

Concerns about the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak continue to grip our nation. As organizations that support the power of parks and open spaces as essential resources for health and wellness, we understand that people may have questions and concerns about visiting their local parks, trails or open spaces at this time.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has flagged mental health as a top concern associated with the COVID-19 outbreak. We recognize that social distancing may take a toll on our mental health, especially during high-stress and anxiety-producing global public health emergencies. We also know that parks provide a connection to the outdoors and green space as well as opportunities for physical activity which studies demonstrate reduces stress and improves mental health.

We believe that many parks, trails and open spaces can continue to be used in a safe manner that allows people to enjoy the mental and physical health benefits these spaces provide. In all instances, we recommend people follow local, state and national ordinances and guidelines regarding the use of these spaces and recognize that these vary from community to community.

In places where there are no restrictions on the use of local parks, trails and open spaces, we encourage all users to follow these recommendations:

- Refrain from using parks or trails if they are exhibiting symptoms.
- Follow CDC's guidance on personal hygiene prior to and during use of parks or trails.
- Prepare for limited access to public restrooms or water fountains.
- While on trails, warn other users of their presence and as they pass, and step aside to let others pass.
- Follow CDC guidance on the recommended size of social gatherings including outdoor picnicking, pick-up sports and other group hangouts, and maintain proper physical distance at all times.
- Observe CDC's minimum recommended social distancing of 6 feet from other individuals at all times. If this is not possible, users should find an alternate location or depart that space.
- Consult their local and state ordinances and guidelines for the most up to date recommendations on park and trail use.

We encourage local jurisdictions to keep parks, trails and open spaces accessible as long as it is safe to do so.

Our local parks, trails and open spaces have always served as places where people can find respite and seek peace and restoration. During this time of uncertainty, these places are needed now more than ever. Our nation's park and recreation professionals are working hard to maintain these spaces and keep them safe, accessible and benefiting our communities during these challenging times. Let us all do our part to use them in a way that respects each other and public health guidance.