Office of
Governor Tim Walz &
Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan

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As Cases Fall and Vaccination Ramps up, Governor Walz Adjusts COVID-19 Mitigation Measures

March 12, 2021

[ST. PAUL, MN] – As Minnesota continues to make progress vaccinating Minnesotans and slowing the spread of COVID-19, Governor Tim Walz today announced that on March 15 Minnesotans can begin safely gathering with more friends and loved ones, supporting Minnesota's small businesses, and visiting large venues.

"Minnesotans should continue to take simple steps to protect the progress we've made, but the data shows that we are beating COVID-19," said Governor Walz. **"Our vaccine rollout is leading the nation, the most vulnerable Minnesotans are getting the shot, and it is becoming increasingly more safe to return to our daily lives. The sun is shining brighter."**

As vaccines have an impact, life is slowly returning to normal. In February, Governor Walz announced a plan to return more students to the classroom, and 90 percent of schools now offer in-person learning, while 60 percent of teachers have been vaccinated. Minnesota is weeks ahead of schedule on vaccinations. Nearly 1.2 million Minnesotans and more than 70 percent of seniors have gotten a shot.

"There are more good days now than bad days," said Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan. **"Our adjustments today reflect the hope we have that we are on the cusp of putting the pandemic behind us. While we continue to keep a close eye on the spread of variants, these are common sense steps to get us back to doing the things we missed most. All of us have the responsibility to one another to do what we can to protect the gains we've made and ensure we can come out on the other side of this pandemic as quickly as possible."**

"This dial turn is possible thanks to all the hard work so many Minnesotans have done," said Department of Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm. **"At the same time, it's important to not let our guard down until we've finished the job. COVID-19 is still circulating in our communities, and we're seeing the new variants more frequently. We need to keep up the prevention measures like masking, social distancing, staying home when sick, and getting tested when appropriate. Those basic tools – along with the safe and effective vaccines – will help us end this pandemic and get to those brighter days ahead."**

Unless otherwise noted, the adjustments are effective at noon on Monday, March 15. They include measures to:

- Make it easier to safely gather with family:
  - **Social gatherings:** Up to **50 people outdoors** or **15 people for indoor gatherings**, both without household limits.
  - **Youth sports:** Pod size increasing to **50** for outdoor activities.
  - **Religious services:** Remove occupancy limit, but social distancing required.
  - **Celebrations:** Follow venue guidance.
- Support small businesses:
  - **Bars and restaurants** : Increasing allowable occupancy to **75%**, up from 50%, with a limit of 250 people. The limits apply separately indoors and outdoors. Bar seating increases to parties of 4.
  - **Salons/barbers:** Removing the occupancy limit, but social distancing required.
  - **Gyms/fitness centers/pools:** Increasing allowable occupancy to **50%,** up from 25%. Outdoor classes can increase to 50 people.
  - **Entertainment venues:** Increasing allowable occupancy to **50%**, up from 25%, both indoors and outdoors, with a limit of 250.
- As summer nears, the state will adjust guidelines for large venues. All venues can open at 50% capacity up to 250 people. Venues with normal occupant capacity over 500 can add additional guests, effective April 1:
  - **Seated outdoor venues** can add an additional **25%** of their capacity over 500, with a limit of **10,000 people.**
  - **Non-seated outdoor venues** can add an additional **15%** of their capacity over 500, with a limit of **10,000 people.**
  - **Seated indoor venues** can add an additional **15%** of their capacity over 500, with a limit of **3,000 people.**
  - **Non-seated indoor venues** can add an additional **10%** of their capacity over 500, with a limit of **1,500 people.**

As more Minnesotans are vaccinated, work from home will no longer be required – but it will continue to be strongly recommended – beginning April 15. All employers should continue to accommodate employees who wish to work from home.

To protect progress and keep Minnesotans safe, several safety measures will remain in place, including:

- Minnesotans should **continue to wear masks.**
- **Continue to socially distance.** All of today's guidance requires venues to maintain 6 feet of distance between guests to reduce the spread of the virus.
- **Our COVID response remains robust.** Community testing sites are available at no cost. The COVIDAware App will continue to alert Minnesotans if they have been exposed.

"Today, we can be optimistic about the progress we have made in slowing the spread of COVID-19 and getting vaccines to Minnesotans," said DEED Commissioner Steve Grove. **"The hard work and sacrifices the hospitality industry has made are paying off, and today we are able to take an important step toward slowly returning to normal. To keep our economy moving, it's critical that we all remain vigilant in fighting COVID-19 by masking up and staying safe."**

"The thaw is here, but in Minnesota we know better than to let our guard down at the first sign of spring," continued Governor Walz. **"Keep doing what you need to do to stay safe, and we'll get through this together."**

Executive Order 21-11 will have the full force and effect of law upon the approval of the Executive Council, which is made up of Governor Walz, Lieutenant Governor Flanagan, Attorney General Keith Ellison, Secretary of State Steve Simon, and State Auditor Julie Blaha.

More information on the state's response to COVID-19 is available here (https://staysafe.mn.gov/).

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