



For Immediate Release
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JEFFERSON COUNTY UNIFIED COMMAND CENTER UPDATES FOR APRIL 24, 2020

Birmingham, AL – The Jefferson County Unified Command Center and its partner agencies have continued over the last week to provide information, goods and services to the people of Jefferson County throughout the COVID-19 pandemic response. Dr. Mark Wilson, Health Officer, and Jim Coker, Director of Jefferson County Emergency Management Agency serve as the co- leaders of the Unified Command Center.

Change in Reported COVID-19 Deaths in Jefferson County and Alabama:

- Recently, the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) and the Jefferson County Department of Health (JCDH) revised the reporting definitions for deaths due to COVID-19. Previously, JCDH and ADPH had worked together to develop a medical review process to determine whether each person who died *with* COVID-19 infection actually died *from* COVID-19 infection. From all the reported deaths of people who had tested positive for COVID-19, only the deaths determined to be *caused by* COVID-19 were counted as “confirmed.” For example, a person with a positive COVID-19 test who happened to die from a car accident would not be counted. While this was an effort to be more accurate, it is not the way most other state and local health departments in the country are counting COVID-19 deaths, and we are anticipating that the Centers for Disease Control will be moving toward greater uniformity in reporting methods across the country.
 - Using the new process set forth by the Alabama Department of Public Health, the following categories will now be counted as deaths:
 - 1) **Positive case:** Those who had a positive test for COVID-19 at the time of death and
 - 2) **Probable Case:** Those who have a physician’s notation of suspected COVID-19 on a decedent’s death certificate.

County Level COVID-19 Data:

- JCDH is entering into an agreement with an independent statistician to conduct the “Expert Determination” that is required (HIPAA requirements) by Department of Health and Human Services for us to share health data at a geographic level less than the statewide level. Note that the county level data we have shared thus far is also already being shared by the Alabama Department of Health at a county level.

For reference:

The first is the “Expert Determination” method:

(b) Implementation specifications: requirements for de-identification of protected health information. A covered entity may determine that health information is not individually identifiable health information only if:

(1) A person with appropriate knowledge of and experience with generally accepted statistical and scientific principles and methods for rendering information not individually identifiable:

(i) Applying such principles and methods, determines that the risk is very small that the information could be used, alone or in combination with other reasonably available information, by an anticipated recipient to identify an individual who is a subject of the information; and

(ii) Documents the methods and results of the analysis that justify such determination;

- JCDH is working on plans to build up the testing and contact tracing capacity that will be needed to keep the community as safe as possible as social distancing orders are gradually relaxed.
- Additional test sites are continuing to be developed; some of these will be “pop-up” (mobile) sites designed to serve different areas of the county over time.

Food Needs:

- If anyone in the County is in need of food/meals please call the United Way 2-1-1 line. The United Way needs your contact information and your zip code. Based on your location they will connect you to the appropriate agency to help fill your needs. The United Way also has a line for senior citizens 1-800-AGE-LINE (800-243-5463). Seniors or their family members can call and get them set up for Meals on Wheels where applicable.

Volunteering:

- If anyone within Jefferson County has the desire to donate their time to volunteer during this time of need, the Command Center has centralized opportunities. Anyone interested should visit <https://olc.alabamafirecollege.org/> to register, take a brief online training, and select your area of interest. Once completed save your form and a member of the Command team will be in touch. Please do not volunteer if you have health issues such as asthma, diabetes, heart or lung issues.

Jefferson County Unified Command Information Center:

- The Command Center has expanded the capabilities of the newly established information website by now providing the information in Spanish. The website is where the public can get the most up to date numbers on the coronavirus in our community. The site has real-time updates on case numbers; individuals tested, deaths, testing locations and preparedness information. The information for the site is compiled by the Jefferson County Dept. of Health, Alabama Dept. of Health and Centers for Disease Control: COVID-19 Resources.
- <http://data-jeffco-al.opendata.arcgis.com/pages/covid-19-in-jefferson-county-alabama>

Remember, over the weekend, to avoid unnecessary shopping. If you must go into a store or another space where you are likely to encounter other people, wear a face covering. Be sure to use hand sanitizer or wash your hands carefully before you touch your face.

The Unified Command Center will provide regular updates on Tuesdays and Fridays, or as needed.

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