



# IOWA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

June 12, 2020

## We are here to help.

*COVID-19 has affected various aspects of life for Iowa residents, communities, and businesses. Information surrounding COVID-19 is rapidly changing and can be overwhelming. To help Iowans navigate information, the Iowa Department of Human Rights has compiled some resources about health and safety, language access, food, employment, grants, and more that we will be sending out in a weekly email. We hope these resources will help Iowans stay safe, healthy, informed, and resilient during these challenging times.*

*During the pandemic, it is especially important for us to serve as a catalyst of information to provide support and resources to Iowans, particularly vulnerable Iowans who are experiencing additional challenges, to help them understand the state's response to COVID-19.*

### **Facebook-Technical Difficulties**

The Iowa Department of Human Rights is experiencing technical difficulties with its Facebook account. Thank you for your patience as we work to resolve the issue. You may also follow us through Twitter [@lowadhr](https://twitter.com/lowadhr) or visit our website at <https://humanrights.iowa.gov>. Our staff are working remotely, but we continue to serve you. You may reach us at 1-800-351-4659 or through our [website](#).

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## **Returning to Work during COVID-19**

### **Reopening**

As restrictions are gradually being lifted, businesses and organizations are facing decisions on reopening and considering how to return employees to work safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to Governor Kim Reynolds' [proclamations](#) and the Iowa Department of Public Health's [guidance on reopening](#), the CDC released [general guidance](#) and a [flow chart](#) to assist employers in making decisions to reopen during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially to protect vulnerable workers.

## **EEOC Guidance**

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) reminds employers that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Rehabilitation Act, and other anti-discrimination laws continue to apply during the COVID-19 pandemic. These laws do not interfere with, or prevent employers from following the guidelines and suggestions issued by the CDC or state and local public health authorities regarding COVID-19.

- The EEOC has updated and expanded its technical assistance publication [What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws](#). The guidance addresses questions arising under the federal Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The question and answer format covers topics such as reasonable accommodation, discrimination, medical screening and inquiries by employers, safety, and other workplace issues.
- The EEOC has provided guidance entitled [Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans With Disabilities Act](#) to help employers implement strategies to navigate the impact of COVID-19 in the workplace.
- To supplement these documents, the EEOC posted a pre-recorded webinar, "Ask the EEOC", addressing questions arising under any of the federal Equal Employment Opportunity laws and the COVID-19 pandemic. The video can be viewed [here](#), and a [transcript of the webinar](#) is also available.

## **Reasonable Accommodations and Teleworking**

In the [March 27, 2020, "Ask the EEOC"](#) webinar addressing the EEO laws in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, a question was asked about a circumstance assuming that an employee with a disability had requested telework as a reasonable accommodation prior to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The employee had shown a disability-related need for this accommodation, but the employer denied it because of concerns that the employee would not be able to perform the essential functions remotely. In the past, the employee therefore continued to come to the workplace. However, after the COVID-19 crisis has subsided and temporary telework ends, the employee renews their request for telework as a reasonable accommodation. **Can the employer again refuse the request?**

The EEOC responded by noting that assuming all the requirements for such a reasonable accommodation are satisfied, the temporary telework experience could be relevant to considering the renewed request. In this situation, for example, the period of providing telework because of the COVID-19 pandemic could serve as a trial period that showed whether or not this employee with a disability could satisfactorily perform all essential functions while working remotely, and the employer should consider any new requests in light of this information. But as with all accommodation requests, the employee and the employer should engage in a flexible, cooperative interactive process if this issue does arise.

## **Reasonable Accommodations for Employees at Higher Risk**

According to the [EEOC](#), if a job may only be performed at the workplace, there are a number of possible [reasonable accommodations](#), absent [undue hardship](#), for employees with disabilities who are at a higher risk for COVID-19. Accommodations for employees

who request reduced contact with others due to a disability may include changes to the work environment such as designating one-way aisles; using plexiglass, tables, or other barriers to ensure minimum distances between customers and coworkers whenever feasible per [CDC guidance](#) or other accommodations that reduce chances of exposure. Other possibilities include temporary job restructuring, temporary transfers to a different position, or modification of a work schedule or shift assignment that allows an employee with a disability to safely perform the essential functions of the job while reducing exposure to COVID-19.

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**Did you know** that the Iowa Department of Human Rights has an Office and Commission of Persons with Disabilities, as well as a Client Assistance Program to assist individuals with disabilities? For more information, click [here](#).

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## 2020 Summer South Leadership Academy



The Youth Leadership Academy is an introduction to leadership skills for youth with disabilities. It will be held August 3-7. The program is funded by the Iowa Development Disabilities Council and is administered jointly by the Council, the Iowa Department of Human Rights, and the University of Iowa Health Care Center for Disabilities Development. Students will learn leadership skills, goal setting, self-determination, civic engagement, and social networking and mentoring. The program is free. Apply by June 22.

For more information and the application, visit the Iowa Department of Human Rights' [website](#).

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## Iowa Spanish Helpline 515-344-3936

The Iowa Department of Human Rights' Office of Latino Affairs, [EMBARC](#), and the Iowa Spanish Helpline Task Force launched the Iowa Spanish Helpline (Linea de Ayuda en Iowa) to assist Spanish speakers with case management services and connecting them to resources during the pandemic. For more information, visit the website of the [Iowa Department of Human Rights](#).

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## Language Access

Governor Kim Reynolds issued a [proclamation](#) on June 10 that continues to ease restrictions on businesses and extends other public health measures, effective June 12-25, 2020. In collaboration with the Iowa Department of Public Health, the Iowa Department of Human Rights provides summaries of the Governor's proclamations and other information in multiple languages, including Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, French, Karenni, Karen, Kunama, Nepali, Spanish, Swahili and Vietnamese.

Visit: <https://humanrights.iowa.gov/covid-19/language-access>.

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## Multilingual Hotline 1-877-558-2609

[RACI](#) and [Lutheran Services in Iowa](#), in partnership with 211, Polk County Health Department, and the Iowa Department of Public Health, have a hotline that will help expand access and capacity to Iowans who are limited in English. There is interpretation available in Spanish, Arabic, Swahili, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi/Kinyamulenge, French, Burmese, Karen, Karenni, Nepali, Somali, Tigrinya, Kunama, Amharic, Nuer, Maban, Vietnamese, Mandarin, and other optional languages. Interpreters will be available 8:30-5:00 with a 24 hour voicemail. For more information [click here](#).

Translated flyers are available in [Arabic](#), [French](#), [Kinyamulenge](#), [Kirundi](#), [Maban](#), [Nepali](#), and [Spanish](#). For a full list, please see the RACI Covid-19 response [page here](#).

Please share! Multilingual hotline: **1-877-558-2609**

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## Local Assistance

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) assists households with a portion of their home heating bills, particularly those facing disconnection or who have trouble paying their utility bill. Interested persons can apply for LIHEAP by June 30 through their local community action agency. Many agencies offer other assistance such as food banks, food delivery initiatives, clothing, diapers, and addressing other emergency needs.

Information about the [Appeal & Hearing Procedure](#) (if someone has applied for LIHEAP and does not agree with the outcome of their application) and a [general overview of the LIHEAP program](#) are now available in the following languages: Arabic (Middle Eastern),

Arabic (South Sudanese), Burmese, Chin (Hakha), French (African), Karen, Karenni, Kinyarwanda, Kunama, Marshallese, Nepali, Spanish, Swahili, Tigrinya, and Vietnamese.

Information about your local community action agency can be found on the Iowa Department of Human Rights' website at <https://humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply>.

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## Housing Assistance in Iowa

If someone is experiencing a housing crisis or homelessness in Iowa, [www.houseiowa.org](http://www.houseiowa.org) is a one-stop site for housing resources across the state of Iowa. The website contains housing resources intended for low-income families and individuals who are seeking to maintain or acquire safe and affordable housing.

The Coordinated Entry system is also an option for assistance. The number is (833) 739-0065. For more information, click [here](#).

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## Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention Program

The COVID-19 Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention Program will provide short-term relief to income-eligible renters and homeowners who are at risk of eviction or foreclosure due to a documented COVID-19 related loss of income after March 17, 2020. There is a maximum of \$3,200 for rental assistance, and a maximum of \$3,000 for mortgage payment assistance. The [Iowa Community Action Association](#) (ICAA) and Iowa's local community action agencies are partnering with the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) and Iowa Workforce Development to assist in reviewing and approving rental relief applications, and will assist renters with their applications.

Additional program details and the application are available at [Iowa Finance Authority's](#) website.

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## COVID-19 Related Legal Information

The Iowa State Bar Association, Iowa Legal Aid and the Polk County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project are co-hosting the next [People's Law School](#) information session on June 16, 2020, 5:30-7:00 p.m. The virtual session will be focused on COVID-19 related legal issues. Topics include employee rights, unemployment, workplace safety issues, evictions, foreclosures, debt collection and stimulus payments. The event is free and open to the public. Online registration is available until June 16. To register, click [here](#).

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## Resources for Uninsured

**[COVID-19 Testing Coverage](#)**

Throughout the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency, Iowans who do not have health coverage and wish to be tested for COVID-19 may complete an [application for COVID-19 Testing Coverage](#). If an individual is found eligible using this application form, the health coverage will only pay for medical tests for COVID-19 but not other medical costs such as doctor visits, hospital care, or prescriptions. To apply for full medical benefits, visit [dhsservices.iowa.gov](#) or go to [Healthcare.gov](#). The Help Center number is 1-855-889-7985.

### **Free TeleMobile Clinic**

The University of Iowa TeleMobile Clinic is offering free telemedicine appointments for patients who are uninsured. The TeleMobile Clinic can help with chronic diseases and medications, acute minor medical illnesses, mental health, and signing up for insurance. Text or call 319-535-2684. To view the TeleMobile Clinic multilingual videos, click [here](#).

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## **Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announces food storage capacity grant offering**

The Iowa DNR is offering a new competitive grant opportunity to help efforts to expand storage and cold storage of donated food. Food banks, food pantries and other non-profit organizations receiving donated food for distribution to food insecure Iowans are eligible to apply.

Information and application materials can be downloaded under the "food waste" tab at [www.iowadnr.gov/FABA](http://www.iowadnr.gov/FABA). Applications will be reviewed on an ongoing basis until available funds have been awarded.

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## **Heading outside this weekend or have questions about DNR regulations during COVID-19?**

In an effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is encouraging the use of the online services for submitting applications, payments and other daily tasks and interaction with DNR staff. For more information, visit the links listed below:

- [Full list of DNR's online services](#)
- [Up-to-date information on DNR services, facilities and events impacted by COVID-19](#)
- [Technical information for regulated businesses in regards to COVID-19](#)

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## **Looking for things to do outside?**

The Iowa Economic Development Authority's (IEDA) Iowa Tourism Office and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced two new opportunities for Iowans to

help celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Iowa state parks and also to support tourism attractions and businesses impacted by the coronavirus crisis:

- A free “digital passport” encourages Iowans to discover new state parks and enjoy the outdoors. State park visitors can sign up online for the passport and receive prizes for visiting multiple parks across the state. The digital passport also will provide discounts to restaurants and tourist attractions near each state park. The passport is a joint promotion between the IEDA’s Iowa Tourism Office and the DNR. To learn more and to sign up for the passport, visit [explore.traveliowa.com/parks](https://explore.traveliowa.com/parks) or text PARKS to 515.531.5995.
- An online gift card marketplace offering e-gift cards or pre-paid admission to museums, zoos, aquariums, wineries, breweries, restaurants, hotels, campgrounds and other attractions across Iowa. A program of the IEDA’s Iowa Tourism Office, the marketplace drives cash flow to attractions and businesses while allowing travelers to visit when the time is right. For more information, visit [traveliowa.com](https://traveliowa.com).

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## State Historical Museum of Iowa to reopen on Tuesday, June 16

The Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs will reopen its State Historical Museum of Iowa on June 16 after closing for several months during the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the first phase of reopening, the museum at 600 E. Locust St. in Des Moines will be open 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Tuesday through Friday. Only its entrance on Locust Street will be open to the public. Visitors are encouraged to wear masks and to follow the health and safety instructions posted throughout the building.

Museum staff are following the latest protocols from the Iowa Department of Public Health and Centers for Disease Control to keep the building clean and safe for everyone who uses it. For more information, please visit [iowaculture.gov](https://iowaculture.gov).

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### **Previous Newsletters**

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[May 1, 2020](#)

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[April 10, 2020](#)

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Are there other resources we should know about? Let us know.

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