



# Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office

*Sheriff Jerry L. Clayton*

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office Coronavirus Response Update

3/20/20

"It has always been my experience that what we value most during uncertain times is information. A lack of factual information breeds rumor and fear, both of which are destabilizing elements that undermine the societal order that is so important as we face the challenges presented by COVID-19." - Sheriff Jerry L. Clayton

The Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office is attempting to do our part to address uncertainty by providing informational updates and answering frequently asked questions. Below is a list of common questions that we have received over the last week.

### **Will we see a spike in the number of cases locally?**

According to our local public health experts, we anticipate a rise in confirmed cases of individuals with COVID-19. In part, this will happen as more tests are conducted and the backlog of current tests of lower risk individuals is processed.

### **Is it true that you are preparing for a 24-hour shelter in place order?**

Governor Whitmer has not enacted a "Shelter in Place order". She has called up the Michigan National Guard to help distribute COVID-19 supplies.

### **Are police still responding to calls?**

While many government services have been suspended, public safety remains an essential service. While we may choose to deliver those services utilizing a slightly different approach, rest assured that the first responders in your community (Sheriff's Office, police departments, fire departments, ambulance services, dispatching and emergency management, mental and physical health care professionals) remain at the ready to assist as best they can given these unprecedented circumstances.

For the Sheriff's Office specifically, we will maintain a consistent level of quality service with a few additional precautions. Should you encounter a deputy they will be asking you three additional questions. These questions assist us in screening for potentially infected individuals.

1. Do you have a new cough or flu like symptoms?
2. Do you have a fever?
3. Have you been around or come into contact with someone that has tested positive for COVID-19?



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Stigma will not fight Coronavirus but sharing accurate information will. You can do your part to help keep our first responders safe and prevent the spread of Coronavirus by truthfully answering these three simple questions.

Additionally, deputies will be taking certain non-emergent reports over the phone. Telephone reporting is not new, but more cases may be handled in this manner in order to limit the face-to-face contact for the community and deputies.

### **What is being done with incarcerated individuals?**

If you have a loved one in the jail, rest assured that we are taking the necessary precautions to keep them safe.

- To date there have been no known cases of COVID-19 within the jail.
- Even before COVID-19 the jail had protocols and processes in place to deal with infectious diseases. Despite already having effective cleaning protocols in place, we have increased those cleaning efforts. We have specific areas to locate and care for quarantined individuals that have been mandated by the court to remain in jail.
- Medical staff and Corrections staff are assessing everyone seeking entry into the jail. This includes Corrections staff, arrested persons and arresting officers. Arrested individuals presenting COVID-19 symptoms will be immediately quarantined in the jail, staff will be sent home and arresting officers will not be allowed in the facility.
- The jail population is down significantly as compared to last year's average daily population. This has allowed for greater flexibility in our housing plan and creation of more space amongst the incarcerated population.
- A judicial review of the case files of each incarcerated individual has been conducted resulting in the reduction of some sentences and a change in the bond status for some others (from cash bond to a personal recognizance bond).
- Jail visits have been done electronically for several years now. Since this does not require face-to-face contact, visits continue as normal.
- Programming within the jail has been modified to limit outside volunteers from entering the jail. Critical services are still being provided, but some programming has been suspended.

### **How can I help or get help?**

If you need food or assistance or if you'd like to donate food, resources or volunteer your time you can find out how in our recently released resources announcement. You can find that here (<https://local.nixle.com/alert/7874816/>).



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You can also do your part to defeat COVID-19 by following the advice of our public health and healthcare professionals;

- Practice physical distancing by maintaining a 6ft physical gap between yourself and others and avoiding gatherings of 10 people or more
- Practice social connecting by leveraging technology to stay engaged with others
- Try to eat a balanced diet, get rest and avoid stress
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces with isopropyl alcohol

### **Where can I find the most up-to-date information?**

Residents can stay informed by visiting [www.washtenaw.org/COVID19](http://www.washtenaw.org/COVID19).

### **With so much information out there, where can I go to learn more?**

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has released a FAQ sheet that can be found here. ([https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdhhs/2019-nCoV\\_Web\\_FAQ\\_Final\\_02.07.20\\_680693\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdhhs/2019-nCoV_Web_FAQ_Final_02.07.20_680693_7.pdf))

“Together, acting responsibly and in the best interest of each other is how we make it through this global pandemic with as many of us as possible, healthy and positioned to put our lives and this community back together and moving forward.” – Sheriff Jerry L. Clayton