. It is important to note that these face coverings:

- 1. Are not surgical or N-95 respirators, which continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and medical first responders, and
- 2. The use of cloth face coverings does not mean we can remove previously set social distancing measures.

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>.

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 have been proven 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 (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>) while long-term prevention measures such as vaccines are being developed.

The CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies), especially in areas of community spread. 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.

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](#)

The questions were modified for the adult workforce. In addition to regular temperature checks, the following 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

- 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the Month-WIG Community Center, 401 Peters St., Port St. Joe
- Farm Share distribution will be the 1st and 3rd Monday of month at 4:00pm. Drive-thru pick up on a first come, first serve.
- Second Harvest of the Big Bend: 2nd 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/>

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

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.

EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 20-166 – Extension of Executive Order 20-52

On July 7th, 2020, Gov. DeSantis extended the state of emergency declared in Executive Order 20-52 for 60 days.

https://www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/orders/2020/EO_20-166.pdf

https://www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/orders/2020/EO_20-52.pdf

FLORIDA PANDEMIC EBT PROGRAM

Governor Ron DeSantis announced federal approval of Florida's Pandemic EBT Program (P-EBT). The program will automatically issue benefits during the month of June to children who have temporarily lost access to free and reduced-price school meals during COVID-19-related school closures. To see the full article visit:

<https://www.flgov.com/2020/05/27/governor-ron-desantis-announces-floridas-participation-in-the-usdas-pandemic-ebt-program/>

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

On, Friday, May 22, 2020, Gov. DeSantis lifted the restrictions on youth sports and summer camps. This new order will go into effect immediately. Guidance for Organized Youth Activities:

<https://floridahealthcovid19.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/FL-Summer-Camp-Guidance-FAQs-5-21-20.pdf>

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.

FORECLOSURES & EVICTION RELIEF

On June 30, the Governor issued [Executive Order 20-159](#), extending EO 20-94, providing targeted, temporary relief from certain mortgage foreclosures and evictions until August 1, 2020.

LOCAL UPDATES:

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.

GULF COUNTY PLAN FOR REOPENING SHORT-TERM VACATION RENTALS

The Governor, Ron DeSantis, has lifted the Vacation Rental Ban in Gulf County. The BOCC submitted a plan to safely reopen rentals, which was APPROVED on May 19th. We are so thankful to the Governor and our BOCC for their swift action! In order to reopen safely and help you during this new travel environment, we have put together some tools to help plan your next adventure in Gulf County. We are excited to welcome you back! Let's not Jump In, Let's Wade in!

See county requirements at <https://www.visitgulf.com/getyourfeetwet/> and click on "Stay In the Know".

We ask that you join in to help familiarize yourself with the guidelines for [Gulf County Vacation Rentals](#) along with the State of Florida and the CDC. Vacation renters are following this CDC map to determine states with higher levels of exposure: <http://www.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/index.html>. Click on "Rates" above the map to view the most updated information.

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION: Effective immediately, DBPR is suspending on premises consumption of alcohol at bars statewide.

http://www.myfloridalicense.com/dbpr/os/documents/EO_2020-09.pdf

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.

PIGGLY WIGGLY PSJ is open daily from 6am to 10pm and is now offering ONLINE shopping. Visit www.DurensPigglyWiggly.com for more information. We ask all customers to remain 6 feet apart. The deli is no longer self-serve but is open. Please try to shop one person per buggy.

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.

ASCENSION SACRED HEART

Online urgent care is available through Ascension Online Care. You can have a video visit with a doctor without leaving your home. Visit <http://ascension.org/onlinecare> to start your visit. Please note that Ascension is not a community COVID-19 testing site.

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 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](#)