LOCAL HEALTH OFFICER ORDER

WHEREAS, on February 29, 2020, Governor Inslee proclaimed a state of emergency within the State of Washington due to COVID-19;

WHEREAS, state law, RCW 70.05.070(2)-(3), requires and empowers the local health officer to take such action as is necessary to maintain health and to control and prevent the spread of any contagious or infectious diseases within the jurisdiction;

WHEREAS, state regulation, WAC 246-100-036, requires the local health officer, when necessary, to institute disease control and containment control measures, including social distancing measures he or she deems necessary based on his or her professional judgment;

WHEREAS, there is evidence of increasing transmission of COVID-19 in Washington State, and scientific evidence and national public health guidance support strategies to slow the transmission of COVID-19 and protect vulnerable members of the public from avoidable risk of serious illness or death resulting from exposure to COVID-19;

WHEREAS, medical evidence and experience with this outbreak further indicates that prevention strategies, including social distancing, are most effective when instituted prior to the existence of a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the community;

WHEREAS, the age, condition, and health of a significant portion of the population of Spokane County places it at risk for serious health complications, including death, from COVID-19. Although most individuals who contract COVID-19 do not become seriously ill, persons with mild symptoms and asymptomatic persons with COVID-19 may place other vulnerable members of the public at significant risk. Further, a large surge in the number of persons with serious infections can compromise the ability of the regional healthcare system to deliver necessary healthcare to the public;

WHEREAS, the implementation of limitations on large gatherings and use of social distancing decreases the risk of COVID-19 transmission to our most vulnerable populations, and is especially important for people who are over 60 years old and those with chronic health conditions due to the higher risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19;

WHEREAS, this Order will reduce the likelihood that many individuals will be exposed to COVID-19 at a single event, and will thereby slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community;

WHEREAS, this Order will help preserve critical and limited healthcare capacity in the County by reducing the spread of COVID-19;

WHEREAS, this Order is issued in accordance with, and incorporates by reference, the March 11, 2020 Governor’s Executive Proclamation on COVID-19 Community Mitigation Strategies;

WHEREAS, this Order is issued in light of the existence of 1469 cases of COVID-19 (including 81 deaths) in Washington State, to include 11 cases in Spokane County, as of March 19, 2020, a significant and increasing number of cases of community transmission and at a time when implementation of large-scale social distancing measures is recommended;
WHEREAS, social distancing measures can reduce COVID-19 transmission by decreasing the frequency and duration of social contact among persons of all ages, this Order is issued to prevent circumstances of transmission that may exacerbate the spread of COVID-19;

WHEREAS, this Order comes after the release of substantial guidance from Spokane Regional Health District, the Washington Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other public health officials throughout the United States and around the world. The local health officer will continue to assess this quickly evolving situation and may modify or extend this Order, or issue additional Orders, related to COVID-19;

WHEREAS, the Local Health Officer hereby finds it is necessary to institute additional social distancing measures within Spokane County;

THEREFORE, as Local Health Officer, I ORDER all “public” playgrounds and playground equipment shall be closed to public use starting March 20, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. and shall remain in effect until terminated by subsequent order.

For purposes of this order, “public” playgrounds and playground equipment shall include equipment for use by children ages 6 months through 12 years in playground areas and equipment for all ages, such as outdoor workout activity stations, of:

- Commercial (non-residential) childcare facilities
- Institutions
- Multiple family dwellings, such as apartment and condominium buildings
- Parks, such as city, state, and community (e.g., HOA) maintained parks
- Restaurants
- Resorts and recreational developments
- Schools; and
- Other areas of public use.

Public Playgrounds and Play equipment shall NOT include the following:

- Tennis / Pickleball Courts
- Skate Parks
- Golf Courses
- Trails
- Sports fields
- Open Space / Natural Areas
- Parks (grass areas, walking paths)
- ORV Parks
- Benches and picnic tables
- Spray Pads and other interactive spray and water features / equipment within an aquatic facility pool.


Robert Lutz, MD, MPH, Health Officer