

## MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: March 16, 2020

### DeKalb County COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Information

#### From the DeKalb County Emergency Management Agency:

FORT PAYNE, Ala. — Earlier today, the DeKalb County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) held a joint press briefing to discuss COVID-19 preparation.

**DeKalb County Commission President Ricky Harcrow said at the press conference:** *“Our first priority is always public safety and though we may not be affected right now certainly we will be. Therefore we will be proactive in our decisions. There are many unknowns and we only can continue with the advice of those we know and trust. We know that personal hygiene is right now the best avenue to avoid contracting the virus and we intend to do that to the best of our ability. Avoid larger gatherings as much as possible, and admittedly that is easy to talk about and hard to do.”*

*“I am confident that our citizens will do the best they can to help themselves and to help those around them. We have seen that take place many times before in times of emergencies. Our EMA Directors and law enforcement officials have been in contact with others in our state and over the nation. Our school officials are very much on top of the situation on a daily basis. I am ordering our senior citizens centers closed until further notice being at the end of business tomorrow. Also, those Council on Aging officials are also keeping close tabs on the gathering places where our senior citizen congregate and the vehicles that transport them.”*

#### **Closings/Important Information for the County:**

**DeKalb County Sheriff’s Office:** Beginning at 4 pm on March 16<sup>th</sup>, The DeKalb County Sheriff’s Office will perform law enforcement duties as normal. The DCSO will have an increased law enforcement presence in the county during this time.

The office, however, will be closed to the public until further notice. If you need a report, contact them at (256)845-3801. Pistol Permits will only be renewed or issued online, by visiting <http://www.dekalbcountysheriff.org> and choosing the “Pistol Permit” section from the left side menu. If you are using a mobile device, you must choose the “Full Site” to find this option.

In the Detention Center, Corrections Officers have already begun screening inmates upon admittance for symptoms. Recommendations from the Alabama Department of Public Health are being followed. All inmate visitation will be handled remotely at <http://www.jailfunds.com> until further notice. Call the jail at (256)845-8565 for bond information.

**DeKalb County Commission Office:** The administrative offices will be open from 10 am to 2 pm beginning March 18<sup>th</sup>. Those without urgent business are being encouraged to wait. The regularly scheduled commission meeting on March 24<sup>th</sup> has been cancelled. Meetings in the future will be reviewed as necessary.

**DeKalb County Public Library:** The Public Library will be closed at the end of the day tomorrow (March 17) until further notice.

**DeKalb Regional Medical Center (DRMC):** During the press conference, DRMC Representative Patrick Trammell stressed the importance of citizens contacting their healthcare provider if they have symptoms for screening and testing. This will ensure that space will be available in the hospital for emergency situations.

**DeKalb County and Fort Payne City Schools:** DeKalb County Schools Superintendent Dr. Jason Barnett and Fort Payne City Schools Superintendent Jim Cunningham discussed the modified schedule and meals schedule.

Dr. Jason Barnett said that DeKalb County Board of Education will be closed from the end of the day today (March 16<sup>th</sup>) until April 6<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Barnett also stated that meals will be provided at a pickup sight in each town near a school between 10 am and 2 pm. The pickup sights and schedule will be posted tomorrow via the board of education's social media.

Superintendent Jim Cunningham stated that Fort Payne City Schools will be closed from the end of the day today (March 16<sup>th</sup>) until April 6<sup>th</sup>. Starting tomorrow (March 17<sup>th</sup>) Fort Payne Middle School, Williams Avenue Elementary School, and Will's Valley Elementary School will all have meals prepared for students at 11 am to 12 pm. Three buses will also be ran to bring students to eat. Bus route 1 will be ran to Fort Payne Walking Park (11:00 am -11:15 am), Stewart Court Apartments (11:30 am -11:45 am), Green Acres Trailer Park (12:00 pm – 12:30 pm), and Fort Payne Family Worship Center (12:45 pm – 1:00 pm). Bus Route 2 will be run to 13<sup>th</sup> Street Apartments (11:00 am – 11:15 am), Fort Payne Church of Christ (11:30 am – 11:45 am), Mountain Trace Apartments (12:00 pm – 12:15 pm), and Briarwood Apartments (12:45 pm – 1:00 pm). Bus Route 3 will run to the Five Points Bus Stop (11:00 am – 11:30 am) and Fischer Rescue Squad (12:00 pm – 12:30 pm).

**DeKalb County Emergency Management Agency:** DeKalb County EOC will operate 24-7 via remote access and in office options. The 24-7 telephone for questions, concerns, or to seek answers is **(256)845-8569**.

**City of Fort Payne:** Fort Payne Mayor Larry Chesser stated that the Recreation Center, Golf Course, and Coal & Iron Building will all remain closed until further notice. Events scheduled during this time will be re-scheduled. The parks in the city will remain open.

**The DeKalb County Courthouse:** Starting on March 18<sup>th</sup> until April 16<sup>th</sup>, the DeKalb County Courthouse will be open on a modified schedule from 10 am to 2 pm. People seeking entrance to the courthouse will be screened by security at the door for symptoms. Admittance will be limited to those with pertinent business at the courthouse, meaning that only those necessary will be admitted and family/friends may be asked to wait outside.

***In closing, DeKalb County Commission President Ricky Harcrow said: "I am so appreciative of our people in DeKalb County for your resilience and perseverance. We will be making decisions in the coming days in the most judicious way possible. Some decisions may have to be re-evaluated in the coming days because we are sailing in uncharted waters. To our mayors, hospital personnel, education officials, EMA; we at this time owe you all a debt of gratitude."***

***"We have the best team assembled that can be expected. This is not our first emergency situation. We will come through this and do everything we can to hold the inconveniences to a minimum, but there will be some for all of us. Whatever we do will likely not be enough, however***

*we will evaluate our situation on a daily basis and make adjustments as best we can at the time.”*

*“Again, I so much appreciate your help and resources. Our staff here at my office and every office are wonderful and have offered their services in anyway and anywhere they may be needed. I want to thank each of you for your marvelous cooperation.”*