



Office of the Governor

**MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** Nora Meyers Sackett  
Press Secretary, Office of the Governor  
[nora.sackett@state.nm.us](mailto:nora.sackett@state.nm.us)  
(505) 690-7313

March 12, 2020

**Health secretary issues public health order  
suspending mass gatherings in New Mexico**  
*Latest COVID-19 precaution limits large groups*

SANTA FE – New Mexico Health Secretary Kathy Kunkel issued an order Thursday temporarily prohibiting mass gatherings in New Mexico in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The public health order defines mass gatherings as events that bring together 100 or more people in a single room or connected space like auditoriums, stadiums, arenas, conference centers and theaters.

**The order is attached to this news release. Please read it and share.**

**Exempt from the order are airports, other mass transit, shopping malls, shelters, retail and grocery stores, offices and businesses, courthouses, all educational institutions, child-care centers, health care facilities and other congregate care facilities and places of worship.**

“We said yesterday morning the situation would evolve. It will continue to evolve. New Mexicans can expect their health officials to make the best decisions possible as we move through this public health challenge day by day,” Kunkel said.

“I support the public health order, which solidifies the guidance I gave yesterday as to large events,” Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said. “I will say it again: New Mexicans need to be prepared and proactive and avoid large public gatherings. I regret that this will affect previously planned and even ongoing events, but right now public health is the first consideration. We have seen what has happened in other states; we have seen what organizations like the NCAA and many others have decided; we want to be as safe and

secure and preventive as we can be. New Mexico is not going to wait as long as some other states to make the hard decisions about this pandemic.”

The Centers for Disease Control says the virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person when an infected person coughs or sneezes, producing respiratory droplets that can reach others who are within about 6 feet.

The governor had already postponed large events at state-owned venues, including the Gathering of Nations, which had been scheduled for April 23-25 in Albuquerque.

The Health Department on Wednesday reported the state’s first three confirmed COVID-19 cases, prompting the governor to declare a public health emergency, as other states have, and take charge of New Mexico’s response to the pandemic. A fourth confirmed case was reported later in the day.

The emergency order gives the state financial flexibility and access to emergency resources to fight the potential spread of the virus and minimize public health risks for New Mexicans.

The authority for Kunkel’s order emanated from the governor’s original order, and both are set to expire together in 29 days, although they can be renewed.

The order comes midway through the New Mexico Activities Association’s high school basketball tournament, underway at The Pit in Albuquerque. State officials yesterday afternoon advised the NMAA to prepare for an order limiting people in a public space, and organizers announced late Wednesday night that games would continue to be played but without spectators in compliance with the order.

In addition to canceling all large public events and avoiding large public gatherings whenever possible, New Mexico health officials continue to urge New Mexicans to:

- Avoid all non-essential travel to affected out-of-state areas; and exercise extreme caution with all out-of-state travel
- Remain home (“self-isolate”) if you are sick and call the Department of Health at 1-855-600-3453 if you are exhibiting any of the symptoms of COVID-19
  - Those symptoms include fever, cough or trouble breathing
- And continue taking precautionary steps to protect your individual health, such as:
  - Washing your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
  - Clean “high-touch” surfaces daily with regular household cleaners
  - Avoid sharing personal household items

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