

Cornonavirus (COVID-19)

Public Health Authority Fact Sheet

Last updated March 3, 2020

Definitions:

- *Communicable diseases: An illness due to a specific infectious agent or its toxic products that arises through transmission of that agent or its products from an infected person, animal, or reservoir to a susceptible host, either directly or indirectly through an intermediate plant or animal host, vector, or the inanimate environment.*
§25-1.5-102(1)(a)(IV), C.R.S.
- *Epidemic diseases: An illness or condition, communicable or noncommunicable, in excess of normal expectancy, compared to the usual frequency of the illness or condition in the same area, among the specified population, at the same season of the year. A single case of a disease long absent from a population may require immediate investigation.*
§25-1.5-102(1)(a)(III), C.R.S.
- *Isolation: A public health practice used to separate ill persons who have a communicable disease from those who are healthy. Isolation restricts the movement of ill persons to help stop the spread of certain diseases.*
- *Quarantine: A public health practice used to separate and restrict the movement of well persons who may have been exposed to a communicable disease to see if they become ill. These people may have been exposed to a disease and do not know it, or they may have the disease but do not show symptoms.*

Investigate and Control

Per §25-1.5-102(1)(a)(I) and §25-1-506(3)(b)(5), C.R.S., respectively, state and local public health have broad authority to investigate and control the causes of epidemic or communicable diseases and conditions affecting public health. For example, a child with measles in a community with other susceptible children may prompt a vaccination campaign before an investigation of how that child became infected.

Isolation and Quarantine

Per §25-1.5-102(1)(c) and §25-1-506(3)(b)(VI), C.R.S., respectively, state and local public health have the authority to establish, maintain, and enforce isolation and quarantine and exercise physical control over property and the persons of the people within Colorado to protect public health.

Limiting transportation, closing facilities or cancelling events

Per §25-1.5-101(1)(a) and §25-1-506(3)(b)(VII), C.R.S., respectively, state and local public health have the authority to close theaters, schools, and other public places, and to forbid gatherings of people when necessary to protect the public health. For example, this could include closing a restaurant, cancelling a sporting event, or stopping bus or light rail transportation.

Require reporting and Gathering Information

Per §25-1.5-102 and §25-1-122(1), C.R.S., the state board of health has the authority to determine which epidemic and communicable diseases and conditions are dangerous to the public health and require both reporting, without patient consent, of those diseases as well as authorizing state and local public health to have access to medical records relating to such diseases.

Per §25-1-122(2), C.R.S., state and local public health have the authority to inspect, have access to, and obtain information from pertinent patient medical, coroner, and laboratory records from medical practitioners, veterinarians, coroners, institutions, hospitals, agencies, laboratories, and clinics, whether public or private, which are relevant and necessary to an investigation.

The Epidemic and Communicable Disease Control rule (6 CCR 1009-1) names the communicable diseases that are reportable. This rule requires all severe or novel coronavirus, including severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) such as coronavirus (COVID-19) to be reported immediately to the Department by laboratories, healthcare providers or other persons knowing of or suspecting a case (e.g. coroners, hospital staff, school or childcare staff). Further 6 CCR 1009-1, authorizes state and local public health to gather relevant information as part of an epidemic or communicable investigation such as reviewing pertinent medical records, obtaining lists of attendees from an event or business where similar or common potential exposure to a reported case may have occurred, performing interviews of potential cases or of persons with knowledge about the case or administering a confidential survey to an impacted community or business.

Purchase and distribution of medications

Per §25-1.5-101(1)(g) and §25-1-506(3)(b)(X), C.R.S., state and local public health have the authority to purchase and distribute to licensed physicians and veterinarians, with or without charge, as determined by the relevant state or local board based upon emergency or need, approved biological or therapeutic products necessary for the protection of public health. For example, during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, public health distributed influenza vaccine to providers throughout Colorado.

Provide Public Information

Per §25-1.5-101(1)(j)(I), C.R.S., state and local public health are authorized to disseminate public health information. For example, this could include providing factsheets or FAQs to the public, a school about COVID-19 or doing a media interview about the current status of COVID-19.

Nuisance Abatement

Per §25-1.5-102(1)(d) and §25-1-506(3)(b)(VIII), C.R.S., state and local public health have the authority to abate nuisances for the purpose of eliminating sources of epidemic and communicable diseases affecting the public health. For example, culling of specific animals infected with a zoonotic disease to limit spread to people.

Protected Classes

Per §25-1.5-102(2) and §25-1-122(9), C.R.S. state public health shall perform these functions regardless of an individual's race, religion, gender, ethnicity, national origin, or immigration status.

Governor's Expert Emergency Epidemic Response Committee (GEEERC)

Per §24-33.5-704.5, the department convenes the GEEERC to 1) annually review the emergency epidemic portion of the department's response plan, 2) provide expert public health and healthcare advice to the governor in the event of an emergency epidemic, 3) provide guidance for the prioritization, allocation, storage, protection, and distribution of antibiotic medicines, antiviral medicines, antidotes, and vaccines that may be needed and in short supply in the event of an emergency epidemic; 4) consider evidence presented by public health about an occurrence or imminent threat of an emergency epidemic and vote whether to recommend that the Governor declare a disaster emergency; and 5) if a disaster emergency has been declared, advise the Governor, who may act by executive order regarding reasonable and appropriate measures to reduce or prevent spread of the disease, agent, or toxin and to protect the public health including

- Procuring or taking supplies of medicines and vaccines;
- Ordering physicians and hospitals to transfer or cease admission of patients or perform medical examinations of persons;
- Isolating or quarantining persons or property;
- Determining whether to seize, destroy, or decontaminate property or objects that may threaten the public health;
- Determining how to safely dispose of corpses and subsequent infectious waste;
- Assessing the adequacy and potential contamination of food and water supplies;
- Providing mental health support to affected persons; and
- Informing the citizens of the state how to protect themselves, what actions are being taken to control the epidemic, and when the epidemic is over.