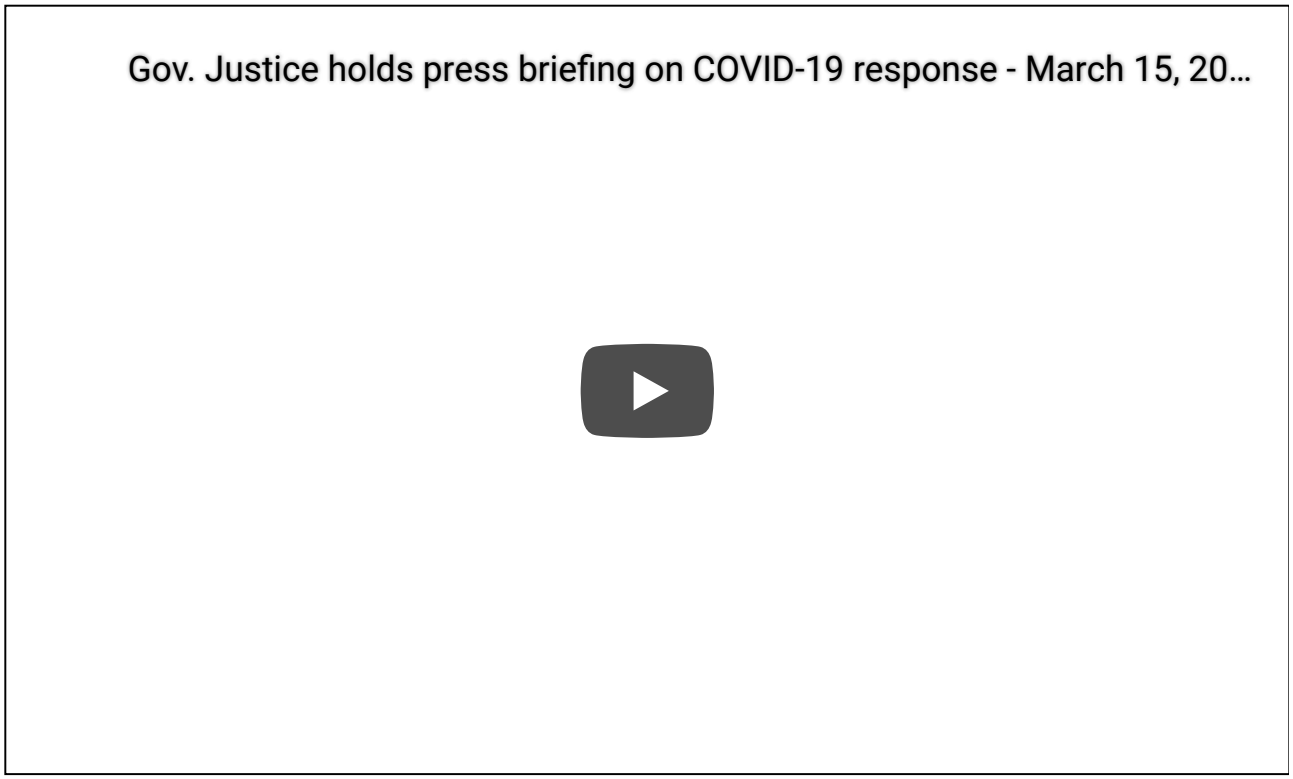
COVID-19 UPDATE: Gov. Justice expands list of vaccine-eligible pre-existing conditions; makes vaccines available to all essential workers

3/15/2021



CHARLESTON, WV – Gov. Jim Justice joined West Virginia health leaders and other officials today for his latest daily press briefing regarding the State's COVID-19 response.

LIST OF VACCINE-ELIGIBLE PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS EXPANDED; VACCINATIONS NOW AVAILABLE TO ALL ESSENTIAL WORKERS

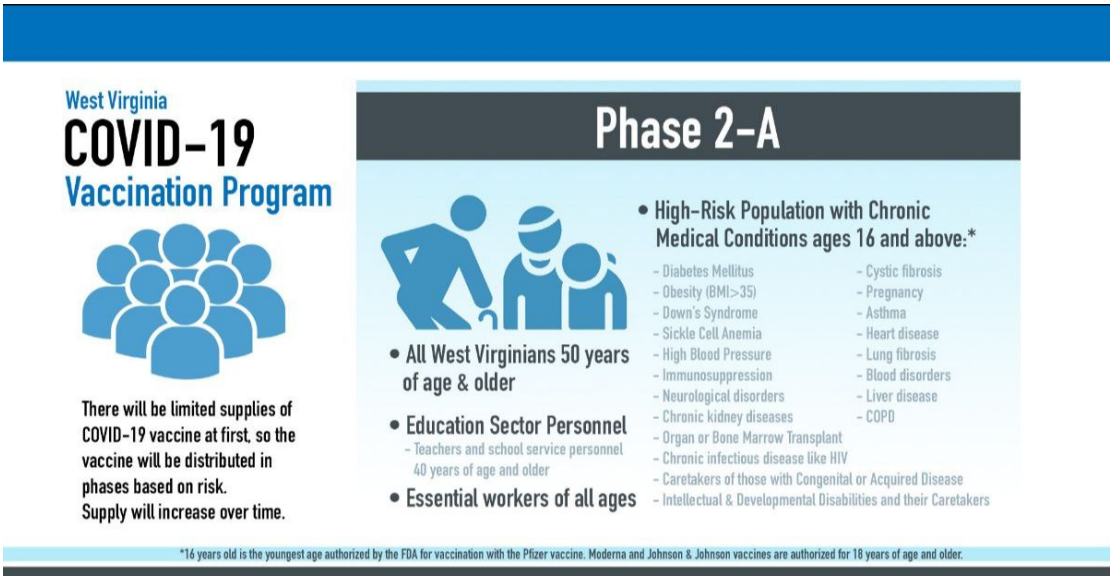
During Monday's briefing, Gov. Justice announced that he is expanding the list of pre-existing medical conditions qualifying West Virginians to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

As a result, vaccinations are now available to all West Virginians age 16 and older with any of the following pre-existing medical conditions:

- Asthma
- Diabetes Mellitus
- Chronic kidney disease
- Heart disease
- Immunosuppression
- Lung fibrosis
- Blood disorders
- Liver disease
- COPD
- Neurological disorders
- High Blood Pressure
- Chronic infectious disease like HIV

These are in addition to the pre-existing conditions or situations Gov. Justice **previously announced** (/News/press-releases/2021/Pages/COVID-19-UPDATE-Gov.-Justice-makes-vaccines-available-to-additional-West-Virginians.aspx) as vaccine-eligible:

- Down syndrome
- Intellectual and developmental disabilities and their caretakers
- Caretakers of those with congenital or acquired disease
- Organ or bone marrow transplant
- Obesity (BMI > 35)
- Sickle cell anemia
- Cystic fibrosis
- Pregnancy



(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Vaccine.aspx)

The Governor went on to announce that vaccinations are now also available to all essential workers, as defined in **Executive Order 9-20** (/Documents/2020%20Executive%20Orders/STAY-AT-HOME-ORDER-MARCH-23-2020.pdf).

Gov. Justice added that, starting next week, pharmacies, Federally Qualified Health Centers, large health system clinics, and primary care clinics will begin offering vaccines to their own lists of recipients to ensure that all West Virginians who want a vaccine are able to be vaccinated as expeditiously as possible. However, all West Virginians who wish to be vaccinated are still encouraged to pre-register at **vaccinate.wv.gov** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Vaccine.aspx) to help schedule the earliest possible appointment.

CLICK HERE TO VIEW PHOTO ALBUM

(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govjustice/albums/72157718659089793)

VACCINE DISTRIBUTION UPDATE

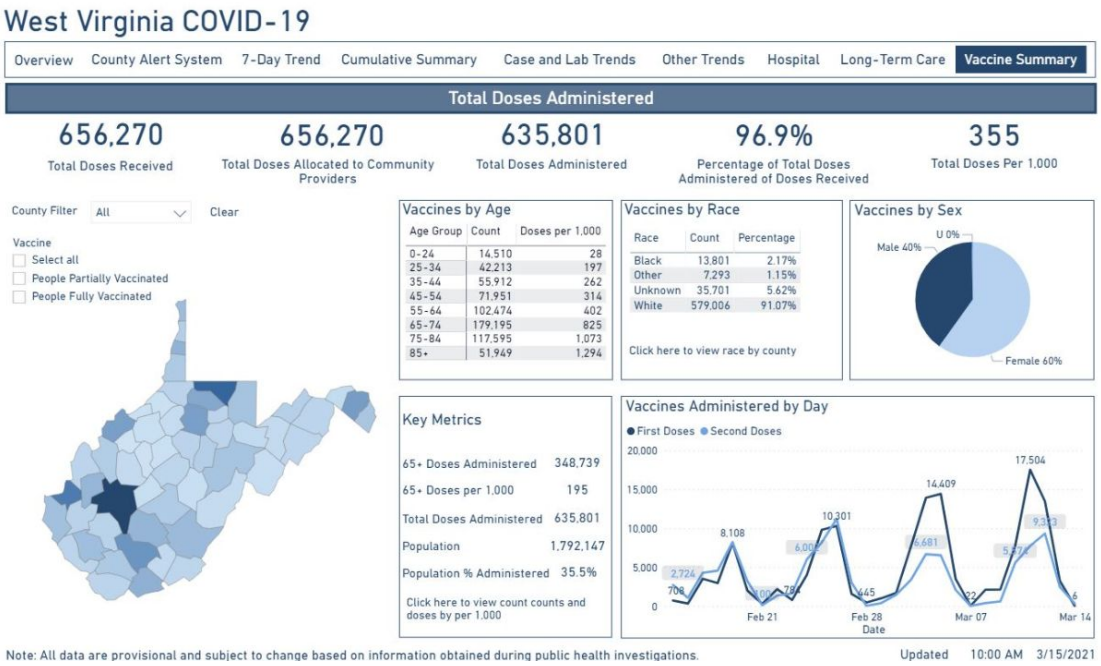
Also on Monday, Gov. Justice reported that West Virginia remains among the national leaders in the rate of COVID-19 vaccine distribution and administration.

West Virginia has successfully administered 635,801 doses after receiving a total allotment of 656,270 doses from the federal government to date; an overall administration rate of 96.9%.

West Virginia currently boasts a first dose administration rate of 100.7%, which exceeds 100% due to extra doses being extracted from vials of the vaccine, and a second dose administration rate of 91.4%.

- First doses: 390,605 administered / 388,000 allotted
- Second doses: 245,196 administered / 268,270 allotted

West Virginia COVID-19 Dashboard (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx) **(Click "Vaccine Summary" tab)**



(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx)

Gov. Justice once again encouraged all West Virginians age 16 and older desiring to be vaccinated to **pre-register at vaccinate.wv.gov** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Vaccine.aspx) or by calling **1-833-734-0965**.

Vaccinations are currently available to all West Virginians age 50 and older, education workers age 40-50, all West Virginians age 16 and older with the aforementioned pre-existing medical conditions, and all essential workers.

West Virginians who are age 65 and older will continue to be prioritized first until all state residents in this age range who desire the vaccine have been vaccinated.

To date, 213,009 West Virginians age 65 and older have chosen to be vaccinated, including 135,730 who are now fully vaccinated.

"As of today, we have vaccinated 58 percent of the people that are over 65 years of age. Our goal is to get that to 75 percent. But, really and truly, what we need is 75 percent of all those over 50 year old; and even higher if we can," Gov. Justice said.

Any West Virginians age 65 and older who are still waiting on an appointment are urged to call the **West Virginia Vaccine Info Line: 1-833-734-0965** to ensure that they are scheduled to be vaccinated. The info line is open Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Gov. Justice noted that, by the end of this week, all West Virginia school employees over the age of 50 that wanted a vaccine will have been vaccinated.

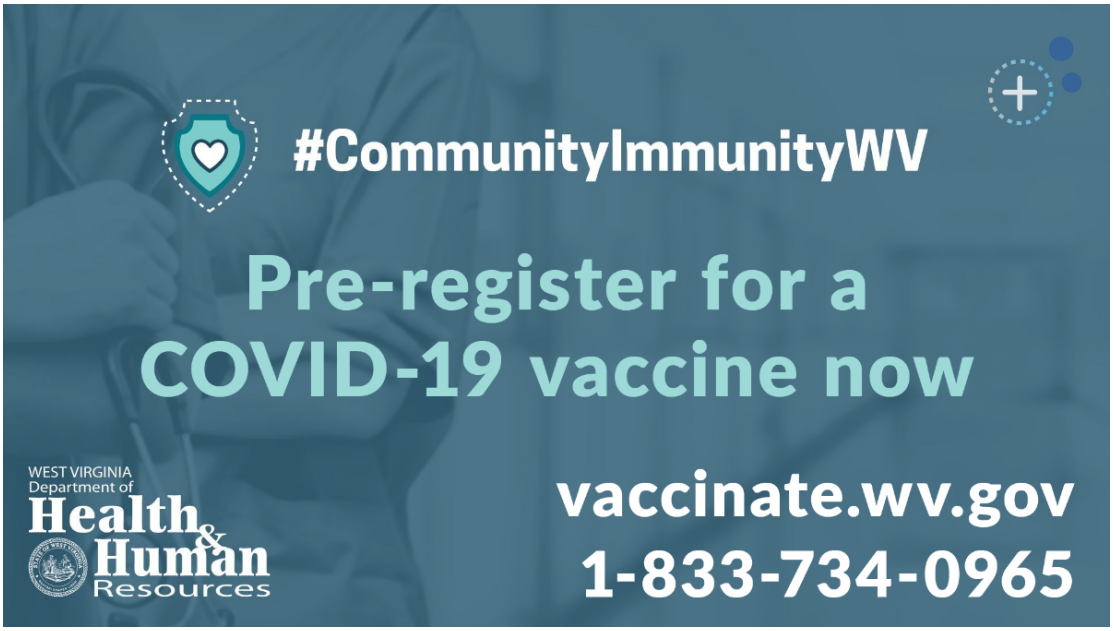
"We're also still vaccinating our school employees from 40 to 50 years of age and we should clean up all school employees very, very soon," Gov. Justice said.

The Governor went on to discuss President Joe Biden's announcement last week that he wants all Americans to be eligible to receive a vaccine by May 1, 2021.

"We're confident we're going to be ready to pull that off here in West Virginia," Gov. Justice said. "All we need you to do is choose to get vaccinated. We're on a glide slope to being able to get our lives back to normal, and that's what we want more than anything."

Free COVID-19 vaccination clinics either already have been or will be held in all 55 counties across West Virginia this week through operation "Save Our Wisdom."

Each clinic location has its own, unique schedule. Names are being pulled from the **West Virginia COVID-19 Vaccine Registration System** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Vaccine.aspx) to fill out appointments. All clinics require appointments and walk-ins will not be accepted. To date, more than 381,000 West Virginians have signed up to be added to the pre-registration list.



(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Vaccine.aspx)

Vaccine supplies are limited, so pre-registration does not mean immediate access to vaccination. Pre-registration offers West Virginians the opportunity to receive real-time updates on vaccine availability and schedule an appointment when available as vaccine supplies allow. The vaccine registration system allows people to select their preferences for communication through text, email, or voicemail over regular phone lines.

The Governor went on to say that increased emphasis on pre-registrations is needed in a handful of counties across the state, including Berkeley, Calhoun, Clay, Gilmer, Hampshire, Jackson, Jefferson, Lincoln, Mason, McDowell, Mercer, Mineral, Mingo, Morgan, Ritchie, Upshur, Wayne, and Wood counties. The Governor urged West Virginians in these counties with friends and family age 65 and older to help these individuals get pre-registered.

(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Vaccine.aspx)

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS UPDATE

Additionally Monday, Gov. Justice announced that, in light of the American Rescue Plan Stimulus bill extending unemployment benefits for all Americans through September 4, 2021, WorkForce West Virginia is working with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) on specific guidance to implement the unemployment provisions of the American Rescue Plan.

The Governor noted that any West Virginians currently receiving unemployment must continue filling out their weekly certifications.

WorkForce West Virginia has programmed their system to enable people to continue certifying, so there are no gaps in benefits once the guidelines are finalized. To ensure a seamless transition, and make sure there are no gaps in benefits payments, WorkForce West Virginia has asked the DOL for approval to deploy the extended programs before receiving official guidance.

Updates will be provided as they becomes available. Visit **workforcewv.org** (https://workforcewv.org/) for unemployment resources and more information.

(https://workforcewv.org/)

COVID-19 CASE NUMBERS UPDATE

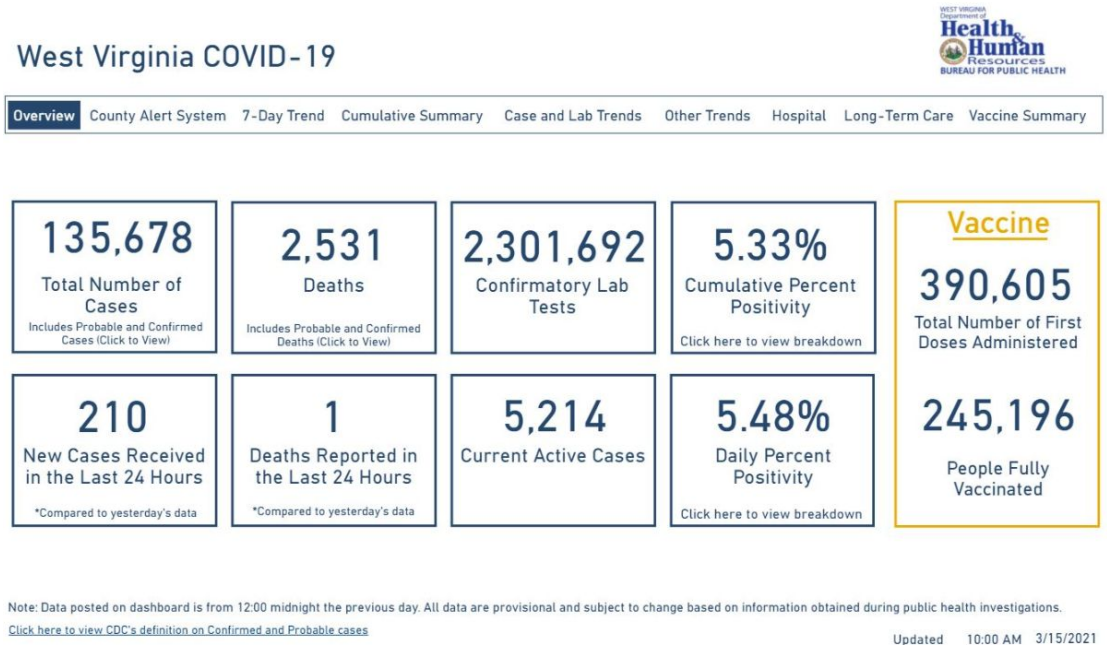
Additionally Monday, Gov. Justice reported that the current number of active cases in the state is now 5,214, down from 5,280 as of his previous COVID-19 briefing on Friday last week.

The number of daily active cases in West Virginia has now decreased for 61 of the past 63 days. Daily active cases are down 82% since peaking at 29,257 in early January.

The number of active hospitalizations is now 151, down from 159 on Friday last week. Of those currently hospitalized, 50 patients are in the ICU, down from 59 such patients on Friday last week.

The cumulative percent of positive cases is now 5.33%, down from 5.34% on Friday last week.

Click here to view the latest COVID-19 data (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx)



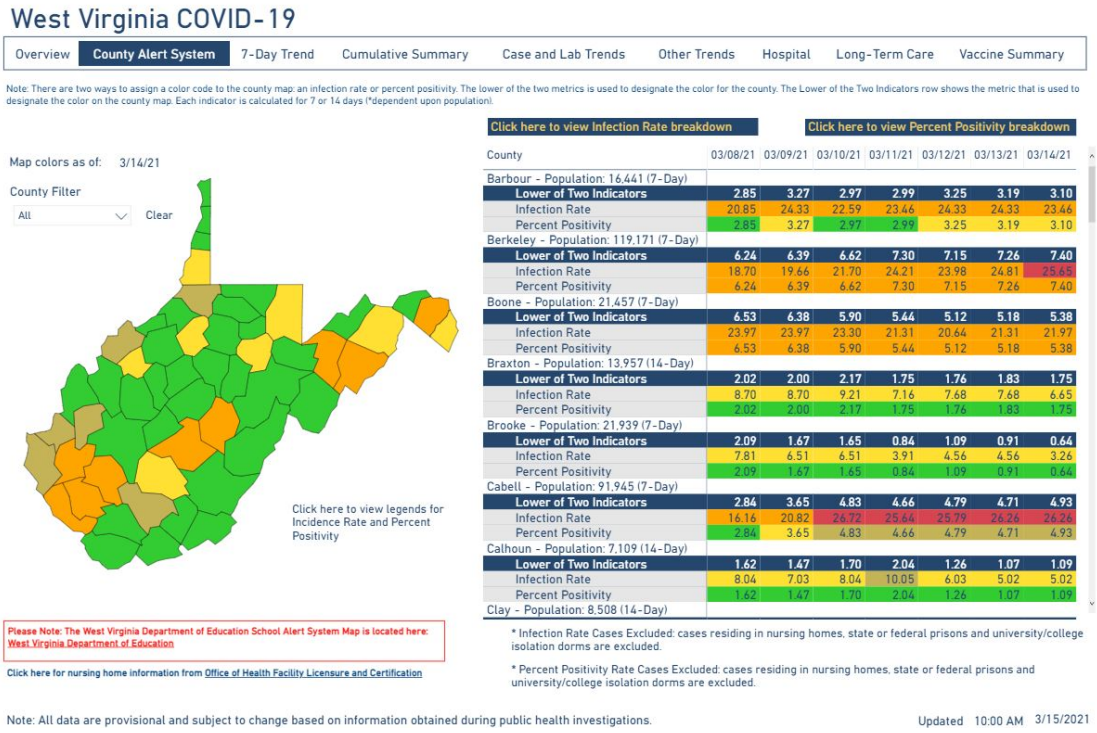
(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx)

MONDAY MAP UPDATE

Also on Monday, Gov. Justice provided a look at West Virginia's latest mid-week County Alert System map update.

The map is updated live on the **DHHR's COVID-19 Dashboard** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx) **(Click "County Alert System" tab)** throughout the week.

Red counties: **0**
Orange counties: **9**
Gold counties: **6**
Yellow counties: **8**
Green counties: **32**



(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx)

OUTBREAK REPORT

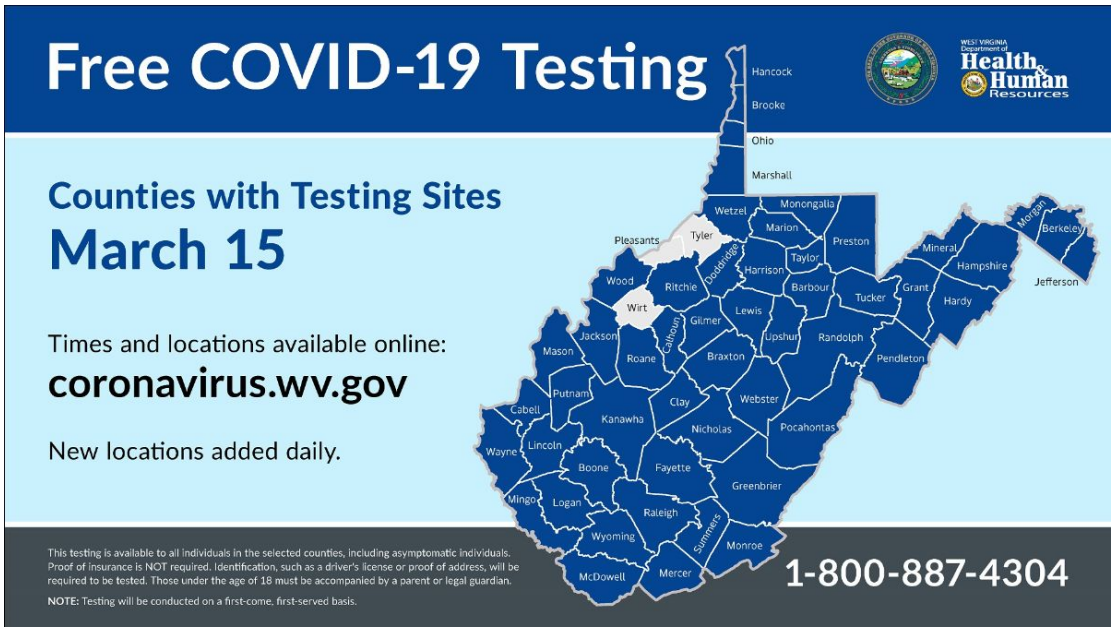
Additionally Monday, Gov. Justice reported that there remain three active church-related outbreaks in West Virginia. These outbreaks are located in Monongalia, Nicholas, and Raleigh counties and account for a total of 32 cases, up from 27 as of the Governor's previous briefing on Friday last week.

There remain three outbreaks in long-term care facilities across the state.

The Governor also reported that there are now just 34 inmate cases across the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) system, down significantly from 137 on Friday last week. Meanwhile, there are now 10 active staff cases across the DCR system, down from 15 on Friday last week. To view the latest DCR case update, **click here** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Correctional-Facilities.aspx).

AGGRESSIVE TESTING CONTINUES ACROSS STATE

Also on Monday, Gov. Justice provided an overview of the 52 counties across the state that have free testing events scheduled through the Governor's Aggressive Testing initiative.

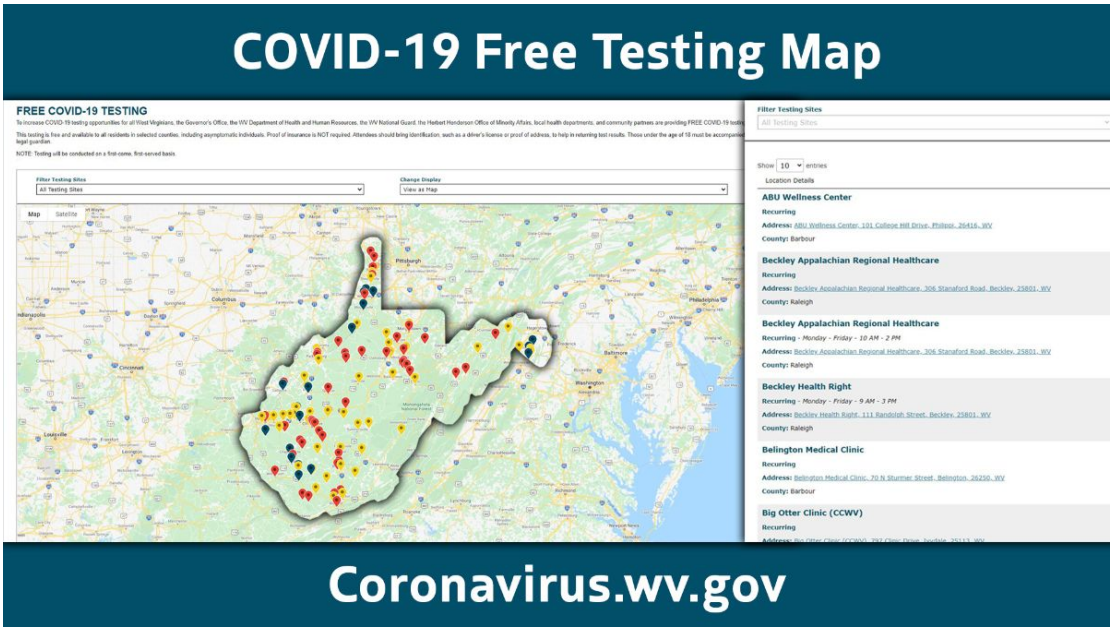


(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx)

This testing is available to all residents, including asymptomatic individuals. Proof of insurance is not required. Attendees should bring identification, such as a driver's license or proof of address, to help in returning test results. Those under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

An interactive online map of all free testing locations across West Virginia is available online. Users can filter the map by type of testing site, including daily testing events, recurring testing events, as well as Walgreens and Fruth Pharmacy testing locations. Users can also filter by county. Each location is marked on the map with a pin. After finding a testing location nearby, users are able to click on the pin for more information about that particular testing site, including the specific location and timeframe during which testing will be held.

Click here to view all locations, dates, times, and more details
(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx)



(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Click here to view all Executive Orders and other actions (https://governor.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=d525ab9ade4d860d2b5772468&id=3029d4fcc4&e=5c140b96bc) taken by Gov. Justice to combat the spread of COVID-19 in West Virginia.

For more information about COVID-19 prevention and more, call the State's toll-free hotline at **1-800-887-4304** or visit **Coronavirus.wv.gov** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx).

Contact Information

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