COVID-19 Update: K-12 Progress, Rent Assistance, Ongoing Nursing Home Vaccination Plan

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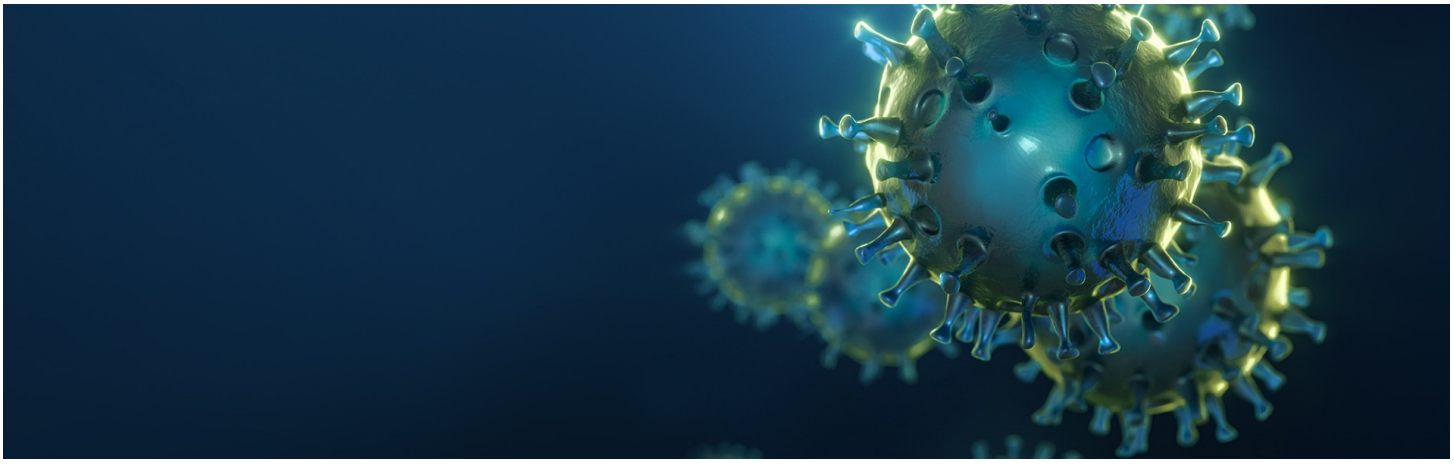

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Lt. Governor Jon Husted today provided the following updates on Ohio's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

K-12 PROGRESS

Governor DeWine announced progress toward the goal of getting K-12 students back into the classroom by March 1. In December, 45 percent of Ohio students were attending school remotely full-time, but today, less than 15 percent of Ohio students are still attending classes completely online. Despite this progress, the pandemic has taken a toll on academic progress, as demonstrated in the Ohio Department of Education's fall 2020 enrollment report.

"This once-in-a-lifetime pandemic has impacted all of us, so it should be no surprise that it has impacted our children. But we should not panic, nor should we be surprised by the results of assessments," said Governor DeWine. "Instead, we should do what Ohioans have always done when facing a challenge – stay calm, roll up our sleeves, and work to solve the problem."

Governor DeWine asked school districts to work with their communities to help students advance and make up for any learning that may have been lost or delayed because of the pandemic.

Governor DeWine also requested that school districts design plans to meet the needs of the students in their districts that include ending the school year later than scheduled, beginning the new year early, or even extending the school day. Summer programs, tutoring, or remote options could also be considered. School districts should provide their plans to the public and General Assembly no later than April 1.

Lt. Governor Husted today also highlighted a provision in the proposed Executive Budget that guarantees student access to a computer science education.

The "right to access" computer science classes would be defined as the statutory right of a student to be able to take a class either offered directly by their school district or through another provider of the student's choice. However, the program must be approved through the Ohio Department of Education.

"Every budget cycle presents an opportunity to distinguish ourselves as a state," said Lt. Governor Husted. "Coming out of the pandemic, the stakes are higher and the impacts more consequential. We must rise to the challenge and commit to the work that will lead to an educational recovery that will echo economically for a generation."

RENT ASSISTANCE

The Ohio Development Services Agency is now distributing $100 million in federal funding to help low-income Ohioans who do not own their own home pay their rent, water, sewer, wastewater, electric, gas, oil and/or trash removal bills.

Ohioans can apply for assistance with outstanding balances dating back to March 13, 2020, assistance for future rent/utility payments once back bills have been made current, and assistance for future rent and utility assistance for three months at a time.

Eligible Ohio households must:

- Be at or below 80% of their county's Area Median Income (varies by county and size of household);
- Have experienced a financial hardship due to COVID-19; and
- Demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

The funding, which was approved by the Ohio Controlling Board for distribution, will be divided among Ohio's 47 Community Action Agencies. Ohioans can apply for assistance by contacting their local Community Action Agency. A list of agencies can be found at businesshelp.ohio.gov under Home Relief Grants.

MAINTENANCE COVID-19 VACCINE PROGRAM

Governor DeWine announced that Ohio's maintenance COVID-19 vaccine program plan to ensure residents and staff within nursing homes and assisted living facilities have continuing access to the life-saving vaccine is nearly complete. The plan will outline how nursing homes and assisted living facilities will move forward to vaccinate new residents, new workers, and workers who initially declined the vaccine but are now willing to be vaccinated. The plan will leverage existing relationships between nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and the pharmacies that regularly provide them with prescription drugs.

In preparation for the release of this plan, Governor DeWine urged administrators for long-term and assisted-living facilities to find out if their facility already has a pharmacy provider that can administer the vaccine. If the provider is not a COVID vaccine provider, they should determine if they intend to become one.

Since the pandemic began, individuals in long-term care settings, such as nursing homes and assisted living facilities, have been at the greatest risk of death from COVID-19. Over 50 percent of Ohio's deaths have been individuals from long-term care settings.

To protect family members and loved ones in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, Ohio immediately activated the federal long-term care vaccination program in mid-December. First and second doses of the vaccine have been administered in nearly all of Ohio's nursing homes and most of Ohio's assisted living centers.

CURRENT CASE DATA

In total, there are 925,350 confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 reported in Ohio and 11,793 confirmed and probable COVID-19 deaths. A total of 47,853 people have been hospitalized throughout the pandemic, including 6,869 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.