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Gov. Beshear Provides Update on COVID-19, Change to Vaccine Eligibility

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FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 11, 2021) – On Thursday, Gov. Andy Beshear said cases and deaths from COVID-19 continue to moderate as more Kentuckians receive the safe and effective vaccines.

“The positivity rate ticked up a little bit, to 3.95%,” the Governor said. “We like to see that below 5%.”

Dr. Steven Stack, commissioner of the Kentucky Department for Public Health, said the eligibility requirements for receiving a vaccine will change slightly next week based on U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance.

“As of March 15, the Kentucky COVID-19 vaccination eligibility phase is 1-C,” Dr. Stack said. “1-C is now expanded to include all persons ages 16 or older with any medical or behavioral health condition or conditions that the CDC reports ‘are’ or ‘might be’ at increased risk of severe COVID-19 illness.”

He noted that smoking is not among the covered conditions in Kentucky. Dr. Stack said vaccination sites should continue to prioritize people 60 and older, and all sites are still urged to use at least 90% of all vaccine doses within seven days of arrival.

Nursing home visits
Adam Mather, inspector general for the Cabinet of Health and Family Services (CHFS), provided new information about visitation at nursing homes.

“The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, which oversees the collection and use of Civil Money Penalty Funds, has approved a proposal submitted by the Trilogy Foundation for nearly $6,771,000 to enhance the safety of Kentucky residents and the public,” Mather said.

He said the funds will be used to implement a smart entry screening platform with smart badges for all employees across 285 Kentucky Medicare-certified nursing homes. Kentucky will be the first and only state to provide contactless devices and vaccine tracking that will help reduce person-to-person spread of COVID-19, the flu, other viruses and infectious diseases.

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“The sensors will be placed at key points of entry to safeguard the 22,450 residents living in these facilities,” Mather said.

In more good news, Mather said beginning Monday, March 15, these facilities will ease restrictions that have been in place for nearly a year, affecting all visitors and non-essential health care personnel.

“Next week, visitation can be conducted more widely. Everyone who enters these facilities will be screened for signs and symptoms of COVID-19, and attention will need to be paid to hand hygiene, face coverings, social distancing and other infection-prevention controls.”

More information is available at the CHFS website (https://chfs.ky.gov/Pages/index.aspx).

Case Information
As of 4 p.m. Thursday, March 11, Gov. Beshear reported the following COVID-19 numbers:

New cases today: 1,211
New deaths today: 37
Positivity rate: 3.95%
Total deaths: 4,921
Currently hospitalized: 523
Currently in ICU: 136
Currently on ventilator: 75

Top counties with the most positive cases today are: Lyon, Jefferson, Kenton, Boone, Fayette and Campbell. Each county reported at least 50 new cases.

To see a list of those reported lost to the virus today, click here (https://governor.ky.gov/attachments/20210310_COVID-19_Deaths.pdf).

Kentucky’s COVID-19 Vaccine Website, vaccine.ky.gov (https://vaccine.ky.gov), shows Kentuckians which phase they are in specifically. Individuals can sign up for notifications so state officials can communicate with them when doses become available at new and existing sites. Vaccine.ky.gov (https://vaccine.ky.gov) also lists regional vaccination partners statewide, so Kentuckians can search their county or region and see how to schedule an appointment.

Kentucky’s COVID-19 Vaccine Hotline, 855-598-2246 (tel:8555982246) or TTY 855-326-4654 (tel:8553264654) (for deaf or hard-of-hearing Kentuckians), has the same features as the website. Kentuckians can get assistance completing the vaccine eligibility questionnaire and scheduling an appointment when doses are available. The hotline is available 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. EST Monday through Friday.

Free or reduced-cost transportation to and from vaccine appointments is offered by public transit agencies across the commonwealth. These services are already operating in over 90 counties, covering 75% of all counties across Kentucky. Kentuckians can find transportation services near them by heading to kycovid19.ky.gov (https://kycovid19.ky.gov) for a full list of participating public transit agencies and their phone numbers, or by calling the Kentucky COVID-19 Vaccine Hotline.

Metalsa Structural Products Inc. expansion
Gov. Beshear also announced Metalsa Structural Products Inc., a manufacturer of chassis structures for light and commercial combustion engine, hybrid and battery electric vehicles, plans to expand its Hopkinsville

operation and create 97 full-time jobs in the years ahead to support its customers. View the full news release here (https://kentucky.gov/Pages/Activity-stream.aspx?n=GovernorBeshear&prId=655).

Kentucky to open regional career centers
Gov. Beshear announced Thursday that next month the Kentucky Career Center (KCC) will open nearly a dozen regional offices around the commonwealth.

On April 15, the state will open 11 regional career centers, in Bowling Green, Covington, Elizabethtown, Hazard, Hopkinsville, Louisville, Morehead, Owensboro, Paducah, Prestonsburg, and Somerset. A center for Lexington is also in the planning stages.

The regional centers will better serve Kentuckians seeking information and help. Appointments will be required through a scheduling tool found at the KCC website (https://kcc.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx). However, the scheduling tool is not yet open.

Healthy at Home **Eviction Relief Fund Update:**
Gov. Beshear also provided and update on the Healthy at Home Eviction Relief Fund. The Governor noted this is the second round of such funding, with the first Kentucky's fall 2020 Healthy at Home Eviction Relief Fund having helped 4,140 households with $14.6 million.

The new fund launched Feb. 15, and in less than a month applications eclipsed the fall program, with nearly 8,000 tenant applications and more than 5,300 landlord applications. Our first payments were issued last Friday and will continue weekly. We have approved just over $520,000 in assistance. The crush of applicants has lead to more than 45 new staffers being hired in past three weeks to ramp up this work.

Gov. Beshear also looked ahead to provisions in the American Rescue Plan Act, which President Joe Biden today signed into law. The Governor said the federal funding coming to Kentucky will provide assistance for renters, homeowners and the homeless.

More Information
To view the full daily report (https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/covid19/COVID19DailyReport.pdf), incidence rate map (https://chfs.ky.gov/Pages/cv19maps.aspx), information on testing locations (https://govstatus.egov.com/ky-covid-testing), vaccines (https://govstatus.egov.com/ky-covid-vaccine), contact tracing (https://govstatus.egov.com/ky-contact-tracing), school reports and guidance (https://govstatus.egov.com/ky-healthy-at-school), guidance for health care providers (https://govstatus.egov.com/ky-healthcare-guidance) and the White House Coronavirus Task Force reports for Kentucky and more, visit kycovid19.ky.gov (https://govstatus.egov.com/kycovid19).

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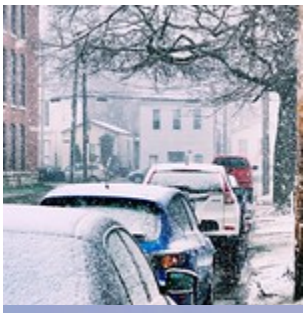
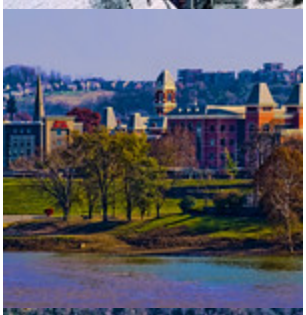
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/7372926@N06/47218320672/in/pool-773339@N20)
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/miamiboy/47184596121/in/pool-773339@N20)
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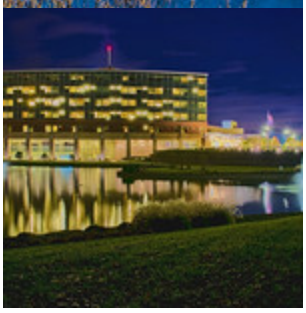
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/miamiboy/32275086277/in/pool-773339@N20)

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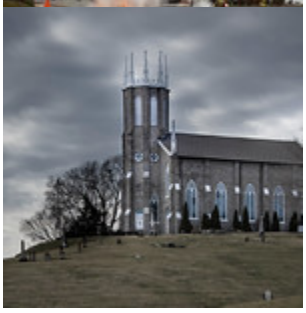
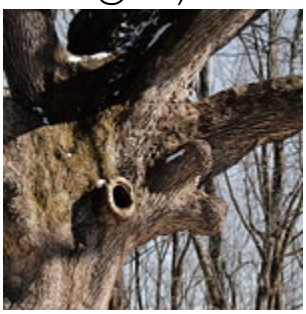
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/127721144@N05/46918072332/in/pool-773339@N20)
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/mcconnell_springs_photo_journal/46864760851/in/pool-773339@N20)
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