



ALLEGHENY COUNTY

ALWAYS INSPIRING

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 17, 2020

Contact: Amie M. Downs
412-350-3711 (office)
412-327-3700 (cell)
amie.downs@alleghenycounty.us

Allegheny County Announces Additional Operational Changes

PITTSBURGH – The COVID-19 pandemic and its corresponding response from the federal, state, and county government has resulted in a number of operational changes impacting Allegheny County government. The following operational changes are the most recent announced in the county:

County Parks

Currently, outdoor areas and restrooms in all nine county parks are open to the public. However, park users should practice social distancing by staying at least six feet apart from each other. If residents choose to use restrooms, playground equipment, exercise equipment, park benches or other outdoor items with touch surfaces, proper handwashing and/or use of hand sanitizer is strongly encouraged before and afterward.

Hartwood Acres Mansion, Boyce Park Nature Center and North Park Latodami Nature Center are closed through Monday, March 30. Park offices are open [regular business hours](#) with skeleton staffs to answer phones and email, but officials ask the public not to visit park offices in person. All park business may be conducted by emailing webmaster.parks@alleghenycounty.us or calling 412-350-2455, Monday-Friday, 8:30 am-4:00 pm.

Under guidance from the Allegheny County Health Department, all facility rentals are being canceled through Monday, March 30, and all customers are receiving full refunds. All recreational programs, as well as park ranger and naturalist activities, are canceled through Monday, March 30, and all paid registrants are receiving full refunds. Cookies with Cottontail events are also canceled in South Park (March 22), Boyce Park (March 28), and North Park (March 29). In addition, star parties scheduled for April 3 and April 4 at Wagman Observatory in Deer Lakes Park are canceled.

Park users who wish to cancel facility rentals or paid program registrations beyond March 30 will receive full refunds. Customers should email name, permit/activity number and phone number to webmaster.parks@alleghenycounty.us or call 412-350-2455, Monday-Friday, 8:30 am-4:00 pm. This policy will remain in effect until further notice.

North Park and South Park golf courses are currently closed for annual maintenance and aeration.

Parks officials join the Allegheny County Health Department in encouraging the most vulnerable groups, which include the elderly, those with underlying medical conditions, and those who are currently sick, to avoid large events and mass gatherings, as well as other settings where there is close contact with a large group of people.

County Jail

Confined areas at the Allegheny County Jail undoubtedly present challenges, but through experience and defined policies, jail staff are adept at taking precautions to mitigate and eliminate the spread of illness or disease. The jail faces hurdles each year in dealing with influenza and other infectious illnesses between inmates and staff, and, through infection control procedures, the facility has been able to curb these conditions.

With COVID-19, jail administration has taken additional steps, including:

- Increased availability of authorized cleaning agents effective at disinfecting the virus, as well as regularly scheduled mandatory cleaning sessions across the entire facility.
- Reducing access to the jail from non-essential visitors by temporarily suspending professional and social visits.
- Additional screening for new inmates at point of admission and incoming jail staff.
- Conversations with multiple county stakeholders, including the Allegheny County Health Department, to ensure the most up-to-date information regarding epidemiology and risk.
- Continued education of inmates and staff about disease transmission and appropriate hand hygiene.

All stakeholders are actively engaged and are motivated to consider any viable solutions to reduce or mitigate possible risks related to COVID-19, including the possible reduction of the inmate population. Ongoing discussions are occurring with the Office of the Public Defender, Court Administration, Probation and other affiliated parties to determine if there are any individuals that may be eligible for review.

With the exception of the temporary suspension of social and professional visits, inmates have had little change to their daily routines. Presently, there are no restrictions for out-of-cell time due to COVID-19 concerns. In order to mitigate the effects of no outside contact, jail administration began working with the facility's telephone provider last week. Beginning in the next 24 hours, alterations to the service will allow inmates two free phone calls a week. When further changes are made to the system, that availability may also expand.

Allegheny County Jail staff will actively monitor the situation and continue to revisit any operational changes moving forward.

Elections

The Elections Division reminds voters that voting by mail is now an option in Pennsylvania. It's an easy, convenient and secure way to cast your ballot. Apply by 5:00 pm on Tuesday, April 21, and return your ballot by 8:00 pm on Tuesday, April 28. To learn more about voting by mail and to apply, visit www.votespa.com.

All public voting system demonstrations have now been canceled through Tuesday, March 31, including those at Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh branches, suburban libraries and Monroeville Mall. In addition, demonstrations at Mt. Lebanon Public Library on April 5 and the Mall at Robinson on April 18 and April 19 are canceled.

The Elections Division reminds poll workers that all training classes have been postponed through Friday, March 27.

Allegheny County Law Library

The Allegheny County Law Library located in Room 921 of the City-County Building is closed until further notice.

For a full list of impacted departments and changes, visit www.alleghenycounty.us/coronavirus.

###

Office of County Executive Rich Fitzgerald
101 Courthouse | 436 Grant Street | Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Phone: 412-350-6500 | Fax: 412-350-6512
www.alleghenycounty.us

Follow us: [allegheny alerts](#) | [facebook](#) | [instagram](#) | [linkedin](#) | [twitter](#) | [youtube](#)