



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New public health order removes hour of operations restrictions for restaurants, bars; expands mass gathering limit to 50

New order to take effect at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, March 10

LAWRENCE – Public health leaders have updated the [local public health order](#) to expand the mass gathering limit and have now removed restrictions on hours of operation for venues and establishments serving food and drinks indoors. The new order is the next step in recognition of fewer COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in the community in recent weeks.

“As we have seen over the past month, newly reported cases and active case numbers continue 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 continue to make strides in the right direction, so we are relaxing these restrictions again.”

The updated order takes effect at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, March 10, and the changes include:

- Expanding the mass gathering limit from 25 people to 50 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.
- Removing the requirement under a public health order to close premises at midnight at venues and establishments serving food and drink, including alcoholic beverages. The social distancing and masking requirements remain for these establishments.

The order still includes:

- 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.
- A requirement for all 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 they are unable to maintain 6 feet of social distance.

“As we continue to loosen the restrictions on gathering limits, we still ask the public 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 continue to believe we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel when it comes to this pandemic. However, it’s critical we not let our guards down.”

Anyone with a question about compliance of the local health order can email: phorders@ldchealth.org. The Douglas County COVID Helpline – 785-864-9000 – is also available. Trained staff will answer this phone number, and they can help answer questions about vaccination, testing, symptoms, local public health orders and other COVID-19 related questions. The helpline will be available: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 8 a.m.-noon Saturday.

More information about Douglas County COVID-19 response and recovery efforts can visit douglascountyks.org/coronavirus and LDCHealth.org/coronavirus.