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**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.  
Shelby County Health Department

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## SHELBY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT ISSUES NEW “SAFER AT HOME” ORDER TO SLOW THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

*Medical community expresses support as hospitals face capacity concerns*

**Shelby County, TN** – Today, the Shelby County Health Department issues Face Mask Order No. 4 and the “Safer at Home” Health Directive No. 16. These directives consider the rapid spread of COVID-19 through the community, the loss of over 800 lives to the virus, and the current strain on capacity at area hospitals. The “Safer at Home” Directive provides a balanced solution that limits social gatherings, continues to encourage personal responsibility, and clearly defines risky activities. The Health Department will continue to monitor compliance and may make additional recommendations as necessary. All Shelby County residents are encouraged to submit instances of non-compliance to the Shelby County Health Department COVID-19 hotline by calling 901-222-MASK (6275).

A summary of the “Safer at Home” Health Directive is below:

- During the four weeks from December 26, 2020 to January 22, 2021, residents of Shelby County are asked to remain home as much as possible.
- Retail capacity decreased to 50%
- Indoor dining capacity at 25%
- Gyms and fitness facilities capacity decreased to 50%, including staff
- Social activities related to entertainment and recreation should be curtailed because they expose everyone to unnecessary risks of spreading COVID-19. This would include, for example, indoor receptions, parties, or events that are not related to places of worship, weddings, and funerals.

- Health Directive No. 16 strongly encourages employers to allow non-essential employees to work remotely (where feasible).
- All previously approved events that were to occur during the effective dates of this “Safer at Home” should reschedule their event or contact the Health Department to determine whether their event may still proceed.
- Businesses that provide goods or services exclusively through curbside service and pickup, drive-thru, shipment, delivery, or virtually may continue.
- Certain listed businesses, including some that provide services to customers onsite, may continue to operate (see number 9 beginning on page 4).
- Due to the risk of viral transmission, Health Directive No. 16 strongly discourages any on-site dining.
- All safety measures for individuals, services, and businesses that were in the previous Health Directive No. 15 will continue under the new Health Directive No. 16.

The Health Department also released today Face Mask Directive No. 4, which:

- Clarifies that masks are required in gyms and fitness facilities unless a customer has a medical condition that prevents him/her from wearing a mask, and if that is the case, a face shield is required.
- Clarifies that language for dining experiences to require a mask unless a customer is “seated and dining (eating/drinking).”

Full text of Health Directive No. 16 and Face Mask Order No. 4 may be viewed at [www.shelbytnhealth.com/healthdirectives](http://www.shelbytnhealth.com/healthdirectives).

Health Directive No. 16 is necessary because in recent weeks, transmission of the virus has accelerated at an alarming pace. Over the past seven days, Shelby County has averaged more than 670 new cases per day and more than six deaths per day.

Hospital ICU utilization in our region has exceeded 90% every day since December 7. The influx of COVID-positive patients increasingly strains our health care systems. The Tennessee Department of Health reports that COVID-19 patients account for an average of 25 percent of all inpatient hospital beds and an average of 40 percent of all intensive care unit beds statewide. The influx of COVID-19 patients is putting a severe strain on our 'region's health care systems. Continued spread of the virus threatens to overwhelm the health care providers we all depend on to provide needed care.

"The virus has the potential to spread exponentially across our state. Without the necessary statewide interventions, we have to turn to the tools we have at the local level. Unless we take reasonable action to reduce social gathering, we expect that January could have the highest numbers since the beginning of the pandemic."

**Alisa Haushalter, DNP, RN, PHNA-BC**  
**Director, Shelby County Health Department**

"Although Shelby County has been one of the best at responding to COVID-19 in our state, Tennessee is on fire. If the state does not act with an effort to combat the current surge, we will have to do something at the local level. If we do not, the numbers we have seen recently foreshadow a very difficult January. The numbers we have seen recently mean lives could be at stake. We can summon the capacity to dig a little deeper and continue the course."

**Lee Harris**  
**Shelby County Mayor**

Medical experts across Shelby County agree on the need for decisive action to flatten the curve, reduce illnesses, and save lives.

"This virus is spreading at an exponential rate, and many of the infected patients that contract COVID-19 are requiring admission to our hospitals. Our systems are already under tremendous strain. We do not want to get to a point where we have no hospital beds available. Such a situation would affect all of us because anyone of us can have an emergency which may require hospital care. Furthermore, our analysis shows that if no action is taken, then the number of daily deaths over the next several months will increase significantly."

**Dr. Manoj Jain, MD, M.P.H.**  
**Infectious Disease Advisor to Mayor of Memphis**

"Our hospital capacity is under severe strain. We should do everything we can right now. These are tough decisions. I get that. However, people could die. We will get through this, but we are asking everyone to please practice the social distancing, wear a mask, and try to avoid social gathering for the next 4 weeks."

**Dr. Jeff Warren, MD**  
**Memphis City Council Member**

"Although no one wants additional restrictions, we believe that at this point we have to do everything we can to remind the public of the importance of reducing social gatherings. That is our tool for slowing the spread. These additional restrictions show to me a very concerted effort to understand what is happening in our community right now and, with the limited tools available, what we might do to bring down the transmission rate."

**Dr. Jon McCullers**  
**Senior Executive Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs, UTHSC**

Hospital Administrators and CEOs also agree there is a need to take decisive action against the community spread of COVID-19.

"Since the start of this pandemic, protecting the health and safety of our community has been our top priority. With the surge we have experienced over the past two weeks, I believe a return to Phase One is the best tool we have to protect the health and safety of those we serve. I support this as a necessary step based on COVID trends in our area. By working together and following proven infection prevention best practices, we can once again reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in our community, and hopefully

we can spend time with our loved ones in the New Year.”

**Michael Ugwueke, DHA, FACHE**  
**President & Chief Executive Officer**  
**Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare**

“Though the COVID-19 pandemic continues to present unique challenges for everyone, it is important to us that you know we have the processes and protective supplies in place to provide care safely,” said Sally Deitch, Market CEO of Saint Francis Healthcare. “The most effective safety measures we can take against COVID-19 continue to be wearing a mask, washing our hands, and maintaining social distance. These measures are important during the holidays as we continue to see a surge in COVID cases and hospitalizations. The Shelby County Health Department’s health directive will further encourage us all to do our part in reducing the spread of COVID-19 in our community.”

**Sally Deitch**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**St. Francis Healthcare**

“With coronavirus surging at a record pace in this community, Regional One Health joins with the other hospital systems who care for the individuals affected by this pervasive and ongoing pandemic. From our staff, nurses, and doctors, everyone is doing their part to continue to provide high quality care to our patients.

High transmission of COVID-19 in the community has created the most challenging conditions we have seen since the beginning of the pandemic. As the Shelby County Health Department makes determinations to reduce the risks of COVID-19, our community must make a conscious and collective effort to slow the spread of COVID-19. I urge everyone to practice social distancing, wear your masks appropriately, and do not gather in crowds or with people outside your household. All must do their part to flatten the curve so that we can continue to provide the care our community needs.”

**Reginald Coopwood, MD**  
**MD, President and CEO**  
**Regional One Health**

For more information about Shelby County's response to the pandemic, please visit our COVID-19 informational page: [www.shelby.community](http://www.shelby.community).

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