



RESPONSES TO COVID-19:

AGENCY OVERVIEWS, UPDATES, AND CHANGES IN SERVICE

April 3, 2020

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COVID-19 UPDATES FROM AGENCIES MONITORED BY THE EDUCATION INTERIM COMMITTEE

Board of Regents/Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

- OCHE is providing guidance, directives, and communications to campuses system-wide on topics related to the remote delivery of courses, on-campus living arrangements, refunds for room and board, telework options for employees, hiring moratoriums, and the rescheduling and/or redesigning of Spring 2020 Commencement ceremonies in order to follow state and federal limits on large gatherings (Info found at the [MUS website](#)).
- Courses are being delivered to students remotely for the remainder of the semester.
- Refunds for room and board are provided to all students exiting the dorms. A relatively small number of students who have no other residential options remain living in dorms and using campus dining services.
- A hiring moratorium suspending new hires and searches is in effect across the system until further notice, with reasonable flexibility for campuses to collaborate with OCHE on extraordinary exceptions for essential hires.
- Employees who can work from home are working from home with regular communication between supervisors and direct reports.
- OCHE is also directing a statewide mental health and wellness campaign for students faced with new living and learning challenges, coordinating campus communications teams in order to promote consistent and accurate messaging, and facilitating calls with campus leaders with the MUS, as well as the community colleges.

All agencies contacted commended their employees in making extraordinary efforts to continue serving the people of Montana.

Board of Public Education

- BPE held conference call meeting on March 27 to waive statewide testing requirements for this spring
- Hiring new superintendent at Montana School for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB)
- Staff are working from home
- Next board meeting scheduled for May 7-8 at MSDB in Great Falls

Office of Public Instruction

- Nearly all staff teleworking; exceptions are finance director, health and safety director, chief data officer, and Superintendent Arntzen's personal staff
- Collaborating with GOV's Office and education groups to provide guidance and clarify expectations for school districts
- Maintaining [COVID-19 webpage](#) with updates and FAQs to support school districts

- Hosting conference calls and Zoom meetings with district leaders to answer questions/provide guidance
- Offering [remote learning resources](#) including online remote learning sharing sessions for educators
- Tracking federal action and funding; preparing to implement distribution of funds from CARES Act

Montana Historical Society

- MHS facilities are closed to the public; all programs are cancelled
- Most MHS employees are working remotely; skeleton crew maintaining building
- Digital resources developed in recent years are allowing access to collections
- MHS is encouraging Montanans to stay connected in a number of ways and making resources available to support learning at home, including a [“quarantine activities” webpage](#)
- Montana Heritage Center planning and design is proceeding via Zoom and other remote means

Montana Arts Council

- All staff continues to work either remotely or at scheduled times in the office
- FY2020 grants are adjusted, as needed, to maintain programming
- FY2021 grant and program planning continues with minor adjustments
- Preparing to administer stimulus funding made available through the National Endowment for the Arts as part of the CARES Act
- June 2020 MAC meeting may shift to an online meeting
- A vacant position is in the process of being filled

Montana State Library

- With the exception of walk-in support, MSL is fully operational and because our services are available online, we only support minimal walk-in traffic anyway.
- Ten MSL staff telework already so their work has not been impacted.
- We are keeping a manager on premises along with one Talking Book Library staff person who is still physically mailing audio cassettes to our Talking Book patrons who choose not to use the online downloadable service.
- With the exception of one employee who should be working home in the next day or two after we resolve some internet issues, all other MSL employees are working remotely.
- All employees are carrying out their normal job duties.
- MSL Commission held online meeting April 1
- MSL has developed a [COVID-19 storymap](#) with daily updated information and resources