SCHOOL RE-ENTRY METRICS AND PROTOCOLS

During Friday's briefing, Gov. Justice joined State education and health leaders to unveil the new metric and color code system that will determine how in-person instruction, athletics, and other extracurricular activities are conducted at West Virginia's pre-kindergarten through 12th grade schools, to ensure the safety of students, teachers, service personnel, and the community as a whole.

"There's no state that we know of that has a rating system that is similar to what we're going to propose to do," Gov. Justice said. "We've been working on this, night and day, for a long long time, with all the experts that we could gather: people from West Virginia, out-of-state, and around the world, our medical experts, the education community, our teachers and counties, and many more."

The School Re-entry Metrics and Protocols – developed by Gov. Justice, the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), and the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) – provide a consistent tool that will assess community transmission. The color-coded system is driven by data and science to monitor the level of COVID-19 in each county.

The system will be based on each county's number of new daily cases per 100,000 people on a seven-day rolling average. This figure will be calculated and updated by the DHHR.

"The new daily cases are then population-adjusted per 100,000 so small counties and big counties can be compared equally," said Dr. Clay Marsh, state Coronavirus Czar, who also went on to discuss the use of new daily cases as the key data point in the metric. "The idea behind this is we actually do this at a metric that can change on a daily basis, which then reflects the status of the county. If we wait for the number of active cases to be cleared, that would generally be a minimum of 14 days to see any change and this model changes things much more rapidly and does it on a population-adjusted basis.

"I believe this is a very safe and innovative approach to make sure that we are trying to balance the need to get our students back in class while also protecting them, as well as our teachers, service personnel, and the whole community," Dr. Marsh continued.

Based on that figure, each county will be assigned one of four colors – green, yellow, orange, or red – which is meant to represent the severity of the rate of community spread.

An online map, tracking each county's performance in the metric and associated color status, is published on the **West Virginia COVID-19 dashboard (under the "Overview" tab, select "Click here to view incidence rate")**.