

**COVID-19 Update:**  
**Tues., March 17, 2020**



Across the entire country, counties are responding to the COVID-19 outbreak. Like every major county, Tarrant County is acting to limit the community spread of COVID-19 while also considering the needs of local businesses who are attempting to adapt during this difficult time.

The Tarrant County community has adhered to the recently implemented social distancing measures, and so far there has been minimal spread of COVID-19 in Tarrant County. However, there continues to be community spread of COVID-19 throughout North Texas and the rest of the country, and Tarrant County is taking additional steps to minimize the risk to the community.

Effective immediately, Tarrant County is strongly recommending **a reduction in the occupancy limits of local businesses**, reducing current allowed occupancy by 50%, or no more than 125 individuals, whichever is less. **These occupancy limits apply to restaurants, bars, event centers, gyms, hotel restaurants, retail stores, theatres, convenience stores, public buildings, plazas, churches, and shopping malls.**

We are currently excluding grocery stores and airports from these strong recommendations, and **we are asking these businesses to implement social distancing with customers or travelers to the greatest extent possible.**

Previously, Tarrant County issued a social distancing protocol for all public events and gatherings limiting participants to 250 – we are reducing this to 125 or less.

**These new social distancing protocols do not apply to private businesses with limited public assembly.** If you are not included in the list of specific places of business, you are likely considered a private business. We encourage all places of business to follow CDC and OSHA guidelines found at <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>.

We realize these decisions are painful for business operations, but we believe this solution will allow for small businesses to remain open considering the rapidly changing situation. However, **if bars and restaurants do not comply or COVID-19 is not contained, further action may be required to meet public health requirements, including closure.**

For example, if a business is allowed 160 individuals, then 80 individuals would be the maximum capacity, including their employees. However, if a business may have 600 individuals, they would now be limited to no more than 125 individuals to comply with these amended recommendations. Businesses can refer to their Certificate of Occupancy to determine their current occupancy limits.

**For businesses like restaurants and bars, the following specific recommendations can be enacted:**

- Strongly encourage take-out and curbside pick-up
- Remove every other chair at the bar to implement an adequate distance
- If continuing sit-down dining, seat the customers at every other table in a checkerboard pattern
- Have your staff keep count of the customers at each table to ensure an accurate count

We are asking businesses to be diligent in their enforcement and mindful of the public health implications. Once again, we urge the public to avoid public places when possible and to stay home, limiting public contact. We will continue to work on resources to support our community during this unprecedented time.

