



Iowa County Elected Officials: Your staff at the Iowa State Association of Counties understands, values, and support the principles of local decision-making. As such, these recommendations are PURELY ADVISORY and have been provided as suggested guidance only. Operational decisions are best made by those who know what is required on the frontlines, who are you, our local elected officials.

ISAC Members: This guidance document is designed to assist you in determining essential services and how to provide continuity of operations within your county during this period of social distancing established by Governor Reynolds that are currently effective.

Governor Reynolds has continually recognized the importance of local decision-makers in her COVID-19 Directives. Modifications to office hours, work routines, staffing, public access, and mitigation measures should be done through a collaborative process that includes all elected officials and local public health professionals. Be especially mindful of the importance of public health and public safety and encourage collaboration with the officials responsible for carrying out those missions.

We believe a flexible approach should be used in making determinations regarding county operations. It is important that neither an elected official nor the county board of supervisors should be making unilateral decisions about office hours for the elected offices in county government. Regardless of what hours are established, you need to implement social distancing mitigation measures in accordance with policies that have been suggested by the Governor, the Iowa Department of Public Health, and your local public health agency. Cooperation and collaboration are essential in this process. If you cannot implement reasonable social distancing measures your options may be limited to modifying schedules, staffing, and public access hours. When determining critical staff and critical operations, please consider utilizing the U.S. Department of Homeland Security guidelines (version 2.0 modified March 28, 2020) and letters provided to county offices by Governor Reynolds.

Although local governments have generally been classified categorically as essential operations, each individual county must evaluate the necessity of full staffing and normal operations during this emergency. As you begin determining your course of action, consider the following:

- Is it necessary to implement modified staffing and hours of operation in elected offices? Use extra caution when discussing changes to those required to respond to public health, safety, and law enforcement functions.
- Which non-elected office staff are you able to send home?
- At what level are you able to operate payroll and human resources functions to carry out required administrative tasks?
- What precautions may be taken regarding road and bridge crews? For public safety, road and bridge crews should at least be available. Possible solutions may include altering schedules, eliminating in-person briefings, and/or modifying work hours.
- How do landfill operations need to be modified for work hours and public access?
- Remember that collective bargaining agreements may play a role in determining revised work hours and the impact to employees. It is advisable to keep union representatives involved in the decision-making process to the extent decisions implicate collective bargaining agreements.

Please remember, each county determines essential and non-essential services and employees. That decision can be revisited as time goes on. Please be deliberative in the processes and err on the side of protecting public health and public safety during this pandemic. Consider providing guidance to your volunteer boards and committees. Consider suspending all board or committee meetings not essential to public safety, health and safety, or essential public services until the social distancing requirements and gathering limitations are relaxed or eliminated if you are not using electronic technology that allows the meeting to be held remotely.

Finally, strongly consider establishing newly revised operations, office hours, or closures in a formal manner. Resolutions should be adopted in conjunction with your emergency declarations (where applicable) and operational plans should be modified and formalized in as public of a manner as possible. Any measures taken must comply with all statutory and constitutional requirements related to county operations. This includes the requirements that meetings must be open to the public, duly noticed, and materials under consideration by the governing body be made available to the public. The conduct of public meetings must be in conformance with applicable laws and any subsequent directives issued during this emergency. The Iowa Public Information Board (IPIB) has issued guidance on meetings and public hearings during the COVID-19 Emergency. Guidance is available on the IPIB website: <https://www.ipib.iowa.gov/>.

The attached Directive follows federal guidance to determine the businesses and operations deemed essential, which are summarized in the Directive and can also be found here: <https://www.cisa.gov/publication/guidanceessential-critical-infrastructure-workforce>.

RELEVANT CITATIONS FROM THE DIRECTIVE

Governmental Functions - All first responders, emergency management personnel, emergency dispatchers, court personnel, law enforcement and corrections personnel, hazardous materials responders, child protection and child welfare personnel, fire protection personnel, housing and shelter personnel, military, government employees involved in training the above functions, and other government employees are categorically exempt from this Directive.

For purposes of this Directive, state government employees are categorically exempt from this Directive.

Local governments are permitted to designate which functions and employees are essential and exempt for the purposes of this Directive, apart from those positions and functions named in the Directive.