



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **New public health order expands mass gathering limit to 25, expands hours of operation for restaurants and bars to midnight**

*New health order to take effect at 12:01 a.m. Friday, Feb. 19*

**LAWRENCE, KS** – Public health leaders have updated the local health order to expand the mass gathering limit and to expand hours of operation for venues and establishments serving food and drinks indoors. The new order is in recognition of fewer COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in the community.

“Newly reported cases and active case numbers are beginning to decline in Douglas County,” Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health Director Dan Partridge said. “As public health and partner agencies continue to administer vaccinations, we strongly encourage residents to continue mask wearing, social distancing and hand washing. We are not out of the clear yet, but we are making strides in the right direction.”

The [updated order](#) takes effect at 12:01 a.m. Friday, Feb. 19, and the changes include:

- Expanding the mass gathering limit from 10 people to 25 people. Mass gatherings are defined as instances in which individuals are in one location and are unable to maintain 6-foot distance between individuals – not including individuals who reside together.
- If there is an outdoor event, the gathering is limited to 200 people and attendees must comply with social distancing rules.
- An indoor capacity limit of 50% of the lowest occupancy load on the certificate of occupancy of the facility where the gathering is occurring. This applies to entertainment venues, recreational facilities, restaurants, bars and other businesses serving food and/or drink indoors. The indoor capacity limit of 100 people has been removed under the new order.
- Starting Friday, Feb. 19, venues and establishments serving food and drink, including alcoholic beverages, must close their premises no later than midnight. This includes all outside seating areas and patios. The closure time previously was 10 p.m.
- Carryout, curbside, drive-through or off-premise delivery of food is allowed after midnight, but not alcoholic beverages. The time previously was 10 p.m.

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 where unable to maintain 6 feet of social distance.

“While we begin to loosen the restrictions on gathering limits, we need to remain vigilant when it comes to mask wearing, social distancing and washing hands frequently,” said Dr. Thomas Marcellino, local public health officer. “As our community continues to vaccinate more and more residents, I believe we are finally beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel when it comes to this pandemic. However, we cannot let our guard down.”

Anyone with a question about compliance of the local health order can email: [phorders@ldchealth.org](mailto:phorders@ldchealth.org). More information about Douglas County COVID-19 response and recovery efforts can visit [douglascountyks.org/coronavirus](https://douglascountyks.org/coronavirus).

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