

Town Officials Urge Community Groups to Limit Gatherings to Less Than 100 People

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A group of five town officials is urging organizations in town to limit the number of people at events to 100 as a way of slowing the spread of COVID-19, they said in a news release late Tuesday afternoon.

"Out of an abundance of caution and to be proactive in response to potential virus spread, we are strongly recommending that all organizations adopt social distancing policies by cancelling/rescheduling large group gatherings, events and activities that draw approximately 100 or more people," the group said in boldface in the announcement.

The statement comes from First Selectman Jayme Stevenson, Board of Education Chairperson Tara Ochman, schools Superintendent Alan Addley, town Health Director David Knauf and the school district Director of Nursing Services Alicia Casucci.

The announcement was released after a flurry of other news releases, statements and messages from various officials in town about what's being done in Darien to ward off infections from the nova coronavirus.

Darien Senior Center, a town government program, [has already started](#) limiting events to no more than 100 participants, its Executive Director, Elizabeth Paris, said in an interview.

Those events continue, as they do in nearly all other communities in the area and in the state, although [the CDC recommends](#) that "People at Risk for Serious Illness from COVID-19," specifically including older adults "Get Ready for COVID-19 Now" and "Take Everyday Precautions" including:

- "Avoid crowds, especially in poorly ventilated spaces. Your risk of exposure to respiratory viruses like COVID-19 may increase in crowded, closed-in settings with little air circulation if there are people in the crowd who are sick."

Regarding the elderly, the Darien announcement said:

- Governor Lamont also issued specific restrictions on nursing and convalescent homes in Connecticut. Effective immediately, the restrictions permit visitors to enter these facilities only if the person who is residing in the facility is in hospice or end-of-life care and visitors wear proper protective equipment.
- Protecting our elderly and medically vulnerable residents from COVID-19 is our highest priority.

With extremely few tests for COVID-19 done so far in Connecticut (as in most other places in the United States), it's hard to get an indication of how many people with the virus could be giving it to people in Darien or neighboring communities where Darienites work or visit. Tuesday's announcement from town officials points out that the number of tests in the state is about to ramp up dramatically.

Darien Library, meanwhile, has gone further, canceling all of its events, as well as the library's Novel Tea fundraiser. Other public libraries in neighboring towns are still holding events, although the Pequot Library in Southport has ended them through the month of March.

The announcement also repeats various pieces of advice, from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other health authorities, for individuals and families, including:

- "If you or a member of your household is sick, please stay home and consult your primary care physician for directions on how to receive medical attention.
- "Do not arrive at a doctor's office or hospital without advanced instructions. However, do not delay seeking medical treatment if you are sick. Your healthcare provider will have established protocols for you to receive evaluation and treatment."

Around the world, the response to COVID-19 has varied, apparently for the most part on how much of the population has it. China, South Korea and Italy have the most restrictive policies. Parts of the United States

where the virus is known to be more prevalent have taken more steps, sometimes including halting or actively discouraging all public events, as in parts of California.

In New Rochelle, New York, about 15 miles from Darien, Gov. Andrew Cuomo has [ordered a "containment area"](#) created in a one-mile radius of a synagogue, an area where "Residents would still be allowed to move around — but the new policy effectively blocks any large public gatherings in the area, to prevent further transmission of the virus," according to National Public Radio.

Full Text of the Announcement

March 10, 2020

At 3 p.m. today, Governor Lamont declared Civil Preparedness and Public Health Emergencies in Response to the emerging COVID-19 crisis. The Town of Darien's emergency preparedness team continues to coordinate our local response efforts. All information contained herein is subject to change as the situation here in Connecticut unfolds.

The Town of Darien, in coordination with the Darien Public Schools and all town agencies, is immediately adopting policies and practices consistent with Governor's recommendations and directives issued on March 9. **Town Government and Darien Public Schools are considered 'essential services' and will remain operational at this time.** For the most updated school related information, please visit www.DarienPS.org.

Out of an abundance of caution and to be proactive in response to potential virus spread, we are strongly recommending that all organizations adopt social distancing policies by cancelling/rescheduling large group gatherings, events and activities that draw approximately 100 or more people.

'Social distancing' is an important tool to help slow the spread of the virus. While these are very difficult and disappointing decisions, we appreciate the recognition of the important role each individual, family and community group plays in containing the potential spread of the virus. Town of Darien sponsored activities will be considered on a case by case basis.

On March 9, Governor Lamont and his administration issued a series of policy recommendations in response to the spread of COVID-19. At present, there are two test-positive cases of the virus here in Connecticut.

In addition, 54 persons have been tested for COVID-19 with negative results. At this time, the Connecticut Department of Public Health has the capability to test 1200 patients while LabCorp and Quest Diagnostics will soon have testing capabilities which will greatly enhance our ability to screen.

Any testing must be authorized by a referring physician and is now restricted to those already exhibiting symptoms. All test results will be provided to CT DPH [Connecticut Department of Public Health] and local health departments for tracking and to assist in localized response efforts.

Governor Lamont also issued specific restrictions on nursing and convalescent homes in Connecticut. Effective immediately, the restrictions permit visitors to enter these facilities only if the person who is residing in the facility is in hospice or end-of-life care and visitors wear proper protective equipment.

Protecting our elderly and medically vulnerable residents from COVID-19 is our highest priority. If you or a member of your household is sick, please stay home and consult your primary care physician for directions on how to receive medical attention.

Do not arrive at a doctor's office or hospital without advanced instructions. However, do not delay seeking medical treatment if you are sick. Your healthcare provider will have established protocols for you to receive evaluation and treatment.

For up-to-date information from the State of Connecticut on COVID-19, including guidance and other resources, please visit www.ct.gov/Coronavirus. Individuals who are not sick but have general questions not answered by information on the state's website can call 2-1-1 for assistance.

The Centers for Disease Control www.CDC.gov and the World Health Organization www.WHO.int are excellent sources of COVID-19 disease information and travel guidance. Information about local efforts is available on the Town of Darien website at www.DarienCT.gov.

—Jayme Stevenson, First Selectman

—Dr. Alan Addley, Superintendent of Schools

—Tara Ochman, Board of Education Chairman

—David Knauf, Director of Health

—Alicia Casucci, Director of Nursing Services [Darien Public Schools]