



For Immediate Release

3/27/2020

Contact: (209) 953-6200
Fax: (209) 953-6268
oes_infoofficer@sjgov.org

San Joaquin County Public Health Services and Office of Education Order School Districts to Remain Closed to Protect Residents from COVID-19

(STOCKTON) Today, the San Joaquin County Department of Public Health Services distributed a letter to school districts countywide reminding them of the guidelines set in the current local emergency declaration and requiring them to remain closed until further notice to protect and preserve public health from the spread of COVID-19.

“We recently became aware of an expressed desire and plan by some school districts within San Joaquin County to reopen their schools and return to normal operations as soon as April 6, 2020,” said Dr. Maggie Park, San Joaquin County’s Public Health Officer. “While I appreciate the desire to return to normalcy, we remain committed to San Joaquin County’s most recent local emergency [Order](#) issued March 26, 2020, for all educational institutions in the County to remain closed until the Order is modified or rescinded.”

Exceptions to the general prohibition of public gatherings have been made only for schools to provide materials for distance learning, distribution of meals and childcare for essential critical infrastructure workers. Exceptions have also been made for academies, training facilities and courses graduating students that comprise essential workforce for all identified critical sections.

“During this unprecedented public health emergency, it is our responsibility to ensure the safety of our children, our families, and our entire community,” said James Mousalimas, San Joaquin County Superintendent of Schools. “I fully support the San Joaquin County Public Health Officer’s decision that all schools in San Joaquin County should remain closed. School closures will help prevent the transmission of COVID-19, which is essential to protecting the most vulnerable members of our community and reducing the potential strain on our health care system. Educators across San Joaquin County will continue to work diligently to provide meals and instructional opportunities for all children.”

As a result of several local emergency proclamations issued by San Joaquin County since March 12, 2020, the County Public Health Officer has the authority to take any preventive measure that may be necessary to protect and preserve the public health over the County and all cities within the County. Accordingly, the County Public Health Officer has determined that such necessary preventative measures included the closure of “all businesses in the County including for profit, non-profit, or educational entities, regardless of the nature of the service, the function they perform, or its corporate or entity structure” except as specifically exempted.

“These County Orders were issued based on evidence of increasing transmission of COVID-19 in San Joaquin County and worldwide, scientific evidence regarding the most effective approach to slow transmission of communicable diseases like COVID-19, and best practices as currently known and available to protect the public from the risk of spread of or exposure to COVID-19. Likewise, these County Orders were intended to reduce the likelihood of exposure to COVID-19, thereby slowing the spread of COVID-19 in our community and communities worldwide,” Dr. Park concluded.

According to the March 26th Order, incidences of COVID-19 are accelerating in San Joaquin County at an intensifying rate and that all necessary steps must be taken over the next several weeks to reduce the spread of the virus. This includes the continued closures of schools, restricting non-essential businesses as well as travel and all gatherings of any number of people occurring outside a place of residence are prohibited (except for essential business and services). The Public Health Officer is continually re-evaluating the COVID-19 emergency and will release updated guidelines accordingly.

###