

**March 17, 2020**

## **Be the domino in helping to stop the spread of COVID-19**

MOBILE, Alabama — On Monday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) were urging a halt to gatherings of more than 50 people for the next eight weeks in an attempt to battle the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus.

At this morning's news conference, ADPH officials are now recommending against gatherings of 25 persons or more for Jefferson, Tuscaloosa, Walker, Blount, Saint Clair and Shelby counties where a 6-foot distance cannot be maintained. Additionally, any restaurant, bar, brewery or Category 3 food service establishment in those counties shall not permit on-premise consumption of food or drink for one week, officials said. This order will be re-evaluated at the end of one week. ADPH is also strongly encouraging other counties across the state to adhere to these same guidelines.

"These are drastic times, and we all must make drastic changes," said Dr. Bernard H. Eichold II, Health Officer for Mobile County. "I applaud the local groups who decided to postpone Saint Patrick's Day celebrations to help keep large crowds from gathering and ending Happy Hour attractions.

"A key to breaking the chain of spreading coronavirus is staying at least 6 feet away from anyone who appears sick. It is like stopping a row of dominoes from falling by pulling out one tile. You can help stop the spread by being that domino."

Dr. Eichold said he understands the impact these changes could have on the service industry employees. While dining out last week, his server was a college student who was concerned by a reduction in her hours and how she would continue to pay for school.

"There are many ways to help our local restaurants," Dr. Eichold said. "You could opt for carryout or delivery. You could also buy gift cards now that can be redeemed in the future. These are our neighbors, so we must be aware of ways to help."

Currently a vaccine or drug is not available for COVID-19. Individuals can practice everyday prevention measures like frequent hand washing or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer, cleaning high-touch surfaces with disinfectants, staying home when sick, avoiding handshakes when possible, and covering coughs and sneezes with your sleeve or a tissue.