



Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

Richard F. Cortez
County Judge

David L. Fuentes
Commissioner, Precinct 1

Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu
Commissioner, Precinct 2

Joe M. Flores
Commissioner, Precinct 3

Ellie Torres
Commissioner, Precinct 4

**OFFICE OF
COUNTY JUDGE
RICHARD F. CORTEZ**

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, March 19, 2020

Hidalgo County Judge Order Limits Mass Gatherings of 10 or more; closes In-room Dining for Restaurants, Bars

EDINBURG – Using his authority under the Declaration of Disaster due to a Local Health Emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic, Hidalgo County Judge Richard F. Cortez tightened prohibitions of gatherings and events to groups of 10 or more people.

He also directed restaurants, bars, lounges, and private clubs to close any serving, dining, congregation or entertainment area, allowing these facilities to remain open for delivery, drive-thru or take-out meals. The order does not mandate shelter in place.

"I realize these are extraordinary measures, but I continue to rely on the expertise of the Center for Disease Control so these measures are a reflection of their evolving advisories," said Judge Cortez.

The order becomes effective immediately upon his signing the document and filing it with the Hidalgo County Clerk's office, which occurred at 5 p.m. Thursday.

This order supersedes an earlier order prohibiting mass gatherings of 50 people that became effective Tuesday. Under state law, Judge Cortez is the director of emergency management for Hidalgo County and may issue such orders for a period of seven days. His revision to Tuesday's order does not begin a new seven-day period; instead his order is set to expire next Tuesday, March 24.

Judge Cortez has already indicated that he intends to ask the Hidalgo County Commissioners Court on that day to extend the order at least another seven days.

"This is a critical two-week period in which all empirical evidence suggests we can mitigate the spread of COVID-19 by avoiding unnecessary contact," Judge Cortez said.

These orders align with similar directives issued by Governor Greg Abbott on Thursday and may be enforced by local law enforcement.

To date, there are no confirmed positive test of anyone in Hidalgo County with COVID-19. A total of 48 tests have been administered in Hidalgo County and have been sent to state laboratories for analysis. Fifteen of those tests have been negative. The remainder are still being analyzed. Others in Hidalgo County have been tested using private laboratories, but those numbers remain unavailable.

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Hidalgo County is home to one of the fastest growing regions in the nation. We provide health and justice to the over 800,000 residents of our county. We strive to be accessible and responsive to our citizens by providing excellent public service through the values of leadership, transparency, fairness, collaboration, respect and fiscal responsibility. Follow our social media feed at www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/followus