

[PRESS RELEASE](#)

TRANSCRIPT: GOVERNOR PHIL SCOTT MARCH 18 ADDRESS ON COVID-19 RESPONSE

18 MARCH 2020

Montpelier, Vt. – At a press conference Wednesday, Governor Phil Scott and members of his administration provided an update on recent mitigation actions in response to COVID-19, including additional details on the closure of schools and child care centers while maintaining child care services for essential persons.

Education Secretary Dan French shared the latest education guidance following the Governor's March 15 directive to [close preK-12 schools statewide](#) and the March 17 directive to [close child care centers statewide](#). Child care centers are encouraged to continue operations exclusively where needed to provide services for [workers who are essential to Vermont's ongoing effort in community mitigation of COVID-19](#).

Health Commissioner Mark Levine, MD, gave an update on the state's response to COVID-19 and its mitigation strategy. Dr. Levine stressed the importance of social distancing and other precautionary measures. To view the latest case and testing data, and important health guidance, visit healthvermont.gov/covid19.

View the full press conference at <https://www.facebook.com/GovPhilScott/videos/1039273673119164/>.

Below is a transcript of Governor Scott's remarks:

As we face a growing number of cases of coronavirus here in Vermont and across the country, there is no doubt these are difficult and uncertain times. It's important for everyone to understand our mission which is to slow down the spread of this virus in order to protect those at risk of getting very sick, which includes the elderly

and very ill. It's also important to understand that even though most of us will have mild to moderate symptoms if we get it, we can all transmit it so we all have a role to play in making sure we don't pass it on to those who are at the highest risk.

To further the point, the best information we currently have from the experts learning from other countries says that slowing it down is the best way to make sure we have the care available to those who need it, especially the most vulnerable who may need hospitalization.

This is literally in our hands. We need everyone to accept this reality and be a part of this effort.

Slowing this down—or "Flattening the Curve" as it's called—is the most important thing we can do. These mitigation steps, along with simple steps like washing your hands, staying home when you can and social distancing, can help protect those loved ones, friends and neighbors who are at higher risk.

On Friday, to act on this strategy, I declared a State of Emergency and we've put in place a wide range of measures to slow this pandemic. From limiting public gatherings and restricting visitors at long-term care facilities and hospitals to banning state employee work travel, encouraging and facilitating telework, extending unemployment benefits to those who have to self-isolate and much more.

Sunday, I ordered the dismissal of preK-12 schools which began today. With it came the challenge of coming up with a continuity of education plan so kids can continue to learn.

Monday, I ordered the closure of bars and restaurants statewide though they can still offer takeout.

And yesterday, I directed the closure of licensed child care centers across the state, however, I've asked centers and schools to provide child care services for those deemed essential personnel. This

includes healthcare and public health workers, first responders and those involved in our State Emergency Operations Centers and many others—because we may need to add to this list.

I realize even as we ask many to step back to help slow the spread of this virus, we're asking others, including educators and child care providers, to step up and provide a critical service so those who are on the frontlines can continue to care for the sick, protect the public and manage this evolving challenge.

I know some won't be able to and that's ok, but for those who can, we appreciate your help. Because filling this need by teachers, child care providers and school support staff is critical to our response.

Understanding how challenging but important these directives are, I've also asked Neale Lunderville and Liz Miller to lead this effort to support the Agency of Education with this critical work. Liz, who served under Governor Shumlin, and Neale, who served under Governor Douglas, have a wealth of experience in state government and the private sector and have already hit the ground running. And they're working on projects beyond education as well.

I want to again remind Vermonters that more measures are inevitable. We're already working on a directive for hospitals to postpone elective procedures. More details will come on this and others. I will continue to make decisions based on science, data and the guidance of an incredible team of leaders and experts I have working with me.

This is a moment of service for all of us, from those working on the front lines in healthcare to those who are simply following our social distancing guidance to protect others. We're all in this together and we will get through it. Just like during Irene, we're facing new challenges every day. I know some are feeling scared, worried and overwhelmed—just like after Irene—and we made it through. And we'll do it again because we're Vermont strong.

In times like this, Vermonters rise to the occasion. We help our neighbors; we answer the call of duty and we get creative to solve big problems. I'm seeing it every day, from healthcare workers, state employees, school administrators and business owners; from those adjusting hours at grocery stores and adding curbside service to organizing online card drives to send love to their grandparents who can't have visitors right now and so many more.

These people, with their compassion and commitment to service, show me that we will get through this and we'll do it together.