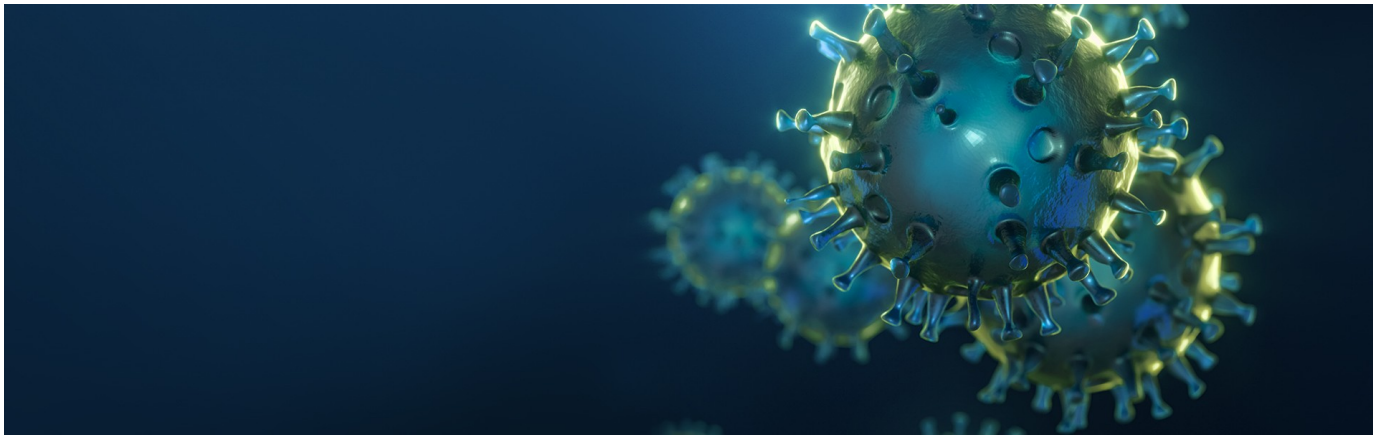
K-12 Schools to Remain Closed, Minority Health Strike Force, Data Collection, Private Lab Testing

April 20, 2020



(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Dr. Amy Acton, MD, MPH, provided the following updates on Ohio's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

K-12 SCHOOLS:

Governor DeWine announced today that K-12 schools in Ohio will remain closed for the rest of the 2019-2020 academic year.

"We balanced many issues in arriving at this decision. In the end, I believe this is what is best to protect the health of our children, our teachers, and our administrators," said Governor DeWine. "While our buildings are closed, we know that students continue to learn in new and innovative ways. I thank all of our teachers, administrators, support staff, and parents for all they have done and will continue to do in these challenging times."

At this time, no decisions have been made regarding whether or not schools will reopen in the fall.

MINORITY HEALTH STRIKE FORCE:

Because COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting minority groups in Ohio and across the country, Governor DeWine announced today that he has formed a new Minority Health Strike Force.

According to data from the Ohio Department of Health, 21 percent of individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 in Ohio are African American, although they only make up approximately 14 percent of Ohio's population.

"We must recognize that there are many Ohioans who have an increased risk of being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, and we must do everything we can to protect all Ohioans from this pandemic," said Governor DeWine.

A list of individuals serving on the Minority Health Strike Force can be found here.

NURSING HOME/HOSPITAL DATA COLLECTION:

In addition to comprehensive data already published on coronavirus.ohio.gov, Governor DeWine announced today that he has directed the Ohio Department of Health to collect more specific information regarding cases of COVID-19 in Ohio nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and hospitals.

In regard to nursing homes and assisted living facilities, this data will include COVID-19 cases broken down by the number of residents and staff who have tested positive for COVID-19 at nursing homes and assisted living facilities listed by facility and county. Data will be posted to coronavirus.ohio.gov every Wednesday.

While balancing transparency and individual privacy rights, Ohio will also begin reporting aggregate death data for nursing homes and assisted living facilities at the county level. Because Ohio's reporting module must be modified to accurately collect this information, this data will likely begin to be reported next week.

Additionally, because Ohioans are concerned about how COVID-19 is impacting hospitals and other healthcare facilities, Governor DeWine directed the Department of Health to modify the Ohio Disease Reporting System to accurately collect case information for direct care providers at hospitals who have tested positive for COVID-19. The data, which will be available soon on coronavirus.ohio.gov, will be listed by each hospital.

PRIVATE LAB TESTING:

The Ohio Department of Health had previously issued an order prohibiting hospitals from sending COVID-19 testing samples to private labs due to slow turnaround time.

Governor DeWine announced today that LabCorp and Quest currently have no backlog of samples and have added more testing capacity. In response to the private laboratories' improved turnaround times, the Ohio Department of Health will again allow hospitals to utilize commercial laboratories in addition to hospital laboratories performing COVID-19 testing.

The Ohio Department of Health will continue to monitor the turnaround times for all laboratories including commercial laboratories to make sure those who have been tested get results as quickly as possible.

CURRENT OHIO DATA:

There are 12,919 confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 in Ohio and 509 confirmed and probable COVID-19 deaths. A total of 2,653 people have been hospitalized, including 798 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 closed captioning, 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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