FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 20, 2020

ReStart WyCo Aligns with Kansas Governor Kelly’s Phase 2 Re-Opening Plan

Alignment Continues Wyandotte County’s Re-Opening Process with Minimal Disruption

In light of the changes announced yesterday by the State of Kansas, the Unified Government Health Department, under the guidance of the Medical Officers, announced that it is aligning its COVID-19 Recovery process with the timing of the State of Kansas Phase 2 plan. Effective as of 12:00 a.m. on Friday, May 22, restrictions will be relaxed as prescribed in the Kansas Phase 2 plan.

“The residents and businesses of Wyandotte County have made significant progress in reducing transmission of COVID-19 and flattening the curve,” said Dr. Allen Greiner, Chief Medical Officer of the Unified Government Public Health Department. “The local data supports further re-opening of our community, and the Governor’s Phase 2 plan strikes the appropriate balance between public health and economic activity at this time. To keep things under control, we urge everyone to wear masks, practice social distancing, and wash hands frequently.”

In listening to feedback, the Unified Government recognized that residents and businesses faced a confusing mix of state and local guidance regarding the re-opening of businesses, activities venues, and other key community segments. The temporary suspension of the ReStart WyCo plan, and adoption of the State Phase 2 plan, will make it easier for residents and businesses to comply with guidance that keeps patrons and families safer. The State’s Phase 2 plan is available to view or download online at covid.ks.gov.

“I’m pleased that Wyandotte County is continuing to gradually reopen parts of our community and the economy,” stated Mayor/CEO David Alvey of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas. “Our public health officials have consistently promoted the safety and health of our community since the outbreak of COVID-19. Their decision to suspend the ReStart WYCO Plan and align with the State of Kansas’ 2 Plan released yesterday was based on data showing that Wyandotte County continues to slow the spread, an effort to provide consistency and uniformity to residents and businesses confused by the current mix of state and local guidelines, and the fact that State prescribed guidelines supersede local authority.”

“However, it’s important to recognize that we have only slowed, not stopped, the spread of this virus,” Mayor Alvey continued. “We must follow through on recommendations to maintain social distancing, wash our hands, and wear masks in public, as these practices will further reduce the threat to public health and our most vulnerable populations, while allowing health officials to relax restrictions on business and personal activities at the most appropriate time.”

Reducing Exposure Remains the Best Defense

Even though the Kansas Phase 2 plan allows for further loosening of restrictions on individuals and businesses, COVID-19 remains a threat in Wyandotte County. If businesses can continue to operate remotely, they are strongly encouraged to do so. The COVID-19 virus is still present in our community, and minimizing exposure by working remotely continues to be a recommended strategy for limiting its spread.
Vulnerable populations, including people over 60 years old, individuals who are immune-compromised, or who have underlying medical conditions should avoid close contact with others by practicing social distancing as much as is possible. The Public Health Department recommends wearing a mask or face-covering in public.

Under the Kansas Phase 2 plan, mass gatherings (where individuals are in one location and cannot maintain proper social distancing) of more than 15 people are prohibited. Other guidance of the Kansas Phase 2 plan include:

- Individuals are encouraged to wear masks in public settings.
- When in public, people should maintain at least six feet of distance between themselves and others (not including people who reside together).
- Businesses can open if they can maintain at least six feet of distance between consumers.
- Restaurants or dining establishments can meet this requirement by using physical barriers to present the spread of virus between individual customers or groups of seated customers.
- Casinos (non-tribal) may re-open if they comply with uniform guidelines approved by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.
- Most activities and venues may re-open as long as they can maintain at least six feet of distance between individuals or groups and follow proper cleaning and public health practices.

Exceptions to the activities and venues re-opening are:

- Outdoor and indoor entertainment venues with a capacity of 2,000 or more people
- Fairs, festivals, carnivals, and parades
- Summer camps
- Public swimming pools
- Bars and nightclubs excluding already operating curbside and carryout services

**When will public buildings re-open?**

Public buildings in Wyandotte County will re-open on Tuesday, May 26 by appointment only. To protect the health and wellness of visitors and employees, public buildings will re-open with restrictions. Visitors will be required to have their temperatures taken before being admitted. Visitors are also required to wear masks when entering a public building. Additional information will be provided in a separate release.

Residents or businesses with specific questions about doing business with a particular department should visit [wycokck.org](http://wycokck.org). Many services, like paying property taxes, renewing vehicle registration, or requesting a new traffic court date can be completed online. Residents, businesses, and visitors may also contact 3-1-1 for assistance.

County health officials will continue to monitor key data on the status of COVID-19 to determine next steps in the community’s re-opening process. Those metrics include:

- The number of hospitalizations and deaths in Wyandotte County and surrounding area hospitals over a 14-day period, and
- The percentage of positive tests over a 14-day period.

“The Unified Government Health Department and Medical Officers will continue to closely track the data and could, if the data goes in the wrong direction, move back to a more restrictive position,” said Greiner. “It is also possible that the Unified Government could stay in Phase 2 for longer than the State. It depends on what the data shows us in terms of whether COVID-19 continues to spread or if it’s contained in Wyandotte County.”

“Data points such as the 14 day moving average and total positive cases are moving in the right direction. It is important that we continue to expand testing across the community, and increase our contact tracing capacity. Testing and tracing are key components to managing the spread of COVID-19 and preventing a resurgence that could overwhelm the medical system,” added Juliann Van Liew, Director of the Unified Government Public Health Department.
Residents with questions about the Governor’s Phase 2 should contact 3-1-1 or visit covid.ks.gov/ad-asta-a-plan-to-reopen-kansas. To learn more about the County’s COVID-19 response and access important FAQs and information, visit wycokck.org/COVID-19.

**Media Inquiries:** Janell Friesen, Public Information Officer
Unified Government Public Health Department
COVID-19 media requests: (913) 573-6727
All other Health Department media requests: (913) 573-6703
jfriesen@wycokck.org

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