May 12, 2020 Executive Order Providing Additional Guidance for Reviving a Healthy Georgia in Response to COVID-19 and its Impact on County Governments

On May 12, 2020, Governor Kemp issued an extensive Executive Order (05.12.20.02) that extends, with some modifications, the requirements set forth in his April 23, 2020 Executive Order (04.23.20.02) providing operational mandates and recommendations to various categories of businesses going forward. The May 12, 2020 Executive Order becomes effective and remains in effect through May 31, 2020 at 11:59 p.m.¹ The summary below prepared by the ACCG Legal Department explains the provisions of the May 12, 2020 Executive Order that directly impact county governments.

Social Distancing in or on County Government Property.

The Executive Order largely extends, through May 31, 2020 at 11:59 p.m., current Social Distancing requirements that have been in place since April 3, 2020. Counties (as well as cities and businesses) may not allow more than ten (10) persons to physically gather at a single location if doing so would require persons to sit or stand within six (6) feet of each other (defined as a “Gathering”). While the Executive Order is not clear on this point, it appears the above prohibition, as applied to county and government property (as opposed to imposing a regulatory requirement on counties to ensure that no such gatherings happen on private property).

This prohibition on gatherings does not apply to:

- Groupings of more than 10 persons that are “transitory” or “incidental”;²
- Gatherings of cohabiting persons, family units, or roommates, whether gathering inside or outside of their homes or place of residence; or
- Entities involved in Critical Infrastructure.

County Ordinances and Orders.

¹ Although not addressed in this guidance, the Public Health State of Emergency and the Shelter in Place requirements for vulnerable populations remain in effect until June 12, 2020 at 11:59 p.m. Those subject to the Shelter in Place requirements include those persons who: are 65 years of age or older; have chronic lung disease; have moderate to severe asthma; have severe heart disease; immunocompromised due to cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medication, etc.; of any age, with class III or severe obesity (i.e., those with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 40 or higher); have been diagnosed with diabetes; have been diagnosed with liver disease; have been diagnosed with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis; and/or live in a nursing home or long-term care facility, including inpatient hospice, assisted living communities, personal care homes, intermediate care homes, community living arrangements, and community integration homes.

² “Transitory” and “incidental” are not defined in the Order.
The May 12, 2020 Executive Order continues the broad preemption of local authority to regulate matters related to the current Public Health State of Emergency. While the Order authorizes county governments to “make, amend, and rescind such orders, rules, and regulations as may be necessary for emergency purposes and to supplement the carrying out of this Order,” it then provides that: (1) such county orders, rules, or regulations “shall not be inconsistent with this Order” or any other order of the Governor or state agency acting under their emergency powers; and (2) any county orders, rules, or regulations that are “more or less restrictive than the terms of this Order shall be considered inconsistent with this Order.”

Thus, it is unclear whether the Executive Order allows any county action regarding the current Public Health State of Emergency, outside of perhaps county regulations designed to assist in enforcement of the terms of the Executive Order. Counties are encouraged to consult with their county attorneys prior to taking any specific actions on subjects covered by the Executive Order.

**Enforcement.**

Violation of the Executive Order is a misdemeanor. Any local law enforcement officials (sheriff’s offices and county police departments) are authorized to enforce the terms of the May 12, 2020 Executive Order. Such law enforcement officials should take reasonable steps to provide notice prior to issuing a citation or making an arrest.

In addition, any law enforcement officer is authorized, after providing reasonable notice and issuing at least two citations, to mandate closure of any business or organization that is not in compliance with this Executive Order.

Sheriffs and police chiefs with specific questions on enforcement should contact the Georgia Sheriffs Association and/or the Georgia Police Chiefs Association for further guidance.

**County Government Eligibility for State Funds and Reporting Requirements.**

The May 12, 2020 Executive Order continues the suspension of various state statutes that impose reporting or filing requirements on local governments and that impact local governments’ eligibility for state funds. These suspended requirements are tied to the Public Health State of Emergency, which is set to expire on June 12, 2020 at 11:59 p.m., subject to further action by the Governor.

- **Service Delivery Strategies/Comprehensive Plans.** The penalties for failing to file Service Delivery Strategies and/or Comprehensive Plans by their respective deadlines are suspended specifically to allow local governments to be eligible for state funding for expenditures that are made during the Public Health State of Emergency and are related to the prevention, treatment, or mitigation of COVID-19.

- **Annual Audits.** The deadline for filing annual local government audits is extended by ninety (90) days for any local government whose existing audit deadline fell/falls either during the declared Public Health State of Emergency or within 90 days after that State of Emergency is terminated.

- **Reports of Local Government Finances and Local Authority Debt Issuance Reports.** The deadline for filing the annual Report of Local Government Finances as well as the deadline for local authorities to file annual indebtedness reports is extended by ninety (90) days for any local government or authority whose existing deadline fell/falls either during the declared Public Health State of Emergency or within 90 days after that State of Emergency is terminated.

- **Grant Certifications.** The deadline for filing certifications relating to expenditure of state grant funds is extended by ninety (90) days for any local government or authority whose existing deadline fell/falls either during the declared Public Health State of Emergency or within 90 days after that State of Emergency is terminated.
County Government Programs Generally.

If a county uses volunteers or has members of the public participate in activities, it must prohibit persons diagnosed with COVID-19, having exhibited symptoms of COVID-19, or having had contact with a person that has or is suspected to have COVID-19 within the past fourteen days from volunteering or participating in activities.

Swimming Pools and Amphitheaters.

Counties with live performance venues may not engage in in-person operations in those venues. These remain closed to the public until 11:59 p.m. on May 31, 2020. However, the Executive Order does not renew the ban on public swimming pools. As a result, such pools may reopen beginning May 14, 2020; however, pool operations are subject to the Social Distancing requirements described above.

Recreational Sports Programs.

The May 12, 2020 Executive Order does not reference or impose any specific restrictions on recreational sports leagues and activities, such as are commonly hosted or run through county parks departments. However, it appears that any such activities would be subject to the Social Distancing and Gathering limitations described in the first section of this Guidance: counties may not allow more than ten (10) persons to physically gather at a single location if doing so would require persons to sit or stand within six (6) feet of each other. Each county will need to determine whether recreational sports activities can feasibly occur with these limitations.

Gyms and Fitness Centers.

The April 23, 2020 Executive Order allowed county-owned or county-operated gyms and fitness centers to re-open as of May 1, 2020, provided that certain measures are implemented. The May 12, 2020 Executive Order relaxes some of those requirements beginning May 14, 2020, with the changes identified below in italics. Of note, the May 12, 2020 Executive Order lifts the previous prohibition of group classes and in-facility child care, and allows for the reopening of pools, basketball courts, other group sports areas, and tanning beds. As used below and elsewhere in this Guidance, the term “Workers” include employees, independent contractors, agents, volunteers, and other representatives of an entity. The revised requirements are:

1. Placing signage at any entrance to instruct patrons that they cannot enter if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19, had symptoms of COVID-19, or had contact with a person that has or is suspected to have COVID-19;
2. Placing signage at any entrance and throughout the facility to instruct patrons of the enhanced sanitation procedures, Social Distancing requirements, and other instructions and limitations, as applicable, set forth below;
3. If workers are present at the gym or fitness center, they must screen patrons at the entrance. Patrons may not enter the gym or fitness center if they exhibit a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell;
4. Limiting occupancy to enforce Social Distancing requirements and to prohibit Gatherings (see definitions in the first section of this Guidance);
5. Utilizing contactless forms of patron check-in;
6. Providing hand sanitizer stations, as available, for patrons;
7. Providing antibacterial sanitation wipes, as available, at or near each piece of equipment and requiring users to wipe down the equipment before and after use;

8. Requiring workers, if any, to patrol patron areas to enforce the equipment wipe-down policy and conduct additional cleanings during times when equipment is not being used;

9. Limiting use of cardio machines to every other machine or distancing machines to maintain acceptable Social Distancing between users;

10. Enforcing Social Distancing and prohibiting congregating between non-cohabiting patrons, especially in pools, group fitness classes, and in area where group sports regularly occur;

11. Encouraging patrons to conduct their workout and exit the facility without unnecessary delay;

12. Complying with the Executive Order’s regulations for Childcare Facilities, if childcare services are provided;

13. Closing the following facilities and equipment within a gym or fitness center: hot-tubs, saunas, and steam rooms;

14. Requiring patrons to spray showers with a provided cleaning spray after use;

15. Requiring workers to clean and sanitize high touch surfaces, bathrooms, and locker rooms regularly throughout the opening hours in addition to the regular cleaning schedule;

16. Prohibiting patrons from sharing equipment without cleaning and sanitizing between uses;

17. Practicing Social Distancing between trainers and patrons as practicable;

18. Requiring no less than ten (10) feet of distance between patrons participating in group fitness classes; and

19. Requiring rooms and equipment used for group fitness classes to be disinfected between classes.

Summer Camps.

The May 12, 2020 Executive Order adds restrictions and requirements for summer day camps (i.e., organized sessions of supervised recreational, athletic, or instructional activities held between school terms). Summer day camps may not allow overnight stays unless and until such stays are authorized by the Georgia Department of Public Health. In the event that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issues guidance for summer day camps, that CDC guidance will control. Until such time, summer day camps are required to follow the guidelines for Critical Infrastructure (below) and must implement the following measures:

1. Placing signage at any entrance to instruct campers that they cannot enter if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19, have exhibited symptoms of COVID-19, or had contact with a person that has or is suspected to have COVID-19 within the past fourteen days.

2. Placing signage at any entrance and throughout the facility to instruct campers of the enhanced sanitation procedures, Social Distancing requirements, and other instructions and limitations, as applicable, set forth below.

3. Screening campers at drop-off and preventing any camper from entering that exhibits a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, other respiratory symptoms, or at least two of the following symptoms: chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell.
4. Requiring that any persons exhibiting a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell at any time while at the summer day camp to be separated from the group immediately and must leave the camp facility as soon as practicable.

5. Requiring any worker or camper that has stayed home sick, been prevented from entering camp due to signs of illness, or been sent home during camp due to signs of illness may not be permitted to attend camp again until they have either had a negative COVID-19 test or have been fever and fever medication free for seventy-two (72) hours, other symptoms have improved, and at least ten (10) days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

6. Requiring parents dropping-off and picking-up campers to remain in their vehicles.

7. Utilizing contactless forms of camper check-in and check-out.

8. Implementing staggered drop-off and pick-up times, with specific times for each group of campers, if practicable.

9. Providing hand sanitizer to campers as soon as practicable upon drop-off.

10. Prohibiting unnecessary visitors to camp activities and facilities.

11. Discontinuing camp tours.

12. Providing training to workers on how to identify symptoms of illness in campers, the proper processes for removing a potentially ill camper, and the infection mitigation procedures to perform in such an event.

13. Providing an isolation area for sick workers or campers.

14. To the extent necessary, limiting groups to twenty (20) persons or less, including workers and campers, in a space where all persons gathered cannot maintain at least six (6) feet of distance between themselves and any other person.

15. To the extent possible, keeping the same workers and campers in the same group for the duration of the camp. Enforcing Social Distancing between groups, prohibiting Gatherings of more than ten people unless six feet of separation can be maintained, and prohibiting congregating among Campers belonging to different groups.

16. Providing a separate designated space for each camper to store personal belongings throughout the duration of the camp.

17. Prohibiting use of camp facilities and equipment that are not able to be regularly sanitized.

18. To the extent possible, allowing only one group to use camp equipment at a time.

19. Sanitizing camp equipment after each group use.
20. Requiring workers to patrol camp areas to enforce the equipment sanitization policy and conduct additional cleanings during times when equipment is not being used.

21. If swimming facilities are available, allowing each group to swim only once per day and staggering swimming times to avoid crowding at the swimming facilities.

22. If camp facilities are also open to other patrons, prohibiting contact between campers and the facility's other patrons and requiring sanitization before and after camp use of any such shared facilities.

23. Providing hand sanitizer stations for campers and requiring regular use.

24. Requiring campers to wash or sanitize their hands during each group restroom break, snack break, and meal break.

25. For day camps, if possible, requiring campers to bring their own lunch and snacks with them to camp each day, with all such food items being in a sealed lunch bag marked with the camper's name.

26. Requiring all dining facilities to follow the criteria for restaurant dine-in services set forth in Section IV of the May 12, 2020 Executive Order to the extent practicable.

27. Requiring workers to wear gloves when helping campers open items from meals and snacks.

28. If camp vehicles are used for transporting campers to and from on or off-site activities, requiring workers to sanitize each vehicle before and after use.

29. Requiring workers to clean and sanitize bathrooms and all frequently touched surfaces regularly throughout the opening hours in addition to the regular cleaning schedule. Shared restrooms must be sanitized no less than twice per day.

30. Providing masks or other Personal Protective Equipment to workers as available and appropriate to the function and location of workers within the camp facility.

31. Providing masks or other Personal Protective Equipment to campers as available and appropriate to the activity and location of campers within the camp facility.

32. Overnight Summer Camps (if authorized by the Department of Health as noted above) must implement the following additional measures:

   i. Screening workers and campers each morning and evening. Persons exhibiting a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell must be separated from the group immediately and must leave the camp facility as soon as practicable;

   ii. Requiring workers to clean and sanitize overnight bunk rooms at least once per day;

   iii. Sanitizing bunks and bunk mattresses at least once per week and before and after use by a new worker or camper;

   iv. Limiting camp occupancy to the extent necessary to maintain overnight bunk room
occupancy at twenty (20) persons, including workers and campers, or less per room;

v. To the extent possible, arranging beds and bunk beds in overnight bunk rooms so that beds are six (6) feet apart and in a foot-to-foot style; and

vi. Requiring a Registered Nurse or Licensed Practical Nurse to be on site during all times that Campers are present at the camp facility to the extent practicable.

Critical Infrastructure.

The May 12, 2020 Executive Order continues, through 11:59 p.m. on May 31, 2020, the prohibition against county and other local governments impeding the operation of any Critical Infrastructure by ordinance.

Certain services of county government are defined by the U. S. Department of Homeland Security as “essential critical infrastructure workforce” and, accordingly, are exempt from the social distancing requirements as noted above. Examples of county government departments or employees falling into this Critical Infrastructure category are listed below. A complete list may be found in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency guidance most recently revised April 17, 2020.

County government departments or employees falling into this category include:

1. Employees who manage health plans, billing and health information, who cannot work remotely.
2. Employees and volunteers in emergency management, law enforcement, fire and rescue services, emergency medical service, jails, correctional institutions, search and rescue.
3. Employees at 9-1-1 call centers and public safety answering points who cannot perform their duties remotely.
4. Employees that maintain equipment and services supporting law enforcement emergency service and response operations.
5. Employees responding to abuse and neglect of children, elders, and dependent adults.
6. Employees who support weather disaster and natural hazard mitigation and prevention activities.
7. Security staff maintaining building access control and physical security measures.
8. Employees in cafeterias used to feed employees, particularly employee populations sheltered against COVID-19.
9. Employees essential for food assistance programs and government payments.
10. Employees needed to operate and maintain drinking water and wastewater/drainage infrastructure.
11. Employees supporting or enabling transportation functions, including bus drivers, dispatchers, maintenance and repair technicians, intermodal transportation personnel, and workers that maintain and inspect infrastructure.
12. Mass transit employees, employees providing critical transit services, and/or critical or routine maintenance to mass transit infrastructure or equipment.
13. Employees supporting car sharing services.
15. Employees supporting the operation, inspection, and maintenance of essential public works facilities and operations, including bridges, water and sewer main breaks, fleet maintenance personnel, construction of critical or strategic infrastructure, traffic signal maintenances, emergency location services for buried utilities, maintenance of digital systems infrastructure supporting public works operations, and other emergent issues.

16. Employees who support the availability and access to needed facilities, transportation, energy and communications, such as road clearing.

17. Network operations staff including information technology managers and staff, security personnel, HVAC and electrical engineers, software and hardware engineers, and database administrators that manage the network or operate facilities.

18. Engineers, technicians, and other employees responsible for infrastructure construction and restoration.

19. Central office personnel to maintain and operate central office, data centers, and other network facilities and critical support personnel assisting front line employees.

20. Customer service and support staff.


22. Employees who support command centers.

23. Data center operators.

24. Employees who support communication systems and information technology and work from home solutions used by law enforcement, public safety, and public works.

25. Employees who ensure the continuity of building functions.


27. Employees supporting the operations of the judicial system.

28. Employees who support mission essential functions and communications networks.


30. Employees who maintain digital infrastructure supporting other critical government operations.

31. Employees who support necessary credentialing, vetting, and licensing operations for critical infrastructure workers.

32. Employees who perform title search, notary and recording services in support of mortgage and real estate services and transactions.

33. Employees of the animal shelter.

34. Employees who support food, shelter, and social services for needy groups and individuals, including in need populations and COVID-19 responders.

35. Employees providing support to the elderly and disable populations.

36. Employees supporting the construction of housing.

County governments must implement measures which mitigate exposure and spread of COVID-19 among its Critical Infrastructure workforce. **Note that while the April 23, 2020 Executive Order referred to measures involving “employees”, the May 12, 2020 Executive Order expands these measures to all “Workers”, defined to include employees, independent contractors, agents, volunteers, and other representatives of an entity.** Through May 31, 2020, these measures may include, but are not limited to, the following requirements for critical departments and workers:

1. Screening and evaluating workers exhibiting signs of illness such as cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever over 100.4 degrees, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell.
2. Requiring workers exhibiting signs of illness to not report to work or to seek medical attention.
3. Enhancing sanitation of the workplace as appropriate.
4. Disinfecting common surfaces regularly.
5. Requiring hand washing or sanitation by workers at appropriate places within the business location.
6. Providing personal protective equipment (PPE) as available and as appropriate to the function and location of the worker.
7. Prohibiting Gatherings of workers during work hours.
8. Permitting workers to take breaks and meals outside, in their office or personal workspace, or in other areas where at least six feet of space may be maintained.
9. Implementing teleworking for all workers when possible.
10. Implementing staggered shifts for all workers when possible.
11. Holding all meetings and conferences virtually, when possible.
12. Delivering intangible services remotely when possible.
13. Discouraging workers from using another worker’s phone, desk, office, work tools or equipment.
14. Increasing physical space between workers’ worksites to at least six feet.
15. Providing disinfectant and sanitation products for workers to clean their workspace, equipment and tools.
16. Prohibiting handshaking and other unnecessary person to person contact in the workplace.
17. If in use, open sales registers must be at least six feet apart.
18. Point of sale equipment should be frequently cleaned and sanitized.
19. Placing notices that encourage hand hygiene at the entrance of the workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
20. Frequently disinfecting personal identification number (PIN) pads, PIN entry devices, electronic signature capture and any other credit card signature capture devices if in use.
Non-Critical Infrastructure.

Through May 31, 2020 (unless extended by the Governor), county governments are required to comply with the following requirements for worker who do not fall into the definition of Critical Infrastructure Workforce (see above):

1. Screening and evaluating workers exhibiting signs of illness such as cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever over 100.4 degrees, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell.
2. Posting a sign on the front of the facility stating that individuals who have a fever or other symptoms of COVID-19 may not enter the facility.
3. Requiring workers exhibiting signs of illness to not report to work or to seek medical attention.
4. Enhancing sanitation as appropriate.
5. Disinfecting common surfaces regularly.
6. Requiring hand washing or sanitation at appropriate places at the work location.
7. Prohibiting Gatherings of more than ten people during hours of operation unless at least six feet may be maintained between persons.
8. Permitting workers to take breaks and meals outside, in their office or personal workspace, or in other areas where at least six feet of space may be maintained.
9. Implementing teleworking when practicable.
10. Implementing staggered shifts when practicable.
11. Holding all meetings and conferences virtually, as practicable.
12. Delivering intangible services remotely as practicable.
13. Discouraging workers from using another worker’s phone, desk, office, work tools or equipment.
14. Prohibiting handshaking and other unnecessary person to person contact.
15. Placing notices that encourage hand hygiene at the entrance of the workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
16. Frequently disinfecting personal identification number (PIN) pads, PIN entry devices, electronic signature capture and any other credit card signature capture devices.
17. Enforcing social distancing of non-cohabitating persons while present on the local government’s leased or owned property.
18. Providing alternative points of contact to provide services, such as outside of the building.
19. Point of sale equipment should be frequently cleaned and sanitized.
20. Increasing physical distance between workers and “customers.”
21. If the local government has volunteers or members of the public participate in activities, prohibiting volunteering or participation in activities for persons diagnosed with COVID-19, having
exhibited symptoms of COVID-19, or having had contact with a person that has or is suspected to have COVID-19 within the past fourteen days.

In addition, non-critical infrastructure locations should implement the following non-mandatory measures, if practicable:

A. Providing personal protective equipment (PPE) as available and as appropriate to the function and location of the worker.
B. Providing disinfectant and sanitation products for workers to clean their workspace, equipment, and tools.
C. Increasing physical space between workers’ worksites to at least six feet.

**Other County Employee Issues.**

County employees and other workers, like other Georgia residents and visitors, in the following categories are required to Shelter in Place through June 12, 2020:

1. Those persons who are 65 years of age or older.
2. Those persons who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility, including inpatient hospice, assisted living communities, personal care homes, intermediate care homes, community living arrangements, and community integration homes.
3. Those persons who have chronic lung disease.
4. Those persons who have moderate to severe asthma.
5. Those persons who have severe heart disease.
6. Those persons who are immunocompromised due to cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medication, etc.
7. Those persons, of any age, with class III or severe obesity (i.e., those with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 40 or higher). For a BMI calculator, see the [CDC’s website](https://www.cdc.gov/).
8. Those persons diagnosed with diabetes.
9. Those persons diagnosed with liver disease.

**Impact of Other Aspects of the Order.**

As county governing authorities have no discretion or authority over the shelter in place, minimum basic operations for businesses not deemed Critical Infrastructure, or requirements for businesses to open to the public, ACCG is not providing interpretation of these portions of the order. ACCG recommends that questions from the business community be directed to the trade association or regulatory board for the particular business. Additionally, the Georgia Department of Economic Development has created [Guidelines for Businesses](https://www.ged.georgia.gov/). Citizens and businesses with questions may also call the COVID-19 Hotline at 844.442.2681.
Questions.

Questions about the applicability or enforcement of the Executive Order to a particular county should be directed to the county attorney.