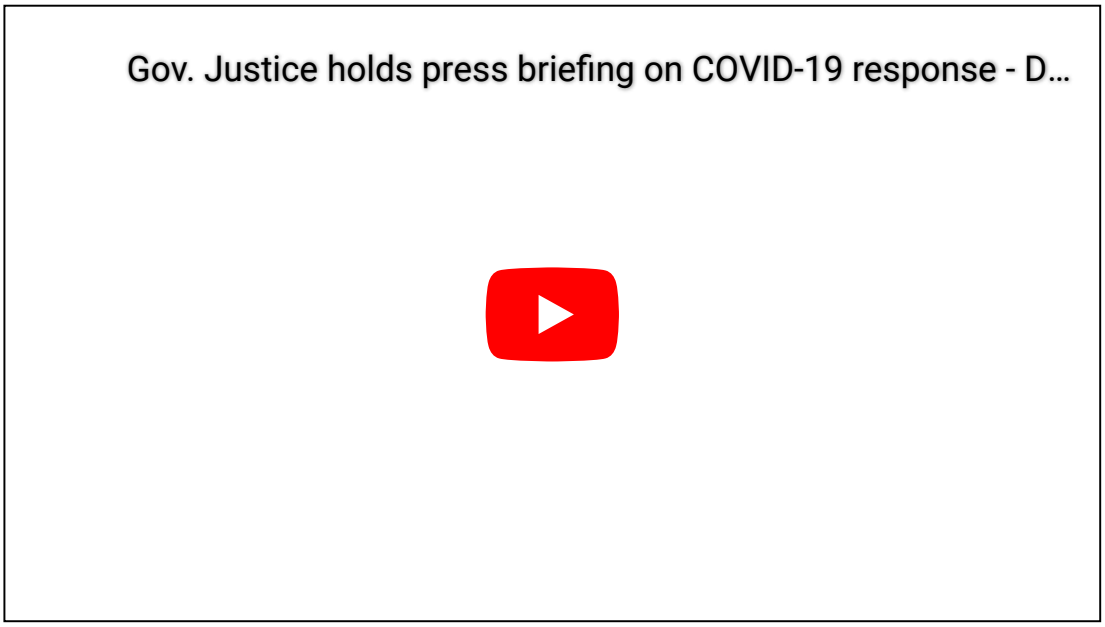
COVID-19 UPDATE: Gov. Justice announces most schools to return to in-person classes; school employees and elderly population next in line for vaccine

12/30/2020



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.

IN-PERSON CLASSES TO RESUME AT ALL ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS, NON-"RED" HIGH SCHOOLS

During Wednesday's briefing, Gov. Justice announced that, beginning on Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021, all West Virginia elementary and middle schools will reopen to in-person learning five days each week.

All high schools will also return to in-person instruction five days each week, as long as their county is not Red in the DHHR County Alert System map.

"We have got to get our kids back in school," Gov. Justice said. "During 2020 we learned that COVID-19 transmission rates in our schools during the first semester was 0.02 percent among students and 0.3 percent among staff. Our schools are safe when guidelines are followed."

Click here to view photo album

(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govjustice/albums/72157717629325736)

"We also learned, when we switched learning modes to virtual learning, the outcomes are not good," Gov. Justice said. "One-third of our students are receiving failing grades in at least one of their core classes. The virtual learning models do not work for many students without consistent, live engagement from a teacher.

"Also the DHHR reports that there is a reduction in child protective services referrals by an average of 50 to 54 percent per month," Gov. Justice continued. "We've got a bunch of kids that are out there, really suffering. So we must get back in school."

From Jan. 4, 2021, through Jan. 15, 2021, counties will move to remote learning, and educators will use this two-week period to prepare for the return to in-person instruction. Families have the option to keep their children in virtual learning, regardless of changes to in-person instruction.

The revisions mean the WVDE's Saturday Education Map will no longer be published and, instead, the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) County Alert System Map will guide high school in-person instruction.

Additionally, Gov. Justice announced that winter sports and extracurricular activities are postponed until March 1, 2021.

"The research shows it is safe to restore the in-person learning model for parents that chose this option for the children," State Superintendent of Schools Clayton Burch said. "We also know students are suffering because of the lack of in-person instruction. CPS referrals have decreased, student social and emotional well-being has suffered, and one-third of our students have received failing grades in at least one core subject area. We simply have to get our students back in school, in-person.

"The Governor understands the data is undeniable," Superintendent Burch continued. "I fully support this decision because we know that heightened transmission rates experienced in communities are not reflected within the schools because of the mitigations in place."

Click here to read more (https://wvde.us/west-virginia-department-of-education-details-in-person-instruction-and-vaccine-roll-out/)

VACCINES TO BE OFFERED TO TEACHERS, SERVICE PERSONNEL, AND ALL SCHOOL EMPLOYEES AGE 50 AND OLDER

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice announced that the COVID-19 vaccine will soon be offered to all teachers, service personnel, and other school employees age 50 and older.

Vaccinations will be available beginning on Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2021, with an anticipated completion date of Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021.

"After we accomplish that, we will double back and offer the vaccine to all of our teachers, service personnel, and other school employees under the age of 50," Gov. Justice said.

Information on where and when each school employee will be able to receive the vaccine will be distributed through the West Virginia Department of Education, directly to the superintendents of each county.

VACCINES TO BE OFFERED TO ALL WEST VIRGINIANS AGE 80 AND OLDER

Additionally Wednesday, Gov. Justice announced that West Virginia will also start allocating vaccines to individuals age 80 and older, beginning immediately.

However, patience is urged while the West Virginia National Guard's Joint Interagency Task Force finalizes plans for the widespread distribution of vaccines for West Virginians in this age category.

There are a limited supply of vaccine doses at this time, based on what is received weekly from the federal government.

There will be ongoing supply of vaccines available through local health departments for West Virginians age 80 and older. Health departments will individually announce availability and locations for vaccinations. If individuals in this age category are patients at a Federally Qualified Health Center, they will be contacted by that center regarding access to a COVID-19 vaccine.

As vaccine supply increases, there will be more vaccines available to the general population based on age. Once vaccines are available at locations throughout West Virginia, they will be distributed on a first come, first served basis.

Gov. Justice has directed the West Virginia National Guard to plan vaccination clinics at locations throughout the state, including at National Guard Armories. These clinics have not yet been scheduled. When they are scheduled, they will be announced accordingly.

West Virginians are urged not to show up at local health departments or National Guard armories for vaccination unless a vaccination clinic for those age 80 and older is scheduled. Please do not overwhelm pharmacies, clinics, hospitals, or the COVID-19 hotline by calling repeatedly.

Click here for additional information (/News/press-releases/2020/Pages/COVID-19-UPDATE-Gov.-Justice-provides-clarification-on-vaccination-plan-for-individuals-age-80-and-older.aspx)

VACCINE DISTRIBUTION UPDATE

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice reported that West Virginia continues to lead the nation in the rate of COVID-19 vaccine distribution and administration.

As of Wednesday, 37,862 of 86,800 total doses delivered in West Virginia to date have been administered. This 43.61 percent vaccination rate is the highest of any state in the nation **according to Bloomberg.com** (https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/covid-vaccine-tracker-global-distribution/), with Colorado ranking 2nd in the nation at approximately 30 percent.

"We've got a plan that, I think, is a terrific plan. But we need to be doing even better," Gov. Justice said. "Not only do I want us to be ahead, I want us to lap the field, because every time we're lapping the field, we're saving somebody's life."

West Virginia also continues to lead the nation in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines to nursing homes and assisted living facilities. This morning, West Virginia became the first state in the county to finish vaccinating all long-term care facilities, when the 214th and final such facility in the state was completed.

HIGHER EDUCATION TESTING

Additionally Wednesday, Gov. Justice announced that all students, faculty, and staff at every Higher Education institution in West Virginia will be tested for COVID-19 when they return to campus for the spring semester.

"We're going to test everyone coming back to our colleges and universities just like we did at the beginning of the year in the fall," Gov. Justice said.

The Governor added that surveillance testing of 10 percent of the on-campus population will continue every week throughout the spring semester.

Weekly testing in the fall resulted in a 1.9 percent cumulative positivity rate at all colleges and universities across the state.

$3.5 MILLION ALLOCATED FOR MORGANTOWN COMMUNITY RESOURCES RAMADA INN PROJECT

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice announced that he has allocated $3.5 million from CARES Act money to WVU Medicine in connection with the Morgantown Community Resources Ramada Inn project.

The funds will be used to replace the roof, install a new HVAC system, install additional sprinkling, renovate the commercial kitchen, update elevators, and renovate the remainder of the former Ramada Inn in Morgantown, so it can house and accommodate many different social service agencies.

The facility will serve as a centralized and coordinated base for social service agencies in the Morgantown area to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and its negative impacts among West Virginia's most vulnerable populations.

GOVERNOR OFFERS CONDOLENCES FOR LOSS OF PUTNAM COUNTY EMERGENCY RESPONDER DUE TO COVID-19

Additionally Wednesday, Gov. Justice took time to offer his prayers and condolences after the passing of Jason Wurster, a paramedic for Putnam County EMS and a firefighter for the Jefferson Volunteer Fire Department, who died yesterday due to COVID-19.

"This touches all of us, does it not? It touches every single last one of us," Gov. Justice said. "Absolutely keep Jason and his family in your prayers."

COVID-19 CASE NUMBERS UPDATE

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice reported that the current number of active cases in the state is now 24,433, up slightly from 24,273 active cases during the Governor's previous COVID-19 briefing on Monday.

West Virginia has recorded 1,452 new positive cases over the past 24 hours.

The number of active hospitalizations has reached a record high of 797 patients, up from 737 on Monday, with 209 of those patients currently in the ICU.

The cumulative percent of positive cases is now 4.78%; the second-highest such percentage since the beginning of the pandemic, trailing only the state record of 4.83% set on April 18, 2020.

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

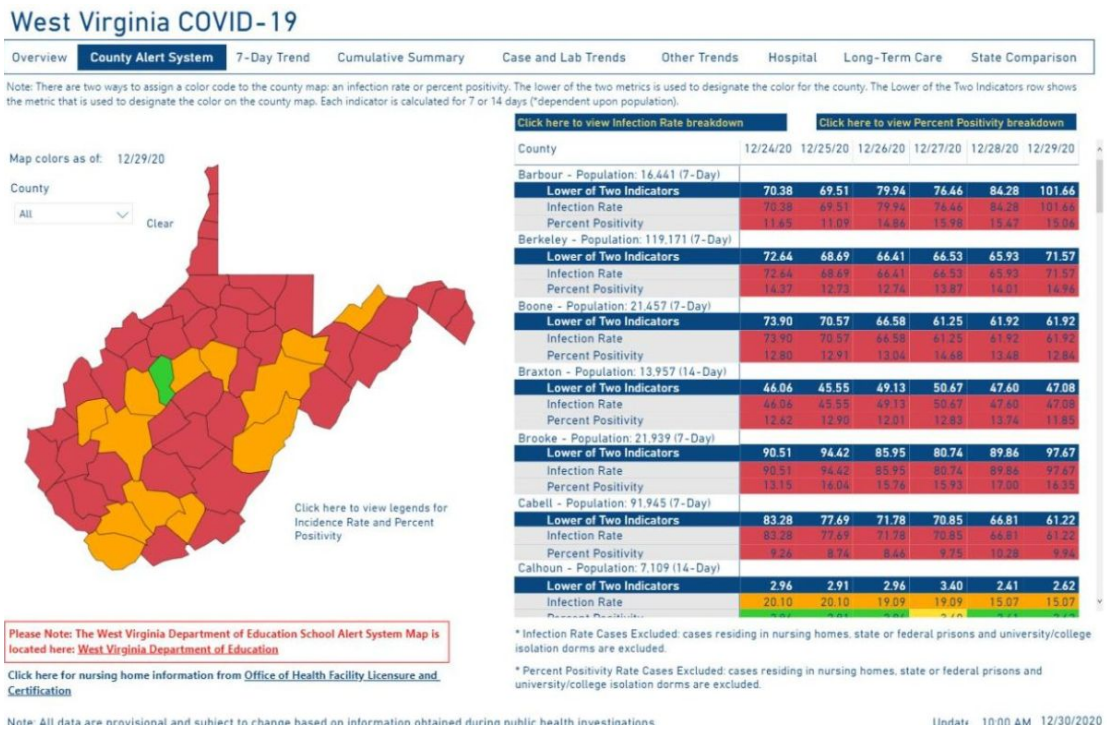
As of Wednesday morning, the **statewide rate of COVID-19 transmission** (https://rt.live/)– also known as Rt – was 1.11; the 2nd-highest such rate of any state in the country.

WEDNESDAY MAP UPDATE

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

Red counties: **41** (Barbour, Berkeley, Boone, Braxton, Brooke, Cabell, Clay, Doddridge, Fayette, Grant, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Hancock, Hardy, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Lincoln, Logan, Marion, Marshall, Mason, Mercer, Mingo, Monongalia, Monroe, Morgan, Nicholas, Ohio, Pendleton, Pleasants, Preston, Ritchie, Taylor, Tyler, Upshur, Wayne, Webster, Wetzel, Wirt, Wood)
Orange counties: **13** (Gilmer, Kanawha, Lewis, McDowell, Mineral, Pocahontas, Putnam, Raleigh, Randolph, Roane, Summers, Tucker, Wyoming)
Gold counties: **0**
Yellow counties: **0**
Green counties: **1** (Calhoun)

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.



County	12/24/20	12/25/20	12/26/20	12/27/20	12/28/20	12/29/20
Barbour - Population: 16,441 (7-Day)						
Lower of Two Indicators	70.38	69.51	79.94	76.46	84.28	101.66
Infection Rate	70.38	69.51	79.94	76.46	84.28	101.66
Percent Positivity	11.65	11.09	14.86	15.98	15.47	15.04
Berkeley - Population: 119,171 (7-Day)						
Lower of Two Indicators	72.64	68.69	66.41	66.53	65.93	71.57
Infection Rate	72.64	68.69	66.41	66.53	65.93	71.57
Percent Positivity	14.37	12.73	12.74	13.87	14.01	14.96
Boone - Population: 21,457 (7-Day)						
Lower of Two Indicators	73.90	70.57	66.58	61.25	61.92	61.92
Infection Rate	73.90	70.57	66.58	61.25	61.92	61.92
Percent Positivity	12.80	12.91	13.04	14.68	13.48	12.84
Braxton - Population: 13,957 (14-Day)						
Lower of Two Indicators	46.06	45.55	49.13	50.67	47.60	47.08
Infection Rate	46.06	45.55	49.13	50.67	47.60	47.08
Percent Positivity	12.62	12.90	12.01	12.83	13.74	11.85
Brooke - Population: 21,939 (7-Day)						
Lower of Two Indicators	90.51	94.42	85.95	80.74	89.86	97.67
Infection Rate	90.51	94.42	85.95	80.74	89.86	97.67
Percent Positivity	13.15	16.04	15.76	15.93	17.00	16.35
Cabell - Population: 91,945 (7-Day)						
Lower of Two Indicators	83.28	77.69	71.78	70.85	66.81	61.22
Infection Rate	83.28	77.69	71.78	70.85	66.81	61.22
Percent Positivity	9.26	8.74	8.66	9.75	10.28	9.94
Calhoun - Population: 7,109 (14-Day)						
Lower of Two Indicators	2.96	2.91	2.96	3.40	2.41	2.62
Infection Rate	20.10	20.10	19.09	19.09	15.07	15.07

(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)

OUTBREAK REPORT

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice reported that per the West Virginia Department of Education, there remain nine active outbreaks in public schools across the state. These outbreaks account for 35 confirmed cases.

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

West Virginia now has 16 active church-related outbreaks across 13 counties: Greenbrier, Harrison, Jackson, Marion, McDowell, Mineral, Mingo, Monongalia, Nicholas, Raleigh, Summers, Upshur, and Wyoming counties. These outbreaks account for a total of 160 cases.

There are now 120 outbreaks in long-term care facilities across the state, up from 113 such outbreaks as of Monday.

The Governor also reported that there are now 634 active inmate cases across the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) system, up from 488 such cases as of Monday. Among the cases that are currently active, 268 are at Eastern Regional Jail, 247 are at Saint Marys Correctional Center, 57 are at Tygart Valley Regional Jail, and 55 are at Central Regional Jail.

There are 46 active staff cases across the DCR system, down from 49 such cases on Monday.

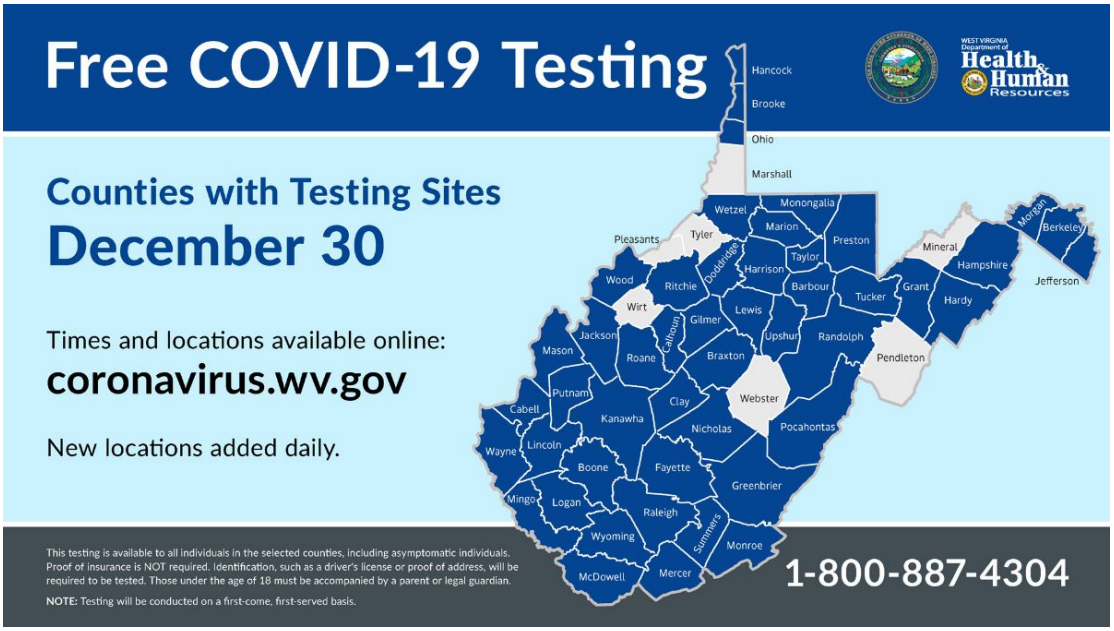
Click here to view the latest corrections facility update
(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Correctional-Facilities.aspx)

AGGRESSIVE TESTING CONTINUES ACROSS STATE

Additionally Wednesday, Gov. Justice provided an overview of the 48 counties across the state that have free testing events scheduled 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.

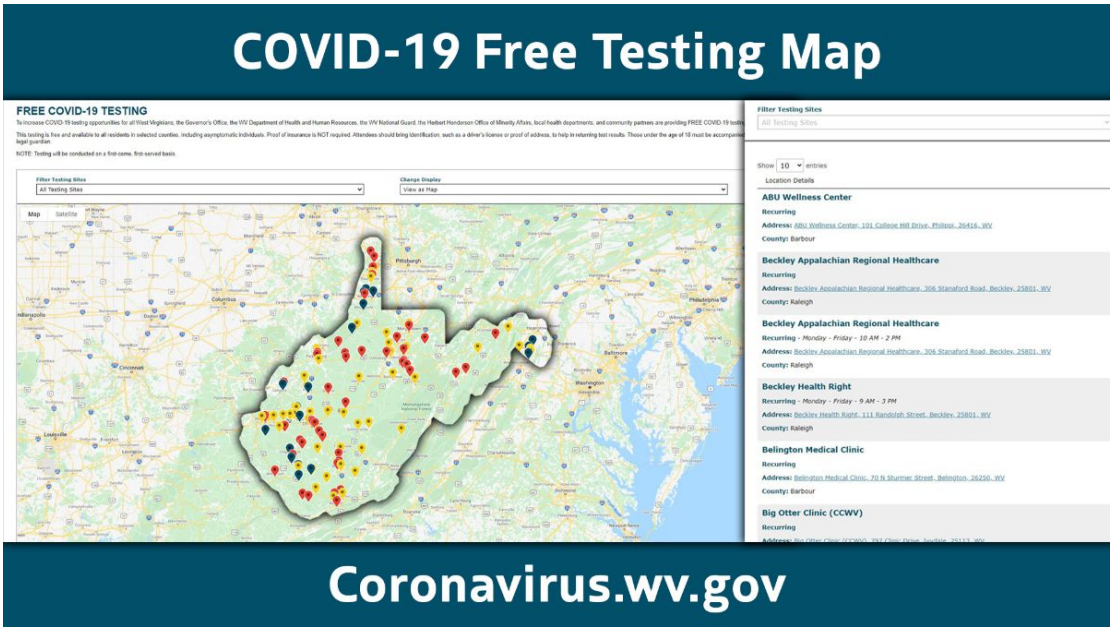
Click here to view all locations, dates, times, and more details
(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx)



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

An interactive online map of all free testing locations across West Virginia is available on the state's **COVID-19 website** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx). Users can filter the map by type of testing site, including daily testing events, recurring testing events, as well as Walgreens and Fruth Pharmacy testing locations. Users can also filter by county. Each location is marked on the map with a pin. After finding a testing location nearby, users are able to click on the pin for more information about that particular testing site, including the specific location and timeframe during which testing will be held.

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)

UPDATED FACE COVERING REQUIREMENT IN EFFECT; SIGNS AVAILABLE FOR BUSINESSES

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice provided a reminder that his broadened Statewide Indoor Face Covering Requirement remains in effect.

The order requires all West Virginians age 9 and older to wear a face covering at all times inside all indoor public places, regardless of whether or not they are able to maintain proper social distance. The order requires that all businesses and organizations that invite the public into their facilities must post adequate signage advising guests of the requirement and are also responsible for enforcing the requirement to ensure it is being followed.

Click here to read more details about the face covering requirement (/Pages/Statewide-Indoor-Face-Covering-Requirement.aspx)

Posters are available on the DHHR's **online Face Covering Toolkit** (https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Face-Covering-Toolkit.aspx) for businesses or organizations to print and display. Social media graphics are also available for download and use by the general public.

(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Face-Covering-Toolkit.aspx)

MONOCLONAL ANTIBODY TREATMENT REMINDER

Additionally Wednesday, Gov. Justice offered a reminder that West Virginia plans to begin utilizing monoclonal antibodies to treat COVID-19 more frequently, following the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's recent emergency authorization of the treatment.

West Virginia has 1,400 doses of monoclonal antibodies on-hand, with 600 more doses expected to arrive shortly.

Monoclonal antibodies are laboratory-made proteins that mimic the immune system's ability to fight off viruses.

The Governor again urged all West Virginians over the age of 65 who test positive to ask their doctor if they qualify for this type of treatment.

WEST VIRGINIANS CALLED UPON TO DONATE BLOOD AND PLASMA

Also on Wednesday, Gov. Justice once again encouraged all West Virginians to consider donating blood and plasma through the American Red Cross.

In the Governor's recent call with the White House Coronavirus Task Force, Vice President Mike Pence said that there is still a shortage of plasma and blood all across the nation.

Those fully recovered from a verified COVID-19 diagnosis may have plasma in their blood containing COVID-19 antibodies that can attack this virus. This plasma is being evaluated as a possible treatment for currently ill COVID-19 patients.

For more information, visit **redcross.org** (https://www.redcross.org/) or call the local American Red Cross offices at **304-340-3650**.

(https://www.redcross.org/)

FLU VACCINE REMINDER

Additionally Wednesday, 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.

In addition to providing protection from the flu, this vaccine helps reduce the burden on hospitals and healthcare systems.

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/72157717629325736)

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