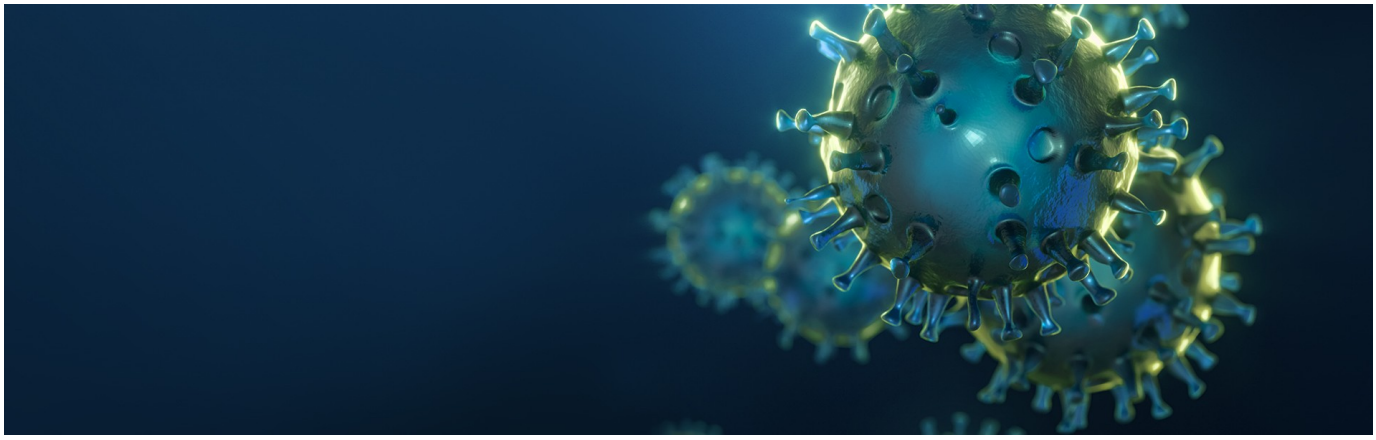
COVID-19 Update: Deferred Elective Procedures, CARES Act Payments, 1099 Unemployment Claims, First Responder PPE, Testing Partnership, Prison Update, Census 2020

April 15, 2020



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

DEFERRED ELECTIVE PROCEDURES:

Governor DeWine announced today that he has asked the Ohio Hospital Association to begin developing a plan to begin treating patients whose non-COVID-19 elective procedures were delayed or deferred due to the ongoing pandemic.

The Ohio Department of Health previously ordered that elective surgeries be postponed to expand hospital capacity for COVID-19 patients and to conserve the personal protective equipment (PPE) that is in short supply.

"We have seen in the last week that Ohio has appeared to flatten the curve, and we feel much better about the capacity of hospitals today. However, there are still serious concerns about the lack of PPE," said Governor DeWine. "As we begin looking at doing procedures that have been delayed, I've asked the Ohio Hospital Association to look at this issue with the shortage of PPE in mind."

Governor DeWine requested that the plan be completed within one week.

CARES ACT/SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS:

Lt. Governor Husted announced that by the end of next week, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) will be able to begin processing the additional $600-a-week payments authorized by the federal CARES Act.

ODJFS also plans to launch an online tool that will allow self-employed, 1099 workers to get in line early, so that as soon as they have the technological ability to process their claims, they will already have their paperwork in and be in line for review. The department expects to be able to begin processing those claims by May 15, 2020.

FIRST RESPONDER PPE:

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine today announced the expansion of Ohio's partnership with Battelle to extend their sterilization services to law enforcement agencies and EMS providers.

The Ohio Department of Public Safety and Battelle have now partnered to sterilize N-95 masks for all of Ohio's first responders. Battelle is providing this service for free.

The Ohio State Highway Patrol developed a statewide collection and distribution system to make this process as simple as possible for local first responders.

Beginning this Friday, local law enforcement agencies and EMS agencies can bring their packaged N-95 masks to any Ohio State Highway Patrol post in the state, and troopers will then bring the masks to Battelle in Columbus where they will be sterilized. The patrol will then bring the masks back to each post where law enforcement and EMS agencies can pick them up.

"This will contribute greatly to our efforts to protect Ohio's protectors," said Governor DeWine. "This process was developed by our Public Safety Strike Force and is a good example of our first responder members identifying a problem and working with their state partners on a solution."

OSU/TOLEDO TESTING PARTNERSHIP:

Health systems worldwide have struggled due to a critical shortage of test kit components, including the swabs used to collect samples and the sterile solution needed to transport the swabs, called viral transport media (VTM).

Governor DeWine announced that a team of Ohio State University researchers created an in-house “recipe” to make the crucial VTM.

In addition, the Ohio State Wexner Medical Center and Ohio State’s colleges of Medicine, Engineering, and Dentistry, along with the Center for Design and Manufacturing Excellence, Infectious Diseases Institute, and Institute for Materials Research, collaborated with a national consortium that rapidly deployed a design and testing program for 3D printed testing swabs.

Ohio State is part of the academic-industry-government consortium led by Harvard, the U.S. Army, and the University of South Florida that designed the swabs. Ohio State teams are working with 3D Manufacturing companies, including FormLabs, Inc. in Toledo, and academic institutes across the State of Ohio to manufacture these swabs and swab kits en-masse for the citizens of Ohio.

"Very soon, the first order of 15,000 3D printed swabs for COVID-19 test kits will be delivered to Ohio State, with a target of 200,000 swabs and swab kits to be shared in partnership with our Ohio Department of Health and hospital systems across Ohio, allowing more people to be tested by the end of April," said Governor DeWine. "We are extremely appreciative of the partnerships between our Ohio academic teams and business partners to create innovative solutions during this time."

The Ohio Department of Health and Ohio State will continue to work on eliminating swab manufacturing and design constraints through a rapid product development cycle, including clinical testing.

PRISON EARLY RELEASE:

Governor DeWine announced today that he is approving the early release of 105 prison inmates in Ohio who had been scheduled to be released in the next 90 days.

Last week, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) Director Annette Chambers-Smith recommended to the Correctional Institution Inspection Committee (CIIC) that certain inmates be released pursuant to Ohio's overcrowding emergency statute (ORC 2967.18) to allow for increased social distancing between prison staff and inmates. Yesterday, the CIIC agreed with the determination that a limited overcrowding emergency exists in Ohio's prisons and recommended that Governor DeWine move forward with approving the early release of specific inmates.

Strict criteria were used to determine which inmates with an upcoming release date could qualify for early release. Anyone convicted of serious charges such as sex offenses, homicide-related offenses, kidnapping, abduction, ethnic intimidation, making terroristic threats, or domestic violence were excluded. Those who had been denied judicial release in the past, had prior incarcerations in Ohio, are inter-state offenders, have warrants or detainers, or have serious prison rule violations in the last five years were also removed from early-release consideration.

Governor DeWine also authorized ODRC to continue to use these criteria to identify other inmates who could qualify for early release under the limited overcrowding statute as more inmates become eligible for release within 90 days.

In addition, Ohio dropped its overall prison population by 311 inmates last week due to efforts of local courts to reduce their jail populations and to hold only critical hearings to allow more room for social and physical distancing.

2020 CENSUS:

Governor DeWine reminded Ohioans to complete the 2020 Census.

The U.S. Constitution mandates a census is held every 10 years to help determine how federal funds will be divided among the states. This funding pays for expenses such as road repairs and food assistance programs; it also determines Ohio's number of representatives in the U.S House of Representatives.

Right now, Ohio's response rate of 52.2% is higher than the national average and higher than all neighboring states, except Michigan which has a response rate of 55%.

Governor DeWine challenged Ohioans to complete the census and help Ohio surpass the response rate of the state up north.

For more information, visit 2020Census.gov or call 844-330-2020.

CURRENT OHIO DATA:

There are 7,791 confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 in Ohio and 361 confirmed and probable COVID-19 deaths. A total of 2,237 people have been hospitalized, including 677 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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