



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Seeking to slow COVID-19 spread, updated local health order reduces capacity at venues

In-house dining to cease by 10 p.m., mass gathering limit now at 10, public asked to limit travel, gatherings for Thanksgiving

LAWRENCE – Amid the recent spike in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in Douglas County and the region, public health leaders have updated the local health order seeking to limit environments for exposure with the goal of curbing the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

The [updated order](#) takes effect Friday, Nov. 20, and changes include:

- Reducing the mass gathering limit from 15 people to 10 people. Mass gatherings are defined as instances in which individuals are in one location and are unable to maintain a 6-foot distance between individuals — not including individuals who reside together.
- An indoor capacity limit of 100 people or 50 percent of the lowest occupancy load – whichever is lower – in entertainment venues, recreational facilities, including gyms and fitness and recreation centers, and restaurants, bars and all other such businesses serving food and/or drink indoors, including public, private or membership-only businesses.
- The venues and establishments serving food and drink must close their premises no later than 10 p.m., including all outside seating areas and patios to customers.
- Carryout, curbside, drive-through or off-premise delivery of food is allowed after 10 p.m., but not alcoholic beverages.

The public health order still requires people older than 5 to wear masks in all indoor public spaces — except when eating, drinking, swimming or if they have a medical condition that prevents it — and outdoor public spaces when unable to maintain 6 feet of social distance.

“Our goal is to strike an appropriate balance in limiting high-risk environments right now in our community. Over the course of the pandemic, we have learned more about the science of increased risk of exposure and planning to handle a surge of hospitalizations, but the more people follow the basic public health guidance of mask wearing, social distancing and limiting gatherings, the better off our community will be during this critical time,” said Dr. Thomas Marcellino, Douglas County’s Local Health Officer. “We are grateful for the businesses in our community that have made sacrifices and worked with us to operate safe environments.”

Marcellino said two of the key changes with the updated order are that venues like gyms and fitness facilities limit capacity and continue to spread out customers who also must wear masks and for establishments to space out parties for indoor dining.

With the Thanksgiving holiday next week, the CDC has recommended people stay home and celebrate with people in their own household. Douglas County Unified Command leaders are also urging people to limit their social gatherings to help limit the spread of the virus.

“The safest way to celebrate the coming holidays is keeping it limited to your family unit, just those within your household,” said Dr. Jennifer Schrimsher, infectious disease specialist at LMH Health and Deputy Local Health Officer. “We have to create new traditions, creative ways to celebrate in order to help keep our family members and community safer. The more people you come into contact with, the more likely it is that you could become infected or spread infection to loved one.”

Anyone with a question about compliance of the local health order can contact phorders@ldchealth.org. LDCHealth.org/COVIDtravel has guidance on holiday travel and how to limit risk with gatherings.

