COVID-19 Update: Testing, Assisted Living Visitation, Premium Deferrals, Fairs

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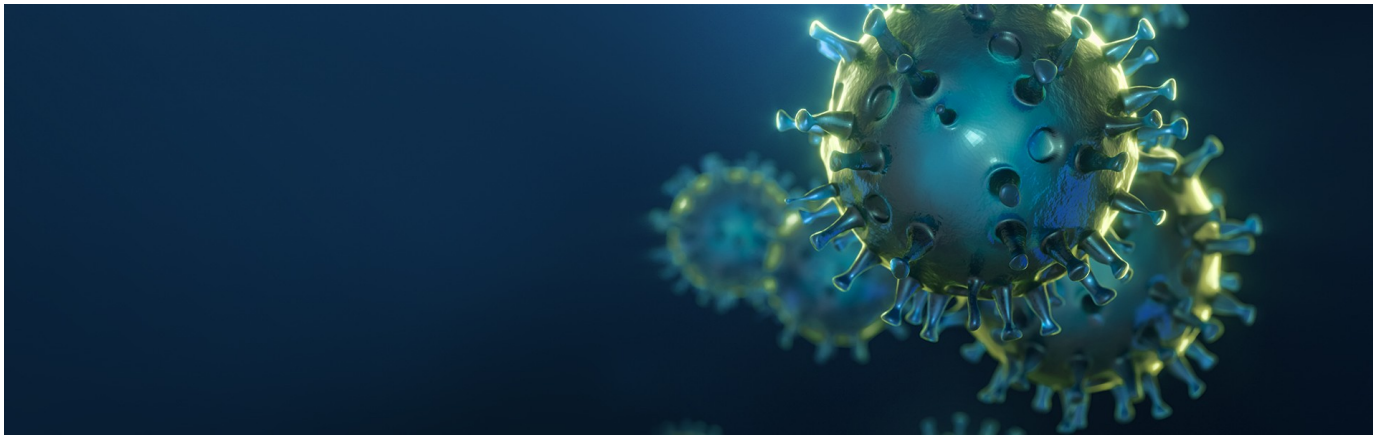

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)— Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Lt. Governor Jon Husted today provided the following updates on Ohio's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

PHARMACY TESTING:

Governor DeWine announced today that the State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy has clarified rules that allow pharmacists to order and administer tests for COVID-19.

"As frontline health care providers, pharmacies are critical in our state's response to this pandemic," said Governor DeWine. "I have asked the Ohio Board of Pharmacy to make sure that Ohio pharmacies have what they need to test for COVID-19."

To help Ohioans find testing locations, a map has been added to coronavirus.ohio.gov that lists COVID-19 testing centers in Ohio. The map includes links to community health centers and pharmacy sites to assist citizens in finding information about how to get a test referral or schedule an appointment.

UPDATED PRIORITY TESTING:

Ohio has utilized COVID-19 testing priorities to manage limited testing capacity. Under the guidance of clinical experts, Governor DeWine announced that Ohio has modified these groups in light of changes in testing availability and evolving knowledge of COVID-19 and its impact on Ohioans.

Testing must be first available to individuals described in Priority Groups 1, 2 and 3, but Ohio is expanding to allow partners and communities to test Ohioans in Priority Group 4 which includes testing “Individuals in the community to decrease community spread, including individuals with symptoms who do not meet any of the above categories.”

"Expanded test availability will allow individuals in lower-risk tiers to be tested and to help further contain and respond to COVID-19 in Ohio," said Governor DeWine.

ASSISTED LIVING VISITATION:

Governor DeWine announced a plan to lift restrictions on visitation at assisted living homes in Ohio.

Beginning on June 8, 2020, properly prepared assisted living facilities and intermediate care facilities for individuals with developmental disabilities can begin to allow outdoor visitation.

The lifted restrictions do not yet apply to nursing homes.

"We will continue to examine, monitor, and adjust as we carefully and thoughtfully lift restrictions on visitation," said Governor DeWine. "The well-being of our residents has been, and remains, central to our decision-making."

The decision to move forward with outdoor visitation for assisting living facilities and intermediate care facilities was made while considering requests from families and residents and considering the impact on the quality of life a prolonged loss of connection can have on an individual. Advocates and providers in the aging and development disabilities communities were also consulted, and guidelines for visitation were jointly developed by the Academy for Senior Health Sciences, Leading Age Ohio, the Ohio Assisted Living Association, the Ohio Health Care Association, and the Ohio Medical Director’s Association.

Because each facility is different, each facility can determine how to best implement outdoor visitations, however, at a minimum, all facilities must develop a policy that includes:

- Screening for temperatures and symptom-reporting for visitors
- Scheduled hours and time limits for visits

- Proper social distancing measures
- Face coverings
- Resident, family, and friend education about the risks of the spread of COVID-19

Consideration for visitors during end-of-life situations will also be expanded. Providers should notify family members when a resident's substantial change of condition indicates end-of-life is approaching. Providers should not wait until a resident is actively dying to allow visitors.

OHIO BWC DEFERS PREMIUM INSTALLMENTS:

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) is deferring Ohio employers' premium installments for the months of June, July, and August. Businesses will have the option to defer the monthly premium payments with no financial penalties.

"By extending the premium due date, businesses can continue to focus on the safety and well-being of their employees and customers during this health pandemic," said Governor DeWine.

This is the second payment deferral BWC has given to employers amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The deferral is designed to help employers focus financial resources on re-opening their businesses under the Responsible RestartOhio Plan.

JUNIOR FAIRS/COUNTY FAIRS/INDEPENDENT FAIRS:

Governor DeWine's Fair Advisory Group has released guidelines for how county fair boards and agricultural societies can work with county health departments to safely operate junior fairs for kids.

The guidelines focus on maintaining social distancing, limiting crowds, ensuring the health of everyone involved in the junior fair activities, and animal care and welfare.

"The decisions about county and independent fairs need to be made locally because each county and independent fair is unique and has different challenges," said Governor DeWine. "Conditions may change over the course of the summer, however, we are asking all fair boards to comply with all of the orders of the Ohio Department of Health and the guidelines for other sectors that would also apply to fairs, such as for food service and rides."

The Ohio Department of Agriculture is in the process of distributing all state funding available for Ohio's 94 county and independent fairs.

CURRENT OHIO DATA:

There are 33,915 confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 in Ohio and 2,098 confirmed and probable COVID-19 deaths. A total of 5,811 people have been hospitalized, including 1,516 admissions to intensive care units. In-depth data can be accessed by visiting coronavirus.ohio.gov.

Video of today's full update, including versions with foreign language translation, can be viewed on the Ohio Channel's YouTube page.

For more information on Ohio's response to COVID-19, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov or call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH.

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