



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

For Immediate Distribution | September 17, 2020 | (512) 463-1826

Governor Abbott Expands Capacity For Certain Services In Texas, Announces Guidance For Nursing Home, Long-Term Care Visitations

AUSTIN - Governor Greg Abbott today held a press conference to provide an update on the state's ongoing efforts to combat COVID-19. During the press conference, the Governor issued Executive Orders [expanding occupancy levels](#) for restaurants, retail stores, office buildings, manufacturing facilities, gyms and exercise facilities and classes, museums, and libraries, and [re-authorizing elective surgeries](#) for a majority of the state of Texas. The Governor also announced new guidance related to visitations at nursing homes and long-term care facilities across the state.

In addition, the Governor implemented the use of reliable, data driven hospitalization metrics used by doctors and medical experts to help guide the state's ongoing efforts to contain COVID-19 and expand occupancy for businesses and services. This metric focuses on areas with high hospitalizations — referring to any [Trauma Service Area \(TSA\)](#) that has had seven consecutive days in which the number of COVID-19 hospitalized patients as a percentage of all hospitalized patients exceeds 15%, until such time as the TSA has seven consecutive days in which the number of COVID-19 hospitalized patients as a percentage of all hospitalized patients is 15% or less. A current list of areas with high hospitalizations will be maintained at www.dshs.texas.gov/ga3031.

[Using this metric](#), 19 of the 22 TSAs in Texas qualify to increase occupancy levels to 75% for restaurants, retail stores, office buildings, manufacturing facilities, gyms, exercise facilities and classes, museums, and libraries beginning September 21st. In addition, these 19 TSAs can also [resume elective surgeries](#). Three of the 22 TSAs (S-Victoria, T-Laredo, and V-Lower Rio Grande Valley) must remain at 50% occupancy and continue postponing elective surgeries until the hospitalization metric requirements are met. These three TSAs contain the following counties: Calhoun, DeWitt, Goliad, Jackson, Lavaca, Victoria, Jim Hogg, Webb, Zapata, Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy.

"With the medical advancements we have made and the personal hygiene practices we have adopted, Texans have shown that we can address both the health and safety concerns of COVID-19 while also taking careful, measured steps to restore the livelihoods that Texans depend on," said Governor Abbott. "Achieving both goals requires safe standards that contain COVID-19, emphasize protecting the most vulnerable, and establish clear metrics that the public can depend on. That is why today we have announced expanded occupancy standards for a variety of services. But, Texans should remember that a steady and significant decline in COVID-19 cases is not a sign to let up in our vigilance against the virus. Instead, Texans must continue to heed the guidance of medical experts by wearing a mask, social distancing, and

practicing proper sanitation strategies. By maintaining health and safety standards that are proven to mitigate COVID-19, we can continue to slow the spread while opening up the Texas economy."

The Governor announced new visitation guidance for eligible nursing homes, assisted living facilities, intermediate care facilities, home and community-based service providers, and inpatient hospice effective Thursday, September 24th. Under the new rules, residents will be allowed to designate up to two essential family caregivers who will be provided necessary training to allow them to safely go inside a facility for a scheduled visit, including in the resident's room, to help ensure their loved one's physical, social, and emotional needs are being met. Designated caregivers will not be required to maintain physical distancing, but only one caregiver can visit a resident at a time.

A long-term care facility resident (or legal representative) can designate the essential caregiver, who can be a family member, friend, or other individual. Facilities are required to train essential caregivers on the proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other infection control measures. Proper PPE must be used at all times during these scheduled visits, and the caregiver must test negative for COVID-19 within the previous 14 days before the initial visit.

For general visitors who are not a designated essential caregiver, these updated emergency rules will allow approved facilities to schedule outdoor no contact visits, open window visits, or indoor visitation with the use of plexiglass safety barriers to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Physical contact between residents and general visitors is not permitted. Facilities also must continue to meet all additional visitation requirements outlined in the emergency rules.

[View the Governor's Executive Order related to expanded capacity of certain services.](#)

[View the Governor's Executive Order related to hospital capacity.](#)



(PHOTO: Office Of The Governor, 9/17/20)



(PHOTO: Office Of The Governor, 9/17/20)

###