



*Stronger Counties. Stronger Ohio.*

209 East State Street • Columbus, Ohio 43215-4309  
Phone: 614-221-5627 • Fax: 614-221-6986  
Toll Free: 888-757-1904 • [www.ccao.org](http://www.ccao.org)

Cheryl Subler, Executive Director

**March 20, 2020**

TO: ALL COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, COUNTY EXECUTIVES, COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBERS,  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATORS AND COUNTY CLERKS

FROM: CHERYL SUBLER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
RACHEL MASSOUD, POLICY ANALYST  
ADAM SCHWIEBERT, POLICY ANALYST

RE: MARCH 20, 2020 COVID-19 UPDATES

### **Gov. DeWine Press Conference**

Today, Gov. DeWine held another press conference regarding the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Ohio now has 169 confirmed cases in 28 counties. There has been one COVID-19 related death.

The governor stressed that nonessential workers should not be going into the office during this time.

A video of the governor's March 20<sup>th</sup> press conference can be found [here](#). The administration plans to continue daily press briefings at 2 pm. Press conferences can be viewed on [www.ohiochannel.org](http://www.ohiochannel.org).

### **Recording of OCCO Webinar on COVID-19 and Employment Law issues**

The PowerPoint of today's OCCO Webinar on employment law issues relating to COVID-19 is available [here](#). The recording of the webinar is available [here](#). Thank you to Jonathan Downes, Attorney, Zashin & Rich, for presenting. Downes will distribute an FAQ sometime next week including questions he received during the webinar. We will include that FAQ in our daily memo when it is available.

### **Determining Essential County Services during COVID-19**

CCAO has received questions about determining essential county services and a Continuity of Operations Plan during the COVID-19 pandemic. Carri Brown, Fairfield County Administrator, offers the following perspective on the thought process for determining such a plan:

In Continuity of Operations and Continuity of Government plans, county department leaders will have outlined essential functions of their departments. That is a good place to start if you are refreshing yourself on what is considered essential services. If your plan has not been updated in a while, it is okay. The plan will still be a good place to start your evaluation. It will still give you a reference point for the services that are provided and the priorities that are set forth. Each appointing authority can evaluate their departmental plan and priorities in the context of the current pandemic.



Fax: 614-220-0209  
[www.corsa.org](http://www.corsa.org)



Fax: 614-229-4588  
[www.cebco.org](http://www.cebco.org)



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If you were not the one to go through the thinking exercise in creating such a plan, or perhaps you do not have a plan, you can determine essential functions by reexamining the mission, reexamining the services provided to other agencies and the public, identifying supporting critical processes, and considering legal requirements.

The determination can be somewhat difficult because the thought process is not about restoration of services in a period of time following a disaster. It is about continuing basic services in the context of a pandemic. Most people have experience in thinking about restoring services during a weather emergency but have no experience in the provision of services in this environment. The skills are the same for each process, though.

Those skills are calm, steady leadership to review services and develop plans for how they can be provided while keeping people safe. Once you have identified critical, essential services, teams can come together (using technology and social distancing) to create staffing plans, which might not differ greatly from your current situation, depending on how you have already responded to the pandemic.

If you have not already notified essential staff that their roles are essential in times of an emergency, it is a good time to do so. That will help them plan, too. While we are all using alternate schedules, alternate work locations, and technology to provide as many services as possible, things could change.

Many things are changing in this environment.

County leaders are working hard right now and connecting with multiple appointing authorities to organize themselves to provide essential services, such as (but not limited to):

- Law Enforcement/Jail Services
- Protective Services
- Court Services - CPOs and CSPOs
- Utilities
- JFS benefits
- Payroll services
- A/P
- EMA
- Road/Bridge emergency repairs
- Administration to keep critical services going
- Veteran Services emergency transportation

Some counties have provided an alert to staff so that they can plan if the environment becomes more limiting. An example of such an alert can be found [here](#).

### **CORSA Risk Service Control Bulletin on Employees Under a Required Self-Quarantine**

CORSA released a Risk Service Control Bulletin today regarding guidelines for employees under a required self-quarantine. Click [here](#) to read this important bulletin.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

**Question:** Do counties need to declare a “State of Emergency” to receive federal funds?

**Answer:** Commissioners DO NOT need to declare a “State of Emergency” pursuant to ORC 5502.21 et seq. in order to receive federal FEMA disaster assistance (typical emergency management funding through the Stafford Act and State Disaster Relief Program). FEMA has indicated that counties (and other local

governments) are covered by the President's actions on March 13 and do not have to take any action to be able to access FEMA funding. FEMA, in a response to NACo on March 19, 2020, indicates:

“On March 13, 2020, the President declared the ongoing Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant an emergency declaration for all states, tribes, territories, and the District of Columbia pursuant to section 501 (b) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 5121-5207 (the “Stafford Act”). State, Territorial, Tribal, local government entities and certain private non-profit (PNP) organizations are eligible to apply for Public Assistance. States, Tribal and Territorial governments do not need to request separate emergency declarations to receive FEMA assistance under this nationwide declaration. The emergency declaration will reimburse for eligible emergency protective measures taken to respond to the COVID-19 emergency at the direction or guidance of public health officials under Category B of FEMA's Public Assistance program.”

### **Commissioners asked to approve ability of county employees to work the polls**

CCAO has had a long-standing excellent relationship with the Ohio Association of Elections Officials (OAE). In-person voting to one extent or another is an option that the state is considering, and we anticipate being resolved by the Legislature, Governor and Secretary of State. Our board of elections members believe that if an in-person voting day will be set, poll worker recruitment for that event will be more challenging than ever. One tool that exists to boards of elections is the ability to leverage county employees to work the polls with the added bonus that those employees do not have to take a vacation day. This tool is dependent on the county commissioners passing a resolution to allow it. While many counties have already done this, both CCAO and OAE would like to encourage every county to do so, at least for this spring election.

### **NACo Resources**

The National Association of Counties' COVID-19 webpage <https://www.naco.org/resources/featured/coronavirus-disease-2019> includes nationwide information about county response as well as information about federal relief packages relating to COVID-19.

### **CCAO/CORSA/CEBCO Bi-weekly COVID-19 Briefing Call**

CCAO, CORSA and CEBCO will host a biweekly COVID-19 briefing call for members every Monday and Thursday at 3:30 p.m. The next call will be Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>. The call-in information is as follows:

**Dial 1-877-273-4202**  
**Access code 889-229-624**

These calls will serve as a way for us to share information and answer questions from counties, as well as provide a space for our members to discuss their best practices if they wish. If you know you have a question that you would like answered, please send it to Adam Schwiebert ([aschwiebert@ccao.org](mailto:aschwiebert@ccao.org)) in advance to give staff some time to research the answer.

### **Other Resources**

Visit <https://ccao.org/resources/coronavirus-updates/> for updates, FAQs and previous memos. As a reminder, current information from the Ohio Department of Health can be found at [www.coronavirus.ohio.gov](http://www.coronavirus.ohio.gov). If you have questions regarding this memo or best practice suggestions relating to COVID-19, please contact Adam Schwiebert, policy analyst, at [aschwiebert@ccao.org](mailto:aschwiebert@ccao.org), or Rachel Massoud, policy analyst, at [rmassoud@ccao.org](mailto:rmassoud@ccao.org).