



# PUTNAM COUNTY

## BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

2509 Crill Avenue, Suite 200  
Palatka, Florida 32177 • 386-329-0205  
[www.main.putnam-fl.com](http://www.main.putnam-fl.com)

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## MEDIA RELEASE

**For Immediate Release:**

### **Short-term Vacation Rentals Approved to Operate in Putnam County**

**Palatka, Florida May 23, 2020** – In response to a May 19 letter sent by Putnam County Administrator Terry Suggs to the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) to reopen short-term vacation rentals in Putnam County, the DBPR on May 22 approved this request.

The County letter was based upon the Governor's guidance in Executive Order 20-123 (Full Phase I: Safe. Smart. Step-by-Step. Plan for Florida's Recovery), specifically Section 4 where it states "*Counties may seek approval to operate vacation rentals with a written request from the County Administrator and the county's safety plan for vacation rental operations submitted to the DBPR Secretary. DBPR will post and update guidance on its website.*"

Attached to this release is the May 19 letter from Putnam County and the DBPR response on May 22. This information has also been placed on our website located at [www.main.putnam-fl.com](http://www.main.putnam-fl.com). For compliance with the requirements for weekly reporting of arrival/departure and home zip codes of renters, as well as an affidavit of compliance with the procedures listed in the safety plan, short-term vacation rental owners/managers can send this information electronically to [pio@putnam-fl.com](mailto:pio@putnam-fl.com), or mail to 2509 Crill Avenue, Suite 200, Palatka, Florida 32177.

If anyone has questions about this process, please send an email to [pio@putnam-fl.com](mailto:pio@putnam-fl.com).

(2) Attachments



Halsey Beshears, Secretary

Ron DeSantis, Governor

May 22, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Terry Suggs  
County Administrator, Putnam County  
2509 Crill Avenue, Suite 200  
Palatka, Florida 32177  
terry.suggs@putnam-fl.com

**RE: DBPR Approval of County Plan for Vacation Rental Operations**

Dear Mr. Suggs:

The Department of Business and Professional Regulation received your correspondence, dated May 19, 2020, requesting approval to permit the operation of vacation rentals in Putnam County pursuant to the provisions of Executive Order 20-123 as issued by Governor Ron DeSantis on May 15, 2020.

Based on the Department's review of the safety plan for vacation rental operations that accompanied your request, Putnam County has established the necessary plans for operation of vacation rentals at this time. Accordingly, I approve the operation of vacation rentals in Putnam County pursuant to the plans as submitted.

For additional information and guidance related to vacation rentals or other businesses regulated by the Department during the ongoing "Safe. Smart. Step-by-Step. Plan for Florida's Recovery," I encourage you to monitor the Department's Emergency Information Page, available at: [www.myfloridalicense.com/emergency](http://www.myfloridalicense.com/emergency).

As always, please contact the Department if our team can be of further assistance to you on this matter or other inquiries related to Putnam County in the future.

Very respectfully,



Halsey Beshears  
Secretary, Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation



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Palatka, FL 32177  
386-329-0205

**Terry K. Suggs**  
**County Administrator**

May 19, 2020

*Sent via electronic mail*

Secretary Halsey Beshears  
Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation  
2601 Blair Stone Road  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1027  
[Halsey.Beshears@myfloridalicense.com](mailto:Halsey.Beshears@myfloridalicense.com)

Re: Short Term Rentals in Putnam County  
Request and Safety Plan

Dear Secretary Beshears:

As a small, rural and fiscally constrained county, Putnam County and its citizens rely upon tourism revenue through local events and short term, vacation rentals. Similar to numerous other counties across the State of Florida, our local economy has suffered greatly due to this ban as well as the continued loss of income that many rely on to pay mortgages and support local employment.

Based upon the Governor's guidance in Executive Order 20-123 (Full Phase I: Safe. Smart. Step-by-Step. Plan for Florida's Recovery), specifically Section 4, Putnam County respectfully requests favorable consideration of our plan to reopen short term vacation rentals in a responsible and safe manner. Vacation rentals offer safer lodging options than hotels and do more to promote social distancing as it minimizes interaction with staff members, and guests typically have access to kitchens providing them the opportunity to stay in rather than eat out.

Enclosed is Putnam County's Plan to Reopen Short Term Vacation Rentals for your consideration and approval.

Putnam County COVID Facts as of May 18, 2020:

- We have a population of roughly 72,435.
- We have had approximately 2,674 total tests conducted.
- We have 134 confirmed cases.
- Our community positivity rate is approximately 5%

I am available to discuss this matter further and will provide any additional information you may need to approve our request. Thank you again for your time, leadership and support shown to the citizens of Putnam County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Terry Suggs".

Terry Suggs,  
County Administrator

/enclosure – Putnam County Plan for Opening Short Term Rentals

Putnam County is committed to protect guests and property owners during the current COVID-19 crisis. As a supplement to Executive Order 20-123 (Full Phase I: Safe. Smart. Step-by-Step. Plan for Florida's Recovery) and reopening across the state of Florida, Putnam County will implement the following additional measures to enable short term, vacation rental units to begin taking reservations and accepting check-ins upon approval by the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR):

- ✓ Vacation rentals reservations and stays will be allowed from all U.S. states with a COVID-19 Case Rate less than 500 cases/100K residents (<https://www.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/index.html>).
- ✓ Vacation rental reservations, from areas identified by Governor DeSantis as high risk, through Executive Orders, must be for periods longer than the quarantine period established in that Order. Guests occupying those vacation rentals must adhere to the quarantine restrictions or be subject to established criminal and civil penalties.
- ✓ Property owners and managers shall provide a report weekly to the Putnam County Administrator's Office which includes all reservations (Arrival/Departure dates) and home zip codes of renters.
- ✓ Property owners and managers will confirm compliance with these and all best practices via affidavit which shall be provided to Putnam County.
- ✓ Clearly communicate to potential guest the requirements to follow all CDC guidelines as well as any local restrictions that may be in place.
- ✓ Property owners and managers will provide COVID-19 guidance of any local restrictions that are in place during the guest stay and other related local information. The county has posted online all current information related to such restrictions so that it can be easily accessible to lodging operators and guests 24/7.
- ✓ Property owners and managers will adhere to all DBPR sanitation guidelines already in place as addressed under [61C-3.001 Sanitation and Safety Requirements of the transient lodging statutes](#).
- ✓ Property owners and managers will follow the [CDC related guidelines that are for public spaces, businesses, schools and homes](#) which expand upon the State of Florida & DBPR requirements already in place for safety and sanitation for all lodging.
- ✓ Lodging should be allowed flexible time between stays based upon the use of CDC cleaning and sanitization procedures. Lodging units being cleaned are all different and some will take more time or less time, depending upon the size of the unit being sanitized.
- ✓ Signage will be placed at each property highlighting the cleaning protocols between stays.
- ✓ Property owners and managers should supply any and all employees or contractors with [CDC related safety guidance](#) while operating in the short term rental industry units to alleviate the transmission of the virus and provide further protection for employees and guests.
- ✓ Property owners and managers should supply guests with [CDC guidance](#) for guests traveling with pets and service/assistance animals if the property is pet friendly.
- ✓ Property owners and managers should also share [CDC resources](#) to any guest while staying in their units. These resources are available in multiple languages at the CDC website.

Property owners and managers of short term, vacation rentals shall strive at all times to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Social Distancing
  - a. Encourage a safe distance (at least 6 feet); no gathering in groups larger than 10 people.
  - b. Stagger arrival times to prevent congregating.
  - c. Limit access to break areas and look for areas where staff can spread out for breaks. Allow staff to eat their meals in their assigned areas, where possible.
2. Masks, gloves and other Personal Protection Equipment should be worn by all employees who interact with the public, unless a physical barrier separates the staff member from the guest. Appropriate cleaning supplies will be provided to clean their work areas and stations
3. Wellness Checks
  - a. All staff members should receive a wellness check upon arrival to work. The wellness check, at a minimum, will consist of a temperature check.
  - b. Staff members who have a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher will not be permitted to work.
4. Hygiene / Sanitization
  - a. Cleaning personnel should follow CDC handwashing guidelines throughout the day. Wash/sanitize your hands frequently especially after touching frequently used items or surfaces. Wear splash goggles that protect their eyes from air and/or liquid.
  - b. Avoid touching your face.
  - c. Sneeze or cough into a tissue or inside your elbow.
  - d. Disinfect your work area frequently throughout a shift and before/after a shift if it is a shared space.
  - e. Individual hand sanitizers will be provided to employees for their assigned work area and for staff members who move through the property and/or community.
  - f. Surfaces should be cleaned and then disinfected.
  - g. Cleaning staff should dispose of gloves and use hand sanitizer before entering their vehicle.
  - h. Cleaning staff should use cleaning products in line with the EPA's list of products with "Emerging Viral Pathogens AND Human Coronavirus claims for use against SARS-CoV-2," and follow disinfecting procedures should allow for required dwell time to kill the viruses and microbes. <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
  - i. Dirty linens and bedding should be professionally laundered and handled and sanitized in such a way as to safeguard cleaning staff and prevent the spread of viruses and germs. (See VRMA/VRHP recommendations). Blankets/comforters should be removed for laundering and replaced with a freshly washed item, or covered with a freshly washed duvet cover as an alternative.
  - j. Inside and outside trash gathering, gloves and masks should be worn at all times.
  - k. Disinfectant should be used on the trash barrel, and a fresh liner or bag should be used inside the barrel or bin.
  - l. Remove all Magazines, Brochures, Pamphlets, etc. which are difficult to disinfect between guests. Require any literature (e.g. menus, local guides, etc.) be placed in binders with page protectors that can be disinfected between guests OR create a "virtual" guidebook online or in format to be e-mailed.

5. Mandatory Training - All staff members will be required to train on and adhere to the minimum standards established by this plan.
6. Common Areas - Lobbies, Pool Decks, Elevators, etc.
  - a. Common areas should be monitored, and appropriate signage displayed, to ensure social distancing protocols are adhered to
  - b. Lobby areas should be monitored and disinfected throughout the day
  - c. Hand Sanitizer should be provided in all common areas, including lobbies, pool decks and elevators
  - d. Elevators should be disinfected throughout the day.
  - e. Pool furniture should be spaced to encourage social distancing (6ft apart)
  - f. Pool furniture should be disinfected between each use.

Guests of short term, vacation renters shall be asked to:

1. Use remote check-ins when possible to cut down on face-to-face interactions.
2. Social Distancing through a safe distance (at least 6 feet); no gathering in groups larger than 10 people.
3. Turn on all ceiling fans and/or HVAC fans when leaving to facilitate air circulation.
4. All guests should vacate property before maintenance staff enters.