



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

## MAYOR LORI E. LIGHTFOOT

Dear City of Chicago employee,

I am reaching out to provide a comprehensive overview of the City of Chicago's preparedness efforts to protect all of our residents – including our valued City employees – from the impact of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). It is important that you are aware of City policies that are in place, and that you have the necessary information and guidance both for you as individuals and for stakeholder groups with whom you may intersect.

Our City's public health response and planning efforts are being led by the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and Commissioner Allison Arwady, M.D., who have been working very closely with City, County, State and Federal partners to monitor and respond to COVID-19 for weeks. The purpose of this message is to update all City of Chicago employees on these COVID-19 response and planning efforts and to connect you with local resources for more information.

The best way to learn about the latest information is by visiting and bookmarking [www.chicago.gov/coronavirus](http://www.chicago.gov/coronavirus) for updates at the local level and [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus) for updates at the national level. These websites are being updated every day as the situation continues to evolve and should be your trusted sources for information.

As of today, March 4, Illinois has had a total of four confirmed cases of COVID-19. The first two cases (a husband and wife) were diagnosed in January and have recovered entirely. The second two cases (also a husband and wife) were diagnosed over the weekend in Cook County and are doing well. The investigation into the second two cases is ongoing.

**Much more testing is happening for COVID-19, and we expect to continue to identify cases in the U.S. and here in the Chicago area. At this moment, the immediate risk to the general public in Chicago remains low, and there remains no need at this point for people in Chicago to wear masks or cancel events.**

I'm sure you are aware that COVID-19 continues to spread internationally and has now been diagnosed in at least 60 countries around the world. You've also seen the news about more community spread in the U.S., particularly on the West Coast, with the first U.S. deaths from COVID-19 occurring in Washington State. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has made it clear that person-to-person spread will continue to occur and that it is important for the U.S. to be ready. Here in Chicago, we have already been working for months to prepare for this situation and will continue to remain vigilant and work to protect our residents while we monitor national and international developments closely.

CDPH has promised to immediately share with the public news of any additional confirmed cases in Chicago, and that promise stands. You may hear rumors or read news stories that speculate on local cases before testing has occurred; please know that any confirmed cases will be formally announced by public health officials, including to the media. Similarly, CDPH will be quick to communicate any change in the guidance to the general public. Our goal is to be fully transparent and to keep you informed with up-to-date, accurate information on the local situation.



Based on what we've seen in China and in other countries, most cases of COVID-19 result in mild illness. To date, children appear less likely to become ill, however older residents and those who have other health conditions are more likely to have serious illness.

COVID-19 is a respiratory virus that is primarily spread in the same way colds and flu are spread: by droplets from coughs and sneezes. Tips for staying healthy during flu season also apply to COVID-19:

- Clean your hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- If you are sick, stay home, unless you are seeking medical care. Look out for symptoms such as fever, cough, or difficulty breathing. If you're not familiar with your department's sick leave policy, please talk to your supervisor or HR representative.
- While sick, cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash, and wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces. At this time, no special sanitizing processes beyond routine cleaning are necessary or recommended to slow the spread of respiratory illness.

CDPH has responded to many other infectious disease outbreaks in the past and has strong systems in place to respond to this new virus. More than 100 CDPH employees are already working on our COVID-19 preparedness and response, joined by many others from across City departments and agencies.

As we look ahead, departments, agencies, and organizations should review their emergency operations plans and continuity of operations plans. Meanwhile, each of you can do your part by reading the attached preparedness checklist for individuals and households, and the attached COVID-19 fact sheet. You should also avoid travel to parts of the world with COVID-19 outbreaks, as defined by the CDC, at the [COVID-19 web page for travelers](#). Travelers returning from any country with a [Travel Alert Level 3](#) should stay home from work and school and monitor their health for 14 days after return. Finally, as a healthy community, we need to fight stigma and fear as we look ahead. Remember that viruses do not target people from specific populations, ethnicities, or racial backgrounds. For more information, please visit [www.chicago.gov/coronavirus](http://www.chicago.gov/coronavirus) or [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus). If you have additional questions, please call CDPH's general COVID-19 inquiry line at (312) 746-4835 or email [coronavirus@chicago.gov](mailto:coronavirus@chicago.gov).

Additional planning and awareness exercises, updates, and activities will continue to be scheduled to ensure that all City agencies and departments are equipped and supported as this situation evolves. The success of our efforts to plan and respond effectively will be informed by our ability to coordinate and work together as one City.

Thank you for all your work in this effort, and for all the work that will continue as we move forward.

Sincerely,

Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot