



DRAFT RELEASE
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Libraries, in-house dining at restaurants in Douglas County to remain closed through May 17

Local health order supplements other guidance from Governor's reopen phased plan when statewide stay-home order ends Monday

LAWRENCE – A task force under Douglas County's Unified Command is announcing a local health order that will keep in-house dining at restaurants closed through May 17 as they have been for the past several weeks. Restaurant carryout, drive-through and delivery services are still allowed as they were under the stay-home under.

The [order](#) by Douglas County's Local Health Officer Dr. Thomas Marcellino also keeps libraries closed through May 17.

Gov. Laura Kelly on Thursday evening presented her [detailed framework](#) for a phased-in approach to begin allowing some businesses to reopen once her stay-home order expires at 11:59 p.m. Sunday. The Governor's plan enables counties to be more restrictive than the executive order she has issued. After discussions with business leaders, local restaurant owners and library directors, Unified Command leaders decided to keep libraries and in-house dining closed for two weeks.

"At this point, as we look to enact a safe and smart reopening, we believe continuing a mitigation strategy related to gatherings that can occur at restaurants and libraries is necessary to contain the coronavirus in addition to the restrictions in the Governor's plan," Marcellino said. "Like the Governor's plan outlines, our timeline for advancing in phases is dependent on Douglas County residents cooperating with restrictions that are still in place, practicing good social-distancing measures and wearing masks or cloth face coverings in public."

Unified Command leaders do not plan to announce any additional local health orders or restrictions before Monday, meaning businesses and Douglas County residents should look to the guidelines in Phase 1 of the Governor's plan to determine if a business will be allowed to open Monday.

In addition to the local order that keeps libraries and in-house dining at restaurants closed, the Governor's plan prohibits mass gatherings of 10 or more people, and keeps the following establishments closed:

- Bars and nightclubs, excluding those already operating curbside and carryout service
- Non-tribal casinos
- Theaters, museums and other indoor leisure spaces such as trampoline parks and arcades
- Fitness centers and gyms
- Nail salons, barber shops, hair salons, massage businesses, tanning salons, tattoo parlors and other personal service businesses where close contact cannot be avoided

You can review the [full Governor's plan](#) for details and this [reopening guidance](#) by industry. Anyone with questions about a public health order can email phorders@ldchealth.org.

Through May 1, 51 residents of Douglas County have tested positive for COVID-19 since its first lab-confirmed case on March 16, and residents have lived under several local health orders and then the statewide stay-home order that initially took effect March 30.

"While we've seen a great amount of support for our local businesses, we realize this has been a challenging time for many. We are looking forward to the gradual and safe reopening of our economy, working with our businesses and local leadership, to ensure the health and safety of our residents, our businesses and their employees," said Bonnie Lowe, President & CEO of The Chamber of Lawrence and a member of the Unified Command reopening task force. "The restaurant owners we consulted with are on board with public health providing guidelines that would fit their establishments and also work to keep everyone safe."

The task force members received feedback from restaurant owners and decided to extend the in-house dining restriction through May 17 while allowing curbside takeout, drive-through and delivery services. The current local health order expires at 12:01 a.m. May 18.

"This will give them some time to plan for serving patrons safely and for them to work with Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health for support on how they can best do that through social distancing and disinfecting," Douglas County Administrator Sarah Plinsky said.

"It is also important for everyone to recognize that while these reopening steps are important and welcome, they also add greater risk to the potential for greater virus transmission and a surge that takes us backwards," said Russ Johnson, President & CEO of LMH Health. "Finding that balance will be important to all of us."

Additional guidance and FAQs about reopening for community members is also available at douglascountyks.org/coronavirus and ldchealth.org/coronavirus, including information on requesting cloth face masks or how to donate them to the community.

"Douglas County residents have done a good job up to this point at helping flatten the curve of the virus, and we believe the steps in the Governor's plan and what we are enacting in Douglas County are prudent and measured in starting to help open up the community more," Marcellino said. "We are still asking for people to maintain social-distancing practices, proper hygiene including good handwashing and wearing masks of cloth face coverings if they interact with others in public."

The reopening task force including Unified Command leaders representing Douglas County, City of Lawrence, LMH Health and Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health, as well as the University of Kansas, The Chamber of Lawrence, Lawrence Public Schools and Douglas County Emergency Management.

Anyone who has a question about possible symptoms of COVID-19, the Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health Coronavirus Hotline is available at 785-856-4343.