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As Arizona Hits 3 Million Vaccine Doses Administered, Governor Ducey Announces New Phase Of COVID-19 Mitigation

News Release

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With Declining Cases And Hospitalizations At Lowest Levels In Months, Business Guidelines Transition From Requirements To Recommendations

PHOENIX — With the state of Arizona hitting several important public health benchmarks, Governor Doug Ducey today announced several updates to the state's COVID-19 measures, including on events, businesses and local ordinances.

Several key data points contributed to these changes:

- Mass distribution of the vaccine:
    - 3,041,773 doses of COVID-19 vaccine had been administered to 1,927,278 individuals in Arizona, including 1,185,986 who have been fully vaccinated.
- 10 weeks of declining cases.
- Hospitalizations at the lowest level since the end of September/beginning of October.

- Opening of vaccine appointments to all Arizonans 16 years of age and older.

- A recent evaluation by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that ranks Arizona among the best states in the nation for getting the COVID-19 vaccine to vulnerable communities.

- President Biden's recent promise that every American will be able to be vaccinated by May 1.

Under the changes announced by Governor Ducey:

- Events of more than 50 people will no longer need the approval of local governments. These events should continue to follow safe practices and CDC recommendations, including physical distancing. This includes youth sports.

- The business guidance will transition from requirements to recommendations. Governor Ducey is providing businesses with the ability to continue requiring masks and social distancing.

- Bars have already been allowed to operate as "dine-in" at full capacity. They will now be allowed to resume regular operations, with the ability to require social distancing and masks.

- Unlike some other states, Arizona never issued a statewide mask mandate, and instead encouraged personal responsibility with an aggressive educational campaign — resulting in more widespread mask usage than states with mandates. Some local governments have implemented "mandates," however, they have rarely, if ever, been enforced. Under this latest action, those local mandates will be phased out. Mask usage is still encouraged, especially in groups that are not vaccinated.

"As we've said all along, distribution of the vaccine is our best path to getting back to normal, and I want to thank the millions of Arizonans who have rolled up their sleeves to make the distribution and uptake so successful," said Governor Ducey. "In Arizona, we never did a shutdown, so it's impossible to have a grand reopening. Instead, we are continuing to take reasonable, safe and sensible steps. The measures put in place last summer allowed Arizona to fight back COVID-19. I want to thank the local leaders who supported these efforts with their own measures, and the businesses who implemented them. Today, we are in a different spot, and we are also a lot smarter. I'm confident Arizona's businesses and citizens will continue to practice the fundamentals and act responsibly as we gradually get back to normal."

"COVID-19 has taken a terrible toll on the lives and livelihoods of all Arizonans. With the state's robust rollout of vaccination resources beginning in December, and recent expansion of eligibility to all residents above the age of 16, the Governor has made the right and responsible decision to continue moving Arizona forward and ensure that our economy and our people will again thrive," said House Speaker Rusty Bowers.

"Throughout the pandemic, I've heard from my constituents who have been facing unprecedented challenges," said Senate President Karen Fann. "Small business owners have shown resilience and strength and our citizens have shown strong personal responsibility. Governor Ducey's guidance protects public health and entrusts Arizona businesses and citizens to continue taking the precautions that will keep everyone safe. Thank you, Governor Ducey, for following the science and getting Arizona back open."

"Restaurants across Arizona have done an incredible job at implementing mitigation measures, protecting patrons and staff, and remaining flexible," said Arizona Restaurant Association President & CEO Steve Chucri. "Our restaurants know what to do, and Governor Ducey's updated guidance will allow them to operate the best way they see fit. Thank you to Governor Ducey for working to protect Arizonans and our economy."

"The vaccine is out far and wide, many Arizonans are vaccinated, and COVID numbers are down," said Chandler Mayor Kevin Hartke. "We're ready to carefully lift restrictions and trust Arizonans to make responsible decisions. I'm grateful to the Governor for

responding to local needs as we move forward and fight the pandemic."

"In Sahuarita, we're ready to ease restrictions and safely begin the process to returning to normal," said Sahuarita Mayor Tom Murphy. "Businesses and community members know what it takes to protect one another, and I'm grateful Governor Ducey is following the data, listening to the experts and encouraging reasonable steps moving forward."

View the Governor's Executive Order **HERE (https://web.archive.org/web/20210330182745/https://azgovernor.go 06.pdf)**.

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