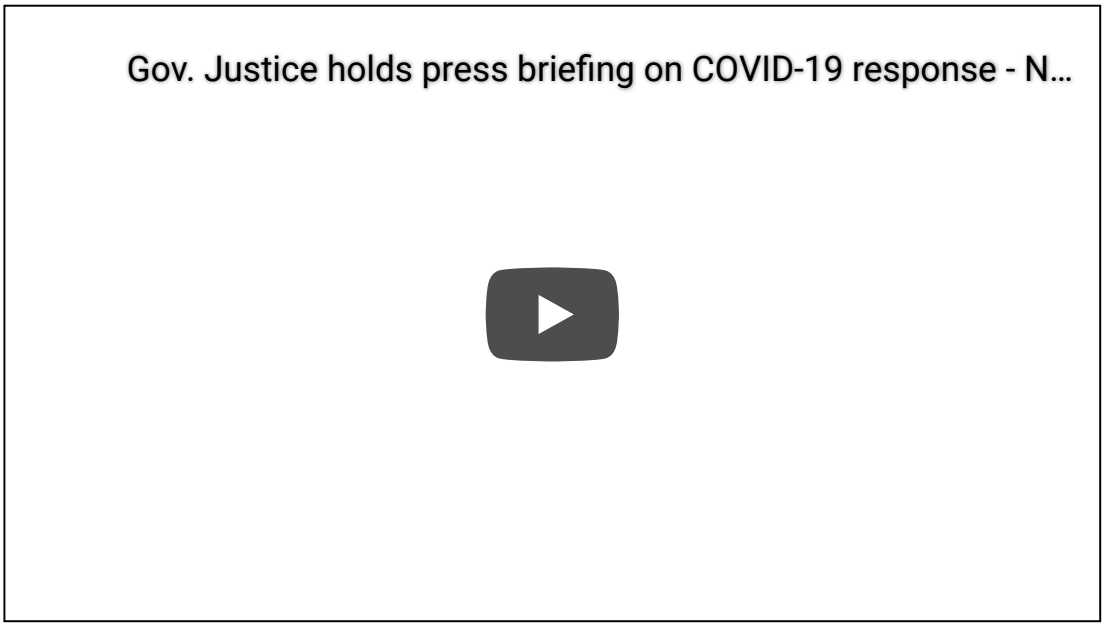
# *COVID-19 UPDATE: Gov. Justice announces $43 million to help thousands of businesses with cost of providing healthcare; celebrates progress on vaccine*

11/9/2020




**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.

## $43 MILLION IN INSURANCE CREDITS APPROVED TO HELP THOUSANDS OF WEST VIRGINIA BUSINESSES

During Monday's briefing, Gov. Justice announced that, at his direction, West Virginia Insurance Commissioner Jim Doddrill has approved $43 million in premium credits on all small and large group healthcare plans of Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield in West Virginia.

The credit will help nearly 3,000 small and large West Virginia businesses with the cost of offering group healthcare plans in the midst of the ongoing pandemic.

"This approval will enable Highmark to provide each of its small and large commercial group policy holders a one-time credit in consideration of the difficulties experienced by West Virginia businesses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic," Gov. Justice said. "This is really good stuff for a whole lot of businesses and great West Virginian workers."

The Governor added that the total insurance premium relief that has been implemented for West Virginia consumers and businesses due to COVID-19 is now more than $140 million.

## GOVERNOR CELEBRATES REPORTED SUCCESS OF POTENTIAL COVID-19 VACCINE

Also on Monday, Gov. Justice took time to celebrate that early reports on a COVID-19 vaccine, currently being developed by pharmaceutical company Pfizer, indicate that the vaccine may be performing better than expected.

According to Pfizer, the vaccine proved to be effective in more than 90% of the first 94 test subjects who were infected with the coronavirus, vastly exceeding the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's minimum expectation of 50% efficacy for a COVID-19 vaccine.

"Let's just hope and pray that this is the right news, because this could be the biggest announcement that we have ever had in our lifetime," Gov. Justice said. "If we have a vaccine that will work at a level greater than 90%, it is unbelievable to think that has been pulled off in the timespan it has taken to make this a reality.

"If this is above 90%, this will enable us to eradicate COVID-19, just like we did with smallpox," Gov. Justice continued. "This is an incredible announcement. It has the stock market going crazy to the upside. They think they will have this vaccine very soon, especially for our most vulnerable.

"We've got to be absolutely thankful to God above if it's a reality, and everybody seems to think it's just that. It's a testament to great American ingenuity, science, and all the goodness that we have."

In a **press release announcing the early results** (https://www.pfizer.com/news/press-release/press-release-detail/pfizer-and-biontech-announce-vaccine-candidate-against), Pfizer said that the clinical trial will continue through to final analysis at 164 confirmed cases in order to collect further data and characterize the vaccine candidate's performance against other study endpoints. The release added that Submission for Emergency Use Authorization to the FDA is planned for soon after the required safety milestone is achieved, which is currently expected to occur in the third week of November.

"How do we bridge the gap between now and, hopefully, when this vaccine becomes a reality? We've got to get tested, we absolutely have to wear our masks, and we have to continue to practice proper social distancing," Gov. Justice said. "It's really tough and frustrating. But, for crying out loud, we're so close now. Please, West Virginia, you've got to buckle up, you've got to try really hard."

**Click here to view photo album**

(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govjustice/albums/72157716817199193)

## ADDITIONAL ROUND OF TESTING AT CLARKSBURG VETERANS NURSING HOME

Additionally Monday, Gov. Justice reported that an additional round of full-facility COVID-19 testing is taking place at the Clarksburg Veterans Nursing home after a positive staff case was identified.

"I've said over and over that we will always run to the fire, especially in some of our most vulnerable communities," Gov. Justice said. "So we're going to do another full round of testing in order to make sure this doesn't break out."

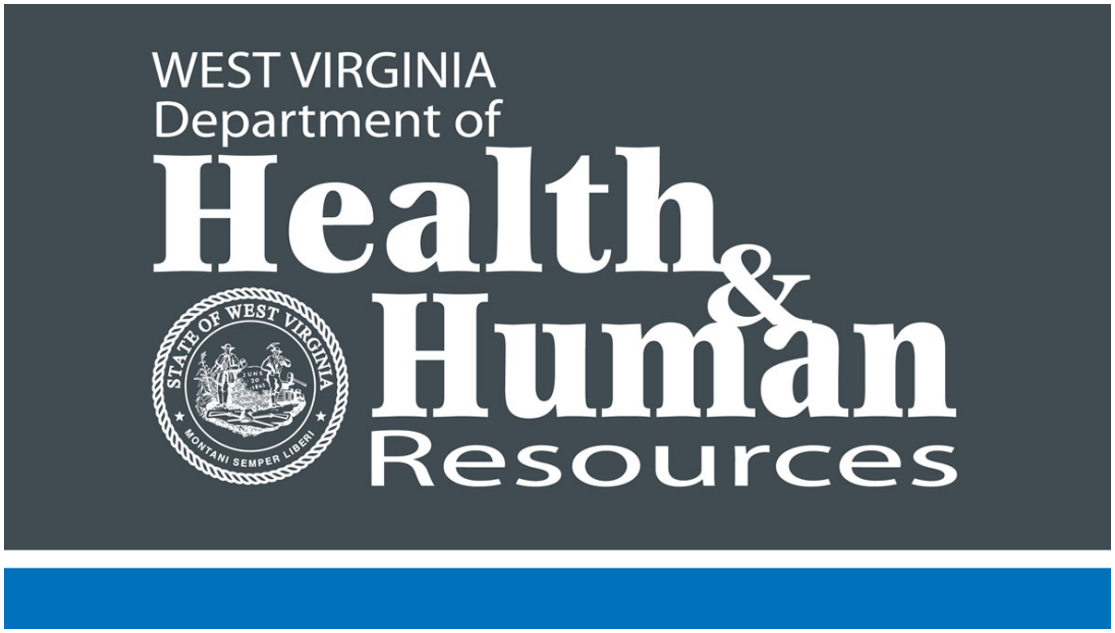
## ADDITIONAL COVID-19-RELATED DEATHS ADDED TO STATE TOTAL

Also on Monday, Gov. Justice explained that 27 additional deaths have been determined by state health experts at the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources to be COVID-19-related and will be added to the **DHHR COVID-19 Dashboard** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx) total.

These deaths were among several that have been flagged over the past several months by the DHHR'S Vital Registration Office as possibly being related to COVID-19 and requiring further investigation. This process serves as a check and balance to ensure all deaths with COVID-19 documented as a cause of death or contributing factors are investigated and reported.

Upon review by DHHR, it has been determined that 23 are confirmed COVID-19 deaths and four are probable COVID-19 deaths.

**Click here to read more** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/News/2020/Pages/COVID-19-Daily-Update-11-9-2020.aspx)




(https://dhhr.wv.gov/News/2020/Pages/COVID-19-Daily-Update-11-9-2020.aspx)

## COVID-19 CASE NUMBERS UPDATE

Additionally Monday, Gov. Justice reported that the current number of active cases in the state has reached a record high of 6,974. Meanwhile, the cumulative percent of positive cases is 3.06%, up from 3.01% on Friday.

However, the Governor also added that the **statewide rate of COVID-19 transmission** (https://rt.live/) – also known as Rt – decreased to 1.12 Monday morning; tied for the 20th-best such rate of any state in the country.

Meanwhile, West Virginia continues to outperform the national average – as well as the rates of all of its bordering states – in lowest percentage of population positive, and lowest percentage of positive test results.

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

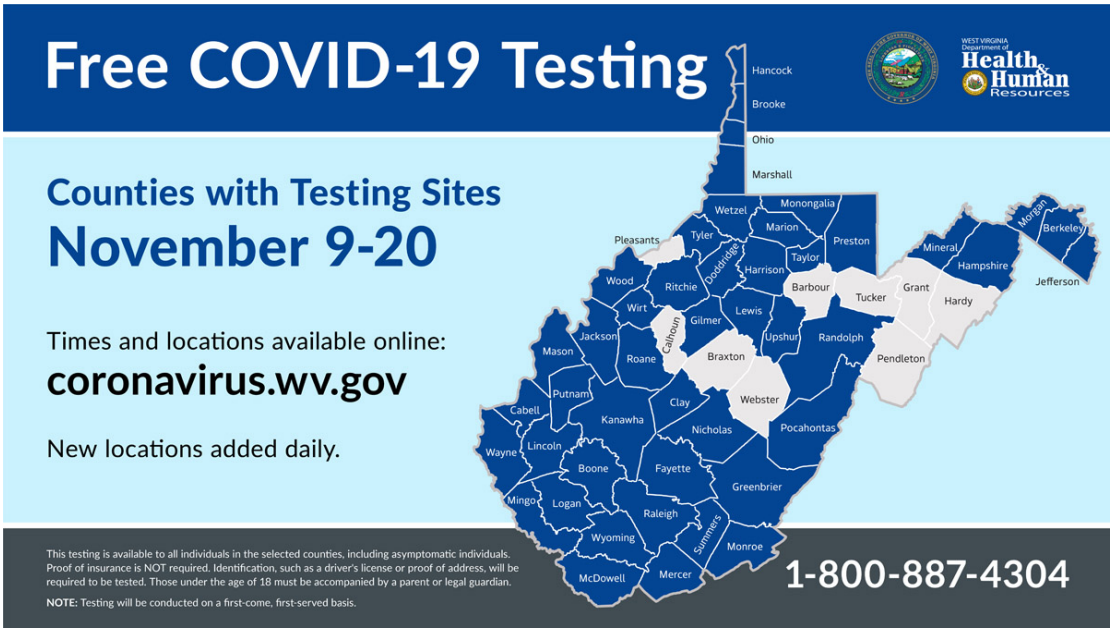
## AGGRESSIVE TESTING CONTINUES ACROSS STATE

Also on Monday, Gov. Justice provided an overview of the 46 counties that have upcoming free testing events scheduled for the near future 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.

Each county reaching **Red** or **Orange** status in the **DHHR's County Alert System map** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx) **(Click "County Alert System" tab)** is required to set up at least one free testing site within the same day. Each county reaching **Gold** status is required to set up at least one free testing site within 48 hours.

**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)

Gov. Justice also offered a reminder that, as part of his administration's efforts to expand free COVID-19 testing throughout West Virginia, the State is now partnering with Walgreens and West Virginia-based company Fruth Pharmacy to offer dozens of new free testing sites at several of their pharmacy drive-thrus.

Walgreens is now offering free testing at 54 locations statewide, including several new testing sites. Locations include stores in Berkeley, Boone, Brooke, Cabell, Clay, Fayette, Gilmer, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Kanawha, Lincoln, Logan, Marion, McDowell, Mercer, Monongalia, Nicholas, Pocahontas, Preston, Putnam, Raleigh, Randolph, Summers, Taylor, Upshur, Wayne, Wetzel, Wood, and Wyoming counties.

Fruth Pharmacy is also offering free testing at 12 of their locations statewide, including stores in Cabell, Jackson, Kanawha, Mason, Putnam, Roane, and Wood counties.

Pre-registration is required for pharmacy drive-thru testing.

**Click here to find the testing location closest to you**
(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx)

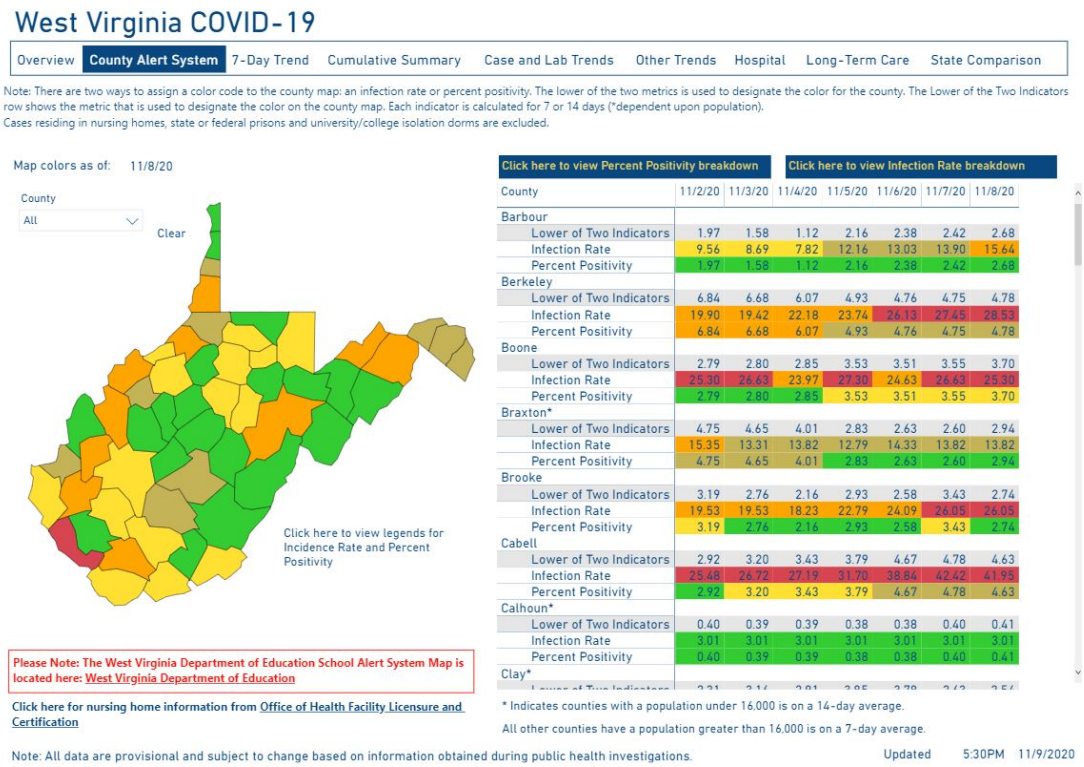
(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx)

## MONDAY MAP UPDATE

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

**Red** counties: 1 (Mingo)
**Orange** counties: 10 (Hampshire, Jackson, Lincoln, Marshall, Mineral, Putnam, Randolph, Tyler, Wood, Wyoming)
**Gold** counties: 9 (Berkeley, Cabell, Fayette, Jefferson, Morgan, Nicholas, Ohio, Wetzel, Wirt)
**Yellow** counties: 15 (Boone, Harrison, Kanawha, Lewis, Marion, McDowell, Mercer, Monroe, Pleasants, Preston, Raleigh, Ritchie, Taylor, Upshur, Wayne)
**Green** counties: 20 (All others)

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)

## GOVERNOR OFFERS CONDOLENCES ON LOSS OF FORMER STATE SUPREME COURT JUSTICE RICHARD NEELY

Also on Monday, Gov. Justice took time out of his remarks on COVID-19 to offer his condolences on the loss of former West Virginia State Supreme Court Justice Richard Neely, who passed away yesterday at the age of 79.

Neely served as a member of the West Virginia House of Delegates from 1971-1973 and then continued his service as Justice and, later, Chief Justice of the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals from 1973-1995.

"We acknowledge all the great service and all the incredible wisdom that Justice Neely gave to the state of West Virginia. We could never thank him enough," Gov. Justice said. "Cathy and I send our deepest condolences to his family and friends, and we ask that all West Virginians join us in praying for Justice Neely and all of his loved ones."

The Governor added that flags will be flown at half-staff at a later date to commemorate his life and service to the state. Further details will be posted on the **Governor's Office website** (/Pages/default.aspx) as soon as they become available.

## HYPERLOOP UPDATE

Additionally, Gov. Justice took time to report that, yesterday, **Virgin Hyperloop completed** (https://virginhyperloop.com/press/first-passenger-testing) the world's first passenger ride on a Hyperloop pod.

The pod reached a peak speed of 107 miles per hour at the company's test site in Las Vegas.

Just last month, **Virgin Hyperloop picked West Virginia** (/News/press-releases/2020/Pages/Gov.-Justice-announces-Virgin-Hyperloop-to-build-Hyperloop-Certification-Center-in-West-Virginia.aspx) to host a $500 million certification center and test track that will serve as a proving ground for this incredible technology. They will build the Hyperloop Certification Center (HCC) on nearly 800 acres of land, spanning Tucker and Grant counties, and leverage intellectual capital and resources from West Virginia University, Marshall University, and from across our state.

"We made the announcement that Hyperloop is coming to West Virginia," Gov. Justice said. "They continue to make advancements, we should be very, very happy for them because they're going to come to West Virginia and it's absolute validation to the world just how great we are in West Virginia and how much good stuff is happening."

## OUTBREAK REPORT

On Monday, the Governor announced that there are now three active cases of COVID-19 among the state's inmate population; one at Southwestern Regional Jail, one at Denmar Correctional Center, and one at Charleston Community Correctional Center. Also, according to the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR), there are 38 active cases among DCR employees.

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

West Virginia now has 17 active church-related outbreaks across 11 counties: Cabell, Fayette, Kanawha, Lewis, Mingo, Monroe, Raleigh, Ritchie, Tyler, Wayne, and Wood counties.

The Governor reported there are now 62 outbreaks in long-term care facilities across the state, up from 47 on Friday.

Finally, the Governor reported that, per the West Virginia Department of Education, there are 20 active outbreaks in public schools across the state. These outbreaks account for 120 confirmed cases.

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

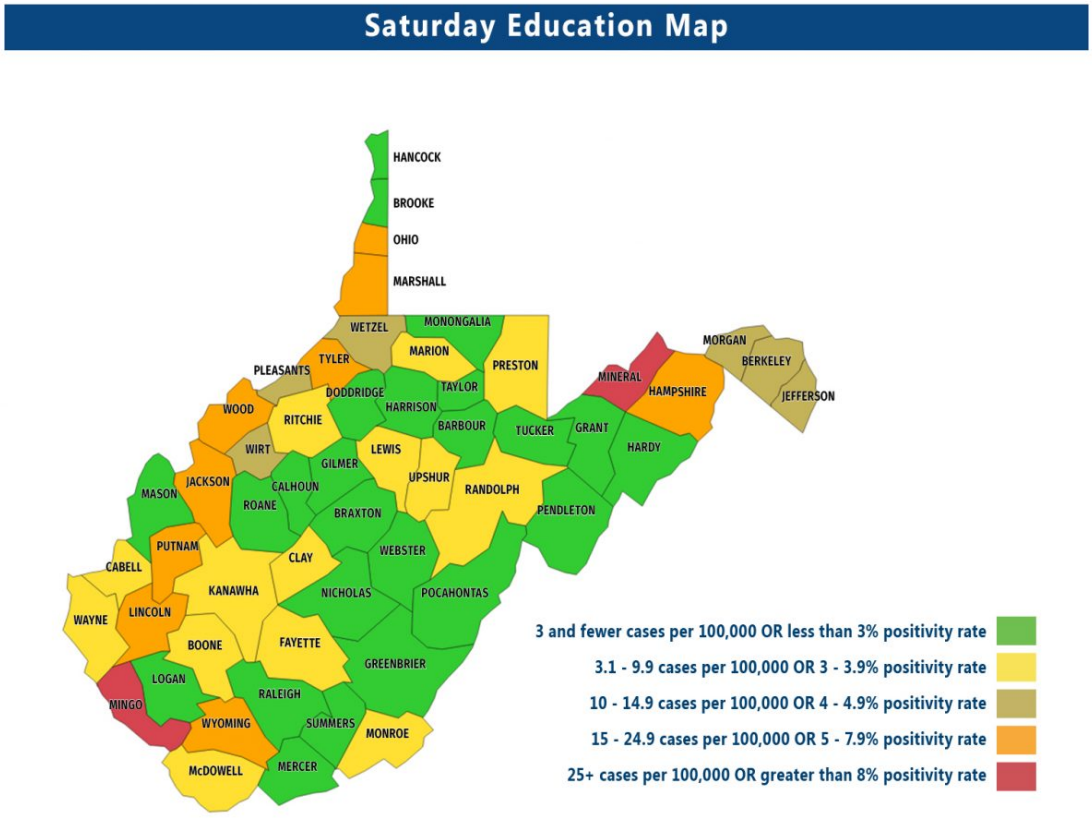
## REVIEW OF LATEST DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SATURDAY MAP UPDATE

Also today, Gov. Justice reviewed this past Saturday's 5 p.m West Virginia Department of Education color-coded **School Alert System map update** (https://wvde.us/school-reentry-metrics-protocols/), which determines the level of scholastic, athletic, and extracurricular activities permitted in each county for the following week.

The results of the update on Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020, were as follows:

**Red** counties: 2 (Mineral, Mingo)
**Orange** counties: 9 (Hampshire, Jackson, Lincoln, Marshall, Ohio, Putnam, Tyler, Wood, Wyoming)
**Gold** counties: 6 (Berkeley, Jefferson, Morgan, Pleasants, Wetzel, Wirt)
**Yellow** counties: 14 (Boone, Cabell, Clay, Fayette, Kanawha, Lewis, Marion, McDowell, Monroe, Preston, Randolph, Ritchie, Upshur, Wayne)
**Green** counties: 24 (All others)

State health leaders who make up the COVID-19 Data Review Panel verified the data to ensure the map was a true indication of the safety level in each county.




(https://wvde.us/school-reentry-metrics-protocols/)

## CITIES/COUNTIES GRANT FUNDING: OVER $173 MILLION HAS NOW BEEN AWARDED

Also today, Gov. Justice provided an update on cities and counties throughout West Virginia applying for funds through the federal CARES Act, reporting that more than $173 million has now been awarded all across the state.

A **web portal** (https://grants.wv.gov/en) is available for city and county government officials to apply. Interested parties can also call the helpline: **1-833-94-GRANT**.

Each of the recipients of CARES Act funding, along with grant amounts, are now available to view through the West Virginia State Auditor's Office **COVID-19 transparency website** (https://stories.opengov.com/westvirginia/published/mnOzKr2wB).

(https://grants.wv.gov/en)

## FLU VACCINE REMINDER

Once again today, 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.

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

(https://dhhr.wv.gov/Pages/default.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/72157716817199193)

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