FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wyandotte County Moves to Phase 3 of Ad Astra Re-Opening Plan

Previous restrictions relaxed; additional guidance provided

Effective June 8 at 12:01 AM, Wyandotte County will move to Phase 3 of the Ad Astra Re-Opening Plan. The Ad Astra plan is available to view or download online at covid.ks.gov and wycokck.org/COVID-19.

Since May 22, Wyandotte County had been in Phase 2 of Governor Kelly’s Ad Astra Re-Opening Plan. On May 26, Governor Kelly’s announced that her re-opening plan for the state would function as guidelines rather than an Executive Order. Wyandotte County had already issued a local Health Order for Phase 2, and a Health Order, signed by Dr. Allen Greiner, Chief Medical Officer with the Unified Government Public Health Department, will also be issued for Phase 3. The Order will be issued on June 5 and go into effect on June 8.

In the Order, the Medical Officers and the Public Health Department have largely adopted the Phase 3 plan from the state, with some additional clarification and guidance, such as additional precautions for long-term care facilities.

Dr. Greiner acknowledged the progress so far in Wyandotte County, allowing the community to continue to move forward in a cautious manner.

“As a community, we’ve made good progress in terms of the actions we’ve taken to control and contain the spread of COVID-19 in Wyandotte County. Even though our numbers have looked more concerning than those in some adjacent counties over the past couple of months, in some key ways, I feel confident that our numbers are fairly stable and it’s appropriate to move forward right now,” said Dr. Greiner.

The earliest Wyandotte County would move out of Phase 3 would be June 22. However, Dr. Greiner noted that there is a strong possibility that the County will remain in Phase 3 beyond that date.

“We will remain vigilant in monitoring COVID-19 numbers in Wyandotte County. While we are excited to see the continuing re-opening of our local economy, COVID-19 remains a threat in Wyandotte County. If the data shows an uptick in the spread of the virus, we might have to take a step back. While we certainly hope that’s not the case, we will continue to monitor COVID-19 data every single day, moving forward,” explained Dr. Greiner. “If in seven to 10 days we’re still not seeing dramatic drops, or if we’re seeing slight upticks in the spread of the virus, that might extend how long we remain in Phase 3.”

Each phase of the Ad Astra plan in Wyandotte County will be in place for at least 14 days because the incubation period for COVID-19 is up to 14 days. This allows the Unified Government Public Health
Department to monitor the population for further outbreaks of the virus, for the duration of one incubation period.

“The latest health data shows continued improvement in Wyandotte County’s fight against the coronavirus, allowing our community to re-open all businesses and further relax existing health orders,” said Mayor/CEO David Alvey. “Today’s announcement is great news for our residents and businesses, as by working together and through shared sacrifice we have significantly slowed the spread of COVID-19 in our community, and protected the most vulnerable. As we move forward, we’ll continue looking for opportunities to help our community recover and return to a sense of normalcy. Simultaneously, it is critical that Wyandotte Countians continue practicing safe social distancing and adhere to all public health guidelines as we move forward, as we don't want to undo all that we’ve achieved over the last several months.”

Reducing Exposure Remains the Best Defense

Even though the Ad Astra Phase 3 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 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.

In Phase 3, all businesses may re-open, and all education, activities, venues, and establishments may operate pursuant to mass gathering guidelines described below.

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 and avoiding large gatherings, especially when precautionary measures are difficult to maintain. The Public Health Department recommends wearing a mask or face-covering in public.

Under the Phase 3 plan for Wyandotte County, mass gatherings (where individuals are in one location and cannot maintain proper social distancing) of more than 45 people is prohibited. Other guidance of the Ad Astra Phase 3 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).
- For employers, the level of on-site staffing is unrestricted, but social distancing is encouraged where possible.
- Businesses still must maintain at least six feet between consumers (individuals or groups). Restaurants or dining establishments can meet this requirement by using physical barriers to prevent the spread of virus between individual customers or groups of seated customers.
- Swimming pools are allowed to open, with social distancing and no more than 45 people. Please note that UG Parks & Recreation pool and spray park facilities will remain closed, but other pools in the area, such as neighborhood pools, may open if they choose.
- No visitations will be permitted at long-term care facilities to protect the health of the facility residents.
- Summer camps, fairs, festivals, and outdoor venues may re-open as long as they can maintain at least six feet of distance between individuals or groups, beyond 45 individuals and at 50% or less of fire marshal approved capacity.
Exceptions to the activities and venues re-opening are:

- All education, activities, venues, and establishments may operate pursuant to mass gathering guidelines.
- Public pools and spray parks in Kansas, City, Kansas remain closed until further notice.

**When Will We Move to the Next Phase?**

Phase 3 will remain in effect until at least June 22. County health officials will continue to monitor key data on the status of COVID-19 to determine the next steps in the community's re-opening process. Those metrics include:

- The number of COVID-19 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.

**Why a Phased Approach to Re-Opening?**

Wyandotte County's phased approach is designed to ensure two things:

- That local hospitals are not overwhelmed by COVID-19 cases.
- That vulnerable populations, including those over 60 years old, individuals who have compromised immune systems, or those who have underlying medical conditions are protected.

“Using a careful phased approach allows us to see how the COVID-19 numbers are evolving in our community and make informed decisions about future re-opening,” said Dr. Erin Corriveau, Deputy Medical Officer. “Proceeding cautiously, and with guidance from at least two weeks of data, is crucial to protect those most vulnerable to serious illness, and thus minimize the number of community members who become seriously ill from COVID-19. We all want to get back to a sense of normalcy. But rushing the process without data indicating this is safe would mean doing so at the expense of our vulnerable friends and family.”

**Public Health Department Continues to Expand Services**

While the County continues to relax restrictions, the Public Health Department's attention to medical, social, and business needs continues. The Unified Government partnered with the University of Kansas Health System to provide clinical services via the County's 3-1-1 call line for residents who have COVID-19 medical questions and needs. The call line is staffed by nurses and other staff from The University of Kansas Health System. Residents can call 3-1-1 to speak to a trained professional if they:

- Are worried they may have COVID-19 and want to talk to someone about their symptoms
- Want to learn more about testing
- Have other medical questions about COVID-19 and want to speak to a health professional

COVID-19 and the subsequent economic challenges it has caused have strained many Wyandotte County families. The social needs line through 3-1-1 helps residents who are seeking a variety of services, including:

- Food assistance
- Access to health care and health insurance
- Housing
- Employment assistance
- Mental health help

Trained community health workers (CHWs) are available to respond to requests for assistance and walk residents through the process of accessing the services they need. The UGPHD and The University of Kansas Health System have partnered to provide CHW staffing for the social needs call line. For assistance, call 3-1-1 or (913) 573-5311, Monday through Sunday between 8 AM and 5 PM.
“We know our community has a lot of questions about the impact of COVID-19 on their families, their health, and their work,” said Juliann Van Liew, Director of the UGPHD. “The new features of 3-1-1 help people get answers to those questions and connect them to much-needed services during a time that has created significant personal and financial stress for many. The Public Health Department is also producing a COVID-19 Business Toolkit to help WyCo businesses protect their staff and customers.”

Area businesses can get their COVID-19 questions answered through 3-1-1, or by viewing resources and guidance at wycokck.org/COVID-19. Staff can assist businesses seeking to better understand how the re-opening process affects their operations and what safety measures they need to take to protect their employees and customers. The 3-1-1 business call line is staffed by the UG Economic Development Department.

When will public buildings re-open?
Public buildings in Wyandotte County re-opened on Tuesday, May 26 by appointment only. On June 8, public buildings will re-open without an appointment needed; however, residents are strongly encouraged to set an appointment or do business with the Unified government where possible by visiting mywyco.wycokck.org. To protect the health and wellness of visitors and employees, visitors are required to have their temperatures taken before being admitted. Visitors are also required to wear masks or face coverings when entering a public building.

Municipal Court
The Kansas City, Kansas Municipal Court will resume limited in-person court hearings on June 15, 2020. All court hearings will be by appointment only, and dockets will be limited in size to comply with the safety guidelines issued by the Wyandotte County Health Officer. Court cases previously scheduled during the shutdown will be slowly rescheduled for a new appointment date. Defendants, victims, and witnesses will be notified individually.

If you do not have an appointment, call before you make the trip to City Hall to ensure you will be seen. Several services provide access to the court remotely, and when possible, you should use these methods to prevent having to come into the office. These services include paying a ticket, applying for traffic diversion, requesting a remote hearing, checking your court date, updating your contact information, providing a document, requesting certified court records, requesting assistance with a suspended driver's license, and requesting one-on-one customer support by phone or email. To contact Municipal Court, email kckmunicourt@wycokck.org or call (913) 573-5200.

Motor Vehicle & Treasury
For all Motor Vehicle work not related to titles, the public is required to continue to use online, drop-off, or mail-in options. However, beginning Monday, June 8, the Annex Office (8200 State Avenue, Kansas City, KS 66112) will be open exclusively for Motor Vehicle title work. Those electing to use this option to complete title work will be required to have a spot in the online queue prior to arriving on location. To save your spot in line, visit wycokck.org/Auto.

Additional information about vehicle registration and title work will be provided in a subsequent press release.

Residents or businesses with specific questions about doing business with a particular department should visit 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.
Residents with questions about the Phase 3 plan should contact 3-1-1 or visit the “ReStart WyCo” tab available at wycokck.org/COVID-19. To contact 3-1-1 outside of Wyandotte County, dial (913) 573-5311. To learn more about the County’s COVID-19 response, access important FAQs, and view additional information, visit wycokck.org/COVID-19.

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