



# KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

In the Pursuit of Extraordinary Governance...

**NEWS RELEASE**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Kalamazoo County Government Calling on All People Who Sew to Make Face Masks**

The Kalamazoo County Government is calling on all local people who sew to make and donate face masks as the community continues to prepare for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The donated face masks would be distributed upon request to community partners that work with the high risk, vulnerable population such as first responders, hospitals, shelters, long-term care facilities, and other front-line staff.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [fabric masks are a crisis response option](#) when other supplies have been exhausted. Homemade masks are not considered Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), since their capability to protect the health care provider is unknown. Homemade masks should ideally be used in combination with a face shield that covers the entire front and sides of the face.

“We know there is a supply shortage across the nation with masks and other PPE,” says Tracie Moored, County Administrator. “This is a way that we can prepare now locally and have our community help us take action to protect our most vulnerable residents and our front-line workers.”

Details about making/delivering fabric masks for our community and first responders:

- The pattern is courtesy of [Phoebe Putney Health Systems](#)
- Remember both women and men in a variety of roles may wear these masks
- When your masks are complete, drop-off at the Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department (311 E. Alcott St., Kalamazoo, MI 49001) Monday through Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 pm.
- Collected masks will be immediately sent to laundry/processing to be prepared for usage.
- If there are any surplus masks after the COVID-19 response, those masks will be distributed to other organizations in need

The Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department (HCS) continues to urge individuals to practice social distancing in order to prevent community spread in Kalamazoo County.

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HCS has acknowledged that there is a lack of testing supplies and a lack of diagnostic testing capacity in Kalamazoo County. In a [Facebook Live video](#) on March 20, Health Officer Jim Rutherford stated, “That is why there is a valid concern about undetected COVID-19 cases in Kalamazoo County.” Currently, all tests samples must be approved by the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS) Bureau of Laboratories and follow their sampling criteria. HCS is working with hospital partners to utilize their labs or commercial labs in order to increase the ability to test more individuals. “As more labs become available in our community, the guidelines for testing may broaden. We are also working to secure more testing supplies. We must alleviate the burden on our healthcare system right now and safeguard the supplies that we do have for our most ill and vulnerable residents,” stated Rutherford.

Kalamazoo County Government will have the face mask pattern and instructions on their website at [www.kalcounty.com](http://www.kalcounty.com).

Bronson Healthcare will also be collecting homemade masks and other new/unused personal protective equipment. Details will be released on Saturday, March 21 and published on [bronsonhealth.com](http://bronsonhealth.com).

### **COVID-19 Questions**

For medical-related questions regarding COVID-19, the public or providers may call 269-373-5267, Sunday through Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. MDHHS has activated a hotline for community questions as well. Their hours are Sunday through Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at 888-535-6136.

For questions regarding the Governor’s Executive Order 2020-9, owners may call Environmental Health Division staff at 269-373-5210.

For immediate emotional support or crisis intervention, call (269)381–HELP ( 4357). For information, and to get connected to resources available in your community, dial 2-1-1. Both of these free and confidential services are provided by Gryphon Place 24/7.

### **Prevention**

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. [[English](#). [Chinese](#). [Spanish](#).]

Older adults over the age of 60 and people with chronic medical conditions have an [increased risk for serious illness from COVID-19](#). If you are at a higher risk of getting sick from COVID-19, you should take everyday precautions to keep space between yourself and others. When you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact and wash your hands often. The CDC is recommending for higher risk individuals to avoid crowds, visiting long-term care facilities, cruise travel and non-essential air travel as much as possible

All individuals should take the following necessary precautions:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) recommendations for using a facemask.
  - CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
  - Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for [health workers](#) and [people who are taking care of someone in close settings](#) (at home or in a health care facility).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
  - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

Patients with confirmed infection have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19, call your health care provider. If you do not have a health care provider, call the nearest hospital.

**REMEMBER:** [Discrimination harms public health](#). People of Asian descent, including Chinese Americans, are not more likely to get coronavirus than anyone else. Always [share accurate information](#) about a virus and how it spreads. It is important to remember that stigma and discrimination occur when people associate an infectious disease, such as COVID-19, with a population or nationality. COVID-19 does not target people from specific populations, ethnicities or racial background. Suspected discrimination can be [reported](#) to the Michigan Department of Civil Rights.

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