



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Douglas County to extend Phase 3 through July 5

Gatherings of more than 45 prohibited; all businesses must maintain social distancing guidelines; and, individuals strongly urged to wear masks in public

LAWRENCE – Douglas County’s Local Health Officer will extend [Phase 3](#) of the county’s Smart & Safe Reopening Plan for two weeks through July 5. The earliest the plan called for moving to Phase Out was Monday, June 22, but based on the county’s recent COVID-19 case situation, Dr. Thomas Marcellino has decided to leave [Phase 3 restrictions in place](#) with the current local health order.

“We have seen an uptick in recent activity suggesting the coronavirus has become more active in our county,” Marcellino said. “I believe it’s more prudent to extend Phase 3 for two more weeks so we can get an idea of the trend of the virus and prevent chances for large mass gatherings that could potentially be a source of a large outbreak that could be devastating.”

As part of Phase 3, mass gatherings of more than **45** individuals are prohibited. All businesses, activities and venues, including swimming pools, have been able to open in this phase provided they can maintain at least six feet of social distance between individuals or groups, follow fundamental cleaning and public health practices, and avoid instances in which the mass gathering limit is exceeded and individuals are unable to maintain 6 feet of distance with only infrequent or incidental moments of closer proximity.

Through June 19, Douglas County has 91 COVID-19 cases (77 individuals have recovered) since its first lab-confirmed case on March 17, and residents have lived under several local health orders since mid-March.

The Smart and Safe: Reopening Douglas County Community Scorecard is available [online](#), and it includes metrics that are helping guide the local COVID-19 Recovery Coordination Team’s decisions on how to proceed with reopening phases or to potentially add restrictions in the future if necessary.

Marcellino said there are encouraging signs in the metrics right now, including LMH Health’s bed and ventilator capacity available and so far the low number of hospitalizations among COVID-19 cases. However, he said because the number of active cases has increased in the past two weeks, it is a good reminder for the public to be more cautious, including wearing masks in public places, especially indoor settings.

“Our Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health team will be evaluating things in the next couple of weeks, but the cornerstone and foundation of preventing the virus is in mask usage,” Marcellino

said. “Personally, I have been disappointed with what I have observed with mask wearing overall, and I am aware of other states and cities that have mandated it. We are hoping our community has better compliance, so that we don’t have to take those measures.”

People should wear a mask or cloth face covering any time they venture into public, he said, and according to public health guidelines and recommendations, businesses should require employees to wear masks. Marcellino said it was especially important to wear one any time you go inside a public place or business. Outside, wear a mask if you are in a situation where you may not be able to keep six feet of social distance from someone who is not a family member.

“We appreciate the businesses in our community that have closed in the past under earlier health orders, and now that they are open, we are asking for their continued cooperation by requiring employees to wear masks,” Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health Director Dan Partridge said. “We also ask members of the public to wear masks when they venture out. We have had a strong community effort for several months, as people have made sacrifices and worked to take care of their neighbors. We are asking people to redouble their efforts and keep doing that.”

Other important ways to reduce transmission of COVID-19 are:

- Practice social distancing, meaning staying at least 6 feet apart from others when in public or outdoors;
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water is not immediately available;
- Cover coughs and sneezes with your elbow;
- Avoid touching your face;
- Keep your home and office surfaces clean;
- Stay home as much as possible and keep your circle of contacts small.

Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health maintains the Coronavirus hotline, 785-856-4343, and there are [weekend options in the community for COVID-19 screening and testing](#). Always call a healthcare provider to let them know of your symptoms before showing up.

Members of the public can [read FAQs about reopening phases](#) at douglascntyks.org/coronavirus or ldchealth.org/coronavirus. Anyone with questions about compliance of a public health order can email phorders@ldchealth.org.