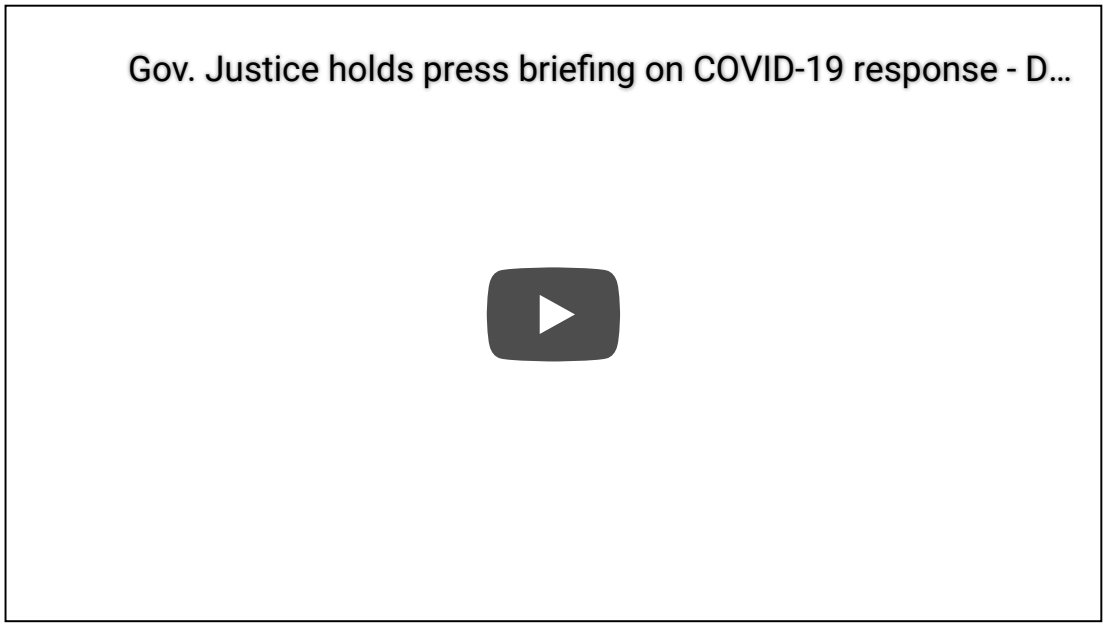
COVID-19 UPDATE: Gov. Justice provides update on vaccine distribution; announces increased utilization of monoclonal antibody treatment

12/23/2020



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.

VACCINE DISTRIBUTION UPDATE

During Wednesday's briefing, Gov. Justice discussed how West Virginia continues to lead the nation in the rate of COVID-19 vaccine distribution and administration.

After receiving 44,300 new doses of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines this week, West Virginia has now received a total of 60,875 doses since vaccination efforts began across the nation on Monday, Dec. 14, 2020.

As of Wednesday, 18,488 doses have been administered, meaning West Virginia has recorded a 30.3% overall administration rate.

West Virginia achieved a 91.3% administration rate in the first week of the state's vaccination program.

Bloomberg.com has ranked West Virginia's progress distributing the vaccine as the **fastest in the nation** (https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-12-21/the-five-states-making-the-fastest-progress-giving-covid-shots).

"We want to continue to lead the nation in every way," Gov. Justice said.

The Governor added that, by the end of Week 2 of West Virginia's vaccine distribution program, doses will have been delivered to all of the state's health departments and all of the state's 214 long-term care facilities. Additionally, nearly all healthcare workers at each of the state's acute care hospitals are expected to have access to the vaccine by the end of Week 3.

"Over 10,000 West Virginians, including primary care providers, rural health clinics, free clinics, home health and hospice providers, urgent cares, and federally qualified health centers will receive vaccines this week, on top of the work we're doing with our long-term care facilities," Gov. Justice said. "By focusing on vaccinating the health care professionals who will be giving the vaccines to the rest of the population, we can make sure we keep our momentum going."

Click here to view photo album

(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govjustice/albums/72157717495071341)

MONOCLONAL ANTIBODY TREATMENT

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice announced that West Virginia plans to begin utilizing monoclonal antibodies to treat COVID-19 more frequently, following the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's recent emergency authorization of the treatment.

West Virginia has 1,400 doses of monoclonal antibodies on-hand, with 600 more doses expected to arrive shortly.

Monoclonal antibodies are laboratory-made proteins that mimic the immune system's ability to fight off viruses.

"If you're diagnosed with COVID-19, and if your doctor believes you can have this drug, early on in your disease, you can speak with your doctor or go to one of the hospitals if they have this drug available," said Dr. Ayne Amjad, State Health Officer. "There is a certain criteria you do have to meet to qualify for this drug. One of them is if you're above 65 years old, have chronic kidney disease, diabetes, if you meet a certain weight criteria, or if you're above 55 and have cardiovascular disease.

"This drug is utilized in nursing homes a lot. We have been using it in several nursing homes already over the last couple of weeks," Dr. Amjad continued. "It has been known to improve mortality rates in nursing homes and across the emergency room population. It is not used in hospital settings, it's used in outpatient settings."

CHILD CARE SUBSIDY EXTENSION

Additionally Wednesday, Gov. Justice announced that he plans to commit "whatever it takes" to continue to fund the Child Care and Development Block Grant, which subsidizes the state's child care program via the CARES Act.

West Virginia originally received $23 million in supplemental funding for the block grant. The funds have allowed West Virginia to provide child care assistance for any parent who has been deemed an essential worker, regardless of income.

"The initial funding was going to be exhausted at the end of August, but we said 'we're not gonna let that happen,'" Gov. Justice said. "We stepped up and we made a commitment. We allocated an additional $6 million to be able to continue to fund this."

As of November, 4,778 children of essential workers and 3,002 West Virginia families have been served.

"We expect to receive an additional $60 million in stimulus money, from the new bill, to continue to extend this program," Gov. Justice said. "However, whatever it takes, I'm absolutely going to continue to fund this.

"This is absolutely essential beyond belief," Gov. Justice continued. "Any of you that are out there that are recipients, sleep well knowing that everything's fine and that we're going to continue to fund this program."

COVID-19 CASE NUMBERS UPDATE

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice reported that the current number of active cases in the state is now 22,826, down slightly from 22,877 active cases during the Governor's previous COVID-19 briefing on Monday.

West Virginia has recorded 1,199 new positive cases over the past 24 hours, and 8,937 new positive cases in the past seven days.

The number of active hospitalizations is now 737, with 175 of those patients currently in the ICU, up from 167 on Monday.

The cumulative percent of positive cases is now 4.46%, up from 4.38% on Monday and the highest such rate seen in West Virginia since April 20, 2020.

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

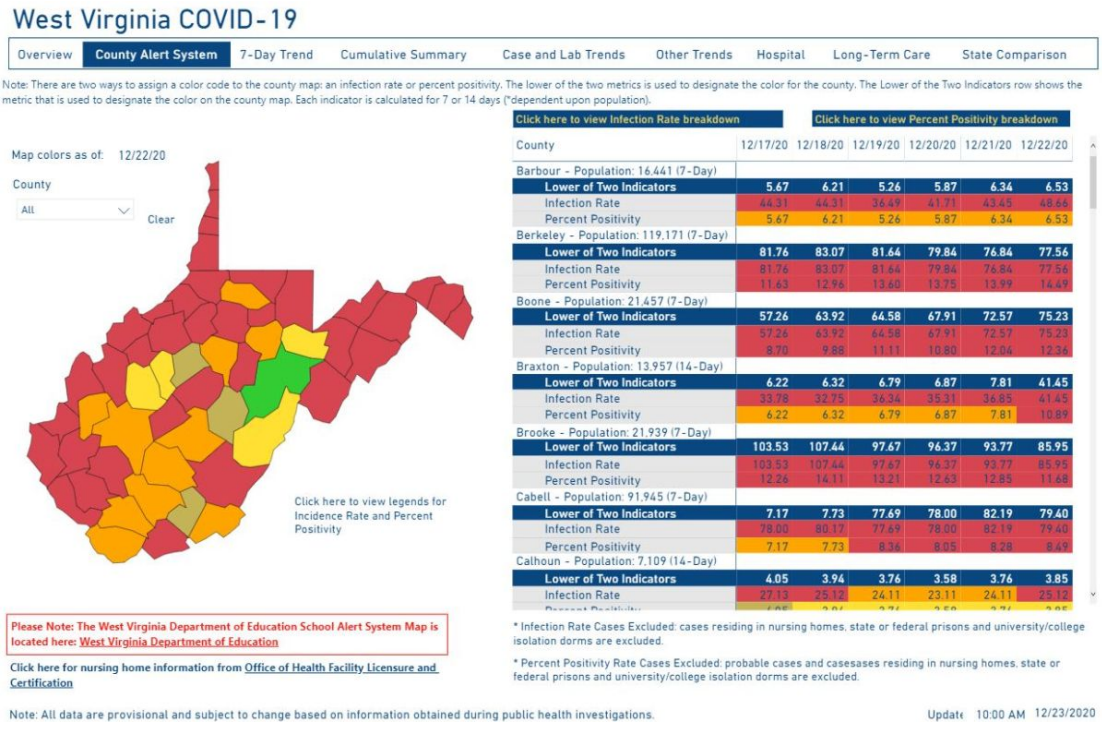
As of Wednesday morning, the **statewide rate of COVID-19 transmission** (https://rt.live/)– also known as Rt – was 1.11; the 4th-highest such rate of any state in the country.

WEDNESDAY MAP UPDATE

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

Red counties: **36** (Berkeley, Boone, Braxton, Brooke, Cabell, Clay, Doddridge, Grant, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Hancock, Hardy, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Lincoln, Logan, Marshall, Mason, Mercer, Mineral, Mingo, Monongalia, Morgan, Ohio, Pendleton, Pleasants, Preston, Ritchie, Taylor, Tyler, Upshur, Wayne, Wetzel, Wirt, Wood)
Orange counties: **11** (Barbour, Fayette, Kanawha, Lewis, Marion, McDowell, Monroe, Nicholas, Putnam, Raleigh, Wyoming)
Gold counties: **3** (Gilmer, Summers, Webster)
Yellow counties: **4** (Calhoun, Pocahontas, Roane, Tucker)
Green counties: **1** (Randolph)

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 for informational purposes and to provide an indication of how each county is trending ahead of each Saturday at 5 p.m.; the time when each county is assigned its official color designation for the next week, which determines the level of scholastic, athletic, and extracurricular activities permitted in each county for that particular week.



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

DHHR's COVID-19 Dashboard **(Click "County Alert System" tab)**
(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx)

OUTBREAK REPORT

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice reported that per the West Virginia Department of Education, there are 11 active outbreaks in public schools across the state. These outbreaks account for 49 confirmed cases, down from 79 on Monday.

Click here to view the WVDE's Current Outbreaks in Schools chart
(https://wvde.us/schooloutbreaks)

West Virginia now has 17 active church-related outbreaks across 15 counties: Braxton, Greenbrier, Harrison, Jackson, Lewis, Marion, McDowell, Mineral, Mingo, Monongalia, Nicholas, Raleigh, Summers, Webster, and Wyoming counties. These outbreaks account for a total of 169 cases, up from 145 on Monday.

There are now 111 outbreaks in long-term care facilities across the state, down from 117 such outbreaks as of Monday.

The Governor also reported that there are now 247 active inmate cases across the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) system, up from 199 on Monday. Among the cases that are currently active, 77 are at Eastern Regional Jail, 74 are at Saint Marys Correctional Center, 38 are at Central Regional Jail, and 25 are at Tygart Valley Regional Jail.

Click here to view the latest corrections facility update
(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Correctional-Facilities.aspx)

GOV. JUSTICE URGES WEST VIRGINIANS TO BE SAFE THIS CHRISTMAS

Additionally Wednesday, Gov. Justice took time to discuss the upcoming Christmas holiday, urging West Virginians to reconsider celebrating the holiday with their family in-person to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

"This thing is really tough. There's been 1,194 people die," Gov. Justice said. "Listen to me: you've got to be super careful with your family right now. Super careful. And, absolutely, as sad and as terrible as it may be, you may need to really not bring your family together, and, if you do, you really need to have masks on – everybody – and you need to not be there for very long.

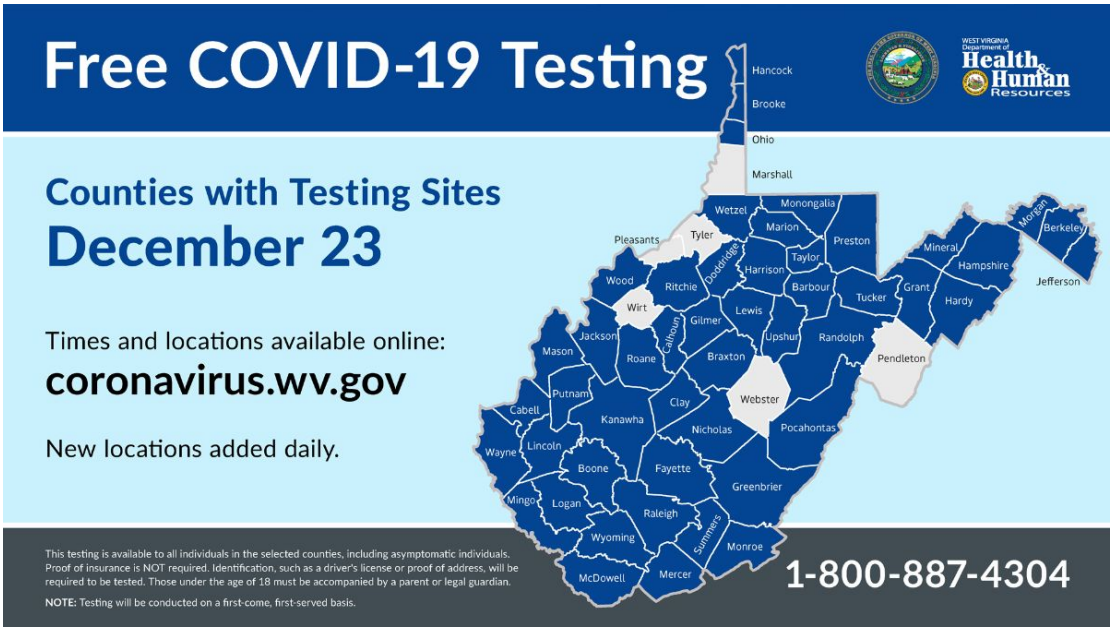
"You may have to do a lot of talking on the phone, a lot of prayers on the phone, and a lot of love on the phone," Gov. Justice continued. "But, nevertheless, I know in my heart that God above's got this."

AGGRESSIVE TESTING CONTINUES ACROSS STATE

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice provided an overview of the 49 counties across the state that have free testing events scheduled through the Governor's Aggressive Testing initiative.

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.

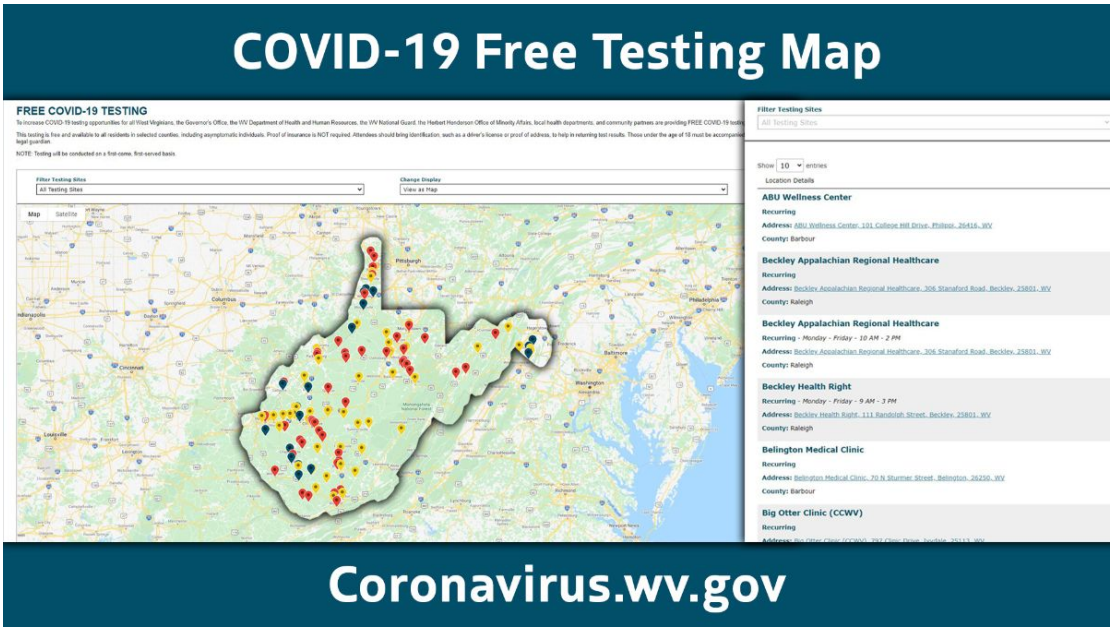
Click here to view all locations, dates, times, and more details
(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx)



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

An interactive online map of all free testing locations across West Virginia is available on the state's **COVID-19 website** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx). 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)

UPDATED FACE COVERING REQUIREMENT IN EFFECT; SIGNS AVAILABLE FOR BUSINESSES

Additionally Wednesday, Gov. Justice provided a reminder that his broadened Statewide Indoor Face Covering Requirement remains in effect.

The order requires all West Virginians age 9 and older to wear a face covering at all times inside all indoor public places, regardless of whether or not they are able to maintain proper social distance. The order requires that all businesses and organizations that invite the public into their facilities must post adequate signage advising guests of the requirement and are also responsible for enforcing the requirement to ensure it is being followed.

Click here to read more details about the face covering requirement (/Pages/Statewide-Indoor-Face-Covering-Requirement.aspx)

Posters are available on the DHHR's **online Face Covering Toolkit** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Face-Covering-Toolkit.aspx) for businesses or organizations to print and display. Social media graphics are also available for download and use by the general public.

(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Face-Covering-Toolkit.aspx)

WEST VIRGINIANS CALLED UPON TO DONATE BLOOD AND PLASMA

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice once again encouraged all West Virginians to consider donating blood and plasma through the American Red Cross.

In the Governor's recent call with the White House Coronavirus Task Force, Vice President Mike Pence said that there is still a shortage of plasma and blood all across the nation.

Those fully recovered from a verified COVID-19 diagnosis may have plasma in their blood containing COVID-19 antibodies that can attack this virus. This plasma is being evaluated as a possible treatment for currently ill COVID-19 patients.

For more information, visit **redcross.org** (https://www.redcross.org/) or call the local American Red Cross offices at **304-340-3650**.

(https://www.redcross.org/)

FLU VACCINE REMINDER

Additionally Wednesday, Gov. Justice took time out of his remarks on COVID-19 to remind and encourage all West Virginians to get their flu vaccine.

According to health officials, everyone 6 months and older should receive this vaccine.

In addition to providing protection from the flu, this vaccine helps reduce the burden on hospitals and healthcare systems.

Locate a flu vaccine near you through the **DHHR website** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/Pages/default.aspx).

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

GOV. JUSTICE ANNOUNCES NEW CHIEF OF STAFF

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice took time out of his remarks on COVID-19 to announce that Brian Abraham will become his new Chief of Staff, effective Friday, Jan. 1, 2021.

"He's a Veteran and he's an experienced attorney who loves our state probably as much as I do," Gov. Justice said.

Abraham has served as Gov. Justice's General Counsel since January 2017. He also serves as Chair of the Joint Staff in the West Virginia National Guard.

Click here to read more (/News/press-releases/2020/Pages/Gov.-Justice-names-Brian-Abraham-as-Chief-of-Staff.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).

(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govjustice/albums/72157717495071341)

Contact Information

Jordan Damron, jordan.l.damron@wv.gov