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## PA Department of Health Orders Additional COVID-19 Mitigation Strategies

During its Nov. 18 public meeting, Delaware County Council voted to pass a resolution requesting that Governor Wolf and the Pennsylvania Department of Health enact additional COVID-19 mitigation strategies. The resolution is in response to an alarming spike in COVID-19 cases throughout the county.

While the Chester County Health Department has been supporting Delaware County in its COVID-19 response, it must rely on the PA DOH to issue orders.

Last week, Delaware County exceeded the highest number of outbreaks since the height of the pandemic. At the height of the pandemic there were 232 cases a day. On Nov. 18, Delaware County reported 287 cases. To date, there have been 118,307 positive cases in the county. There have been a total of 849 COVID-19 related deaths in the county.

The 7-day incidence rate as of Nov. 20 was 310.40 per 100,000 and the 7-day PCR positivity rate is 10.47%. To put that into perspective, a few weeks ago the incident rate was 149.98 per 100,000 and the 7 day percent positivity is 6.40%. Delaware County's incidence rate doubled in three weeks. Delaware County is currently experiencing community spread again.

**In response to the resolution, the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health ordered the following mitigation efforts specific to Delaware County:**

- Individuals in bars, restaurants and other retail food establishments must wear masks except when actually eating or drinking
- Bars, restaurants and other retail food establishments must limit the number of individuals at a table to four
- Events or gatherings\* of more than 10 people indoors are prohibited

### Definition of events and/or gatherings:

- An event or gathering is a temporary grouping of individuals that takes place over a limited timeframe, such as hours or days. Examples include weddings, indoor private and public parties, festivals, concerts, or shows. It also includes groupings that occur within larger, more permanent businesses, such as shows or performances within amusement parks, individual showings of movies on a single screen/auditorium within a multiplex, business meetings or conferences.

- The order does apply to funeral homes. Licensed funeral homes should refer to the [State Registrar](#) Notices for more information.
- Groups of people who share a space within a building during the course of operations, such as in an office building, classroom, production floor or regularly occurring operation of a business or organization, are NOT considered events or gatherings.
- Religious gatherings are NOT affected by the Order and have not previously been restricted throughout the response. The PA Department of Health continues to encourage places of worship to find alternative ways to hold services, including virtual and outdoors, and to employ social distancing and mask wearing during services.
- The order does NOT apply to classroom settings but does apply to school activities outside of the classroom that are not related to educational instruction.
- The order applies to school sports and youth and adult recreational sports. School sports must also comply with district rules or local health department restrictions.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the virus spreads more easily indoors person-to-person and therefore any person at an indoor gathering is at a higher risk.

The order states “Delaware County is among those counties seeing serious increases in case counts and concomitant increases in deaths.” The order took effect on November 21, 2020, and will remain in effect until January 2, 2021. Pennsylvania Department of Health, Pennsylvania State Police, and individual municipalities will enforce the amended order.

The order pertaining to Delaware County can be found here:  
<https://www.delcopa.gov/pdf/OrderOfTheSecretaryForDelawareCounty.pdf>

On Nov. 23 Governor Wolf announced new statewide mitigation efforts. Recent data projects 22,000 new COVID-19 cases per day in the state in December. In the past week, the number of COVID-19-attributable deaths has quadrupled, and the average daily case count is seven times higher than it was two months ago.

The new measures include revamped school safety attestation, targeted business and gathering restrictions, and a new enforcement plan that includes liability protection for businesses enforcing the Secretary of Health’s strengthened mask-wearing order. The administration is also advising all Pennsylvanians to limit unnecessary travel and keep gatherings held in homes to members of the same household.

### **Statewide Mitigation Efforts:**

The Wolf Administration is requiring Pre-K to 12 public schools in counties that have been in the substantial transmission level for at least two consecutive weeks to commit to safety measures to ensure the safety and well-being of students and educators. If they choose not to, they must move to fully remote learning without all extra-curricular activities.

The administration is revising and reissuing its orders to protect businesses, customers, and employees. This order will consolidate previous orders and includes reiterating cleaning and social distancing requirements, mandatory telework requirements unless impossible, and other safety measures.

- Telework is mandatory unless impossible; safety measures required for businesses including cleaning, social distancing and masking.
- Online sales and curbside pickup for all shopping are encouraged.

All large events and gatherings are reduced until further notice. In addition, the retail food services industry, including bars, restaurants, and private catered events must end alcohol sales for on-site consumption at 5 p.m. on Nov. 25, 2020 only.

Orders already in place and amended orders are enforceable, and law enforcement and state agencies will be stepping up enforcement efforts, issuing citations and fines, and possibly regulatory actions for repeat offenders.

The amended statewide order can be found here:

[www.governor.pa.gov/newsroom/as-covid-19-cases-reach-critical-levels-wolf-admin-announces-new-mitigation-efforts/](http://www.governor.pa.gov/newsroom/as-covid-19-cases-reach-critical-levels-wolf-admin-announces-new-mitigation-efforts/)