



## JOINT NEWS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Berrien County Health Officials Urge Commitment to Social Distancing**

(Berrien County, Michigan) – Berrien County is reporting 60 confirmed cases of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and has reported another death in a male over the age of 65 who had underlying medical conditions and had been hospitalized at Lakeland Medical Center in St. Joseph. This additional death brings the cumulative fatality total to two (2) deaths in Berrien County due to COVID-19.

"This loss of life is tragic and we send our deep condolences to the family," said Berrien County Health Department Health Officer Nicki Britten. "We remain committed to slowing the spread of this virus to try to minimize the loss of life in our community during these unprecedented times."

Given multiple recent COVID-19 cases associated with in-person funerals in Berrien County, BCHD urges that families who have experienced a family death to plan a livestreamed funeral so people can attend remotely. This is a solution that allows for the closest immediate family members at the funeral service in person, while keeping that gathering to under 10 people, while other people participate from home. Live chat can be included for anyone who may not have a webcam at home but still wants to be actively involved in the funeral service. Multimedia offerings can be provided to remote attendees, including the funeral program, written eulogy, and family photos and videos. Many funeral homes in Berrien County have already started to implement these remote viewing alternatives.

With many religious commemorations around the corner, the Berrien County Health Department also reminds residents to stay committed to social distancing and avoid in-person gatherings. "While the way we celebrate traditions may be different this year, know that you are not alone," said Health Officer Nicki Britten. "This is a challenging time and while we come from many different backgrounds, faiths and walks of life, we are uniquely bonded by this shared experience. One of the most loving things we can do for one another is to stay home."

Knowing that COVID-19 can spread even before there are any symptoms of illness, it is so important to avoid any traditions that include family and friends or other people who do not live with you. These events include gathering for special worship services, Easter egg hunts, Passover meals, or other events.

There are many ways to stay safe in your worship during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Check your place of worship's webpage and social media for virtual services.
- Celebrate with family via video chat.
- Cook traditional foods at home to enjoy the familiar tastes and smells of the holiday.
- Consider a smaller celebration with your immediate family now, and hold a larger celebration when the pandemic is over.
- If you are setting up remote worship, make sure to communicate with your community on how to get connected.
- Both Facebook and YouTube have options called "Premiere" that will allow houses of worship to pre-record, load, and schedule a video of a service to start at a certain time. This provides a similar feel and comments section interaction of a livestream, but does not require a broadcast live with WiFi. [This article has tips on setting up your video premiere.](#)