

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, September 25, 2020

Hidalgo County Health Authority Recommends Delaying On-Campus Instruction until after October 25; County Judge drops curfew

EDINBURG – Public and private schools in Hidalgo County are strongly encouraged, but not mandated, to delay on-campus instruction until at least October 25, Hidalgo County Health Authority Ivan Melendez, M.D. said in new health orders aimed at mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic locally.

And a countywide curfew will no longer be in effect, County Judge Richard F. Cortez said in separate orders he signed on Friday.

In addition, Dr. Melendez is strongly encouraging that school-sponsored activities, including sports, also be delayed until at least October 25. Schools that do reopen must provide county health officials with a reopening plan.

Dr. Melendez also said that schools that return to on-campus instruction are required to report to health officials any student infection of COVID-19 and requires the school campus to close any area the affected student may have frequented.

The orders coincide with new orders issued by Judge Cortez to keep most current COVID-related safety procedures in place.

Both orders are predicated on an executive order issued by Governor Greg Abbott on September 17 that relaxed state restrictions in most areas of Texas except for the Rio Grande Valley, and the Laredo and Victoria areas based on continued high hospitalization rates in those regions.

The local orders by Judge Cortez and Dr. Melendez go into effect one minute after midnight on Monday, September 28 and remain in effect until one minute before midnight on Sunday, October 25.

"Because of a backlog of state information, the daily updates that we are recording are accurate but they do not reflect the most up to date numbers," Judge Cortez said in explaining his decision to end the curfew. "Hospital rates are dropping and the only reason that's happening is because so much of the community has modified its behavior. The fact that people are being more cautious gives me the freedom to lift the curfew so that people have more flexibility in their lives as long as they remain cautious."

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Hidalgo County is home to one of the fastest growing regions in the nation. We provide health and justice to the over 800,000 residents of our county. We strive to be accessible and responsive to our citizens by providing excellent public service through the values of leadership, transparency, fairness, collaboration, respect and fiscal responsibility. Follow our social media feed at www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/followus

Among the safety measures Judge Cortez has decided to keep in effect are:

- Requiring facial coverings when people are inside commercial buildings when six feet of physical distancing is not feasible.
- All businesses operating within Hidalgo County shall have a maximum capacity of 50 percent of its listed occupancy.
- Event organizers are limited to 50 percent capacity at indoor venues and there are no limits for outdoor events provided that seating is limited to groups of no more than ten people.

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Attachments: Signed orders by County Judge Richard F. Cortez and County Health Authority Ivan Melendez, M.D.