

Statewide Public Health Orders Reach Expected Final Phase

May 21, 2021

The Wyoming Department of Health (WDH) is announcing the likely final phase for statewide public health orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the immediate removal of one of the two remaining orders.

Statewide public health order #2, which affected indoor events of more than 500 people, is now eliminated.

Mask use and physical distancing requirements in statewide public health order #1 related to K-12 schools will remain through May 31, while the same requirements for colleges are immediately eliminated. An extension of statewide public health order #1 past May 31 is not expected.

“We are making these changes now because we are confident in the effectiveness of the currently authorized COVID-19 vaccines. We are seeing excellent results among those who have been vaccinated. The vaccines are doing their job very well,” said Dr. Alexia Harrist, state health officer and state epidemiologist with WDH.

WDH data shows more than 28 percent of Wyoming residents are fully vaccinated with more people choosing the vaccines every day.

“There is no question we would like to see a much higher coverage percentage,” Harrist said. “But adults, including college students, across our state have had ample opportunity to choose vaccination by this point,” Harrist said. “The change to the order affecting schools and colleges will reflect recently updated guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.”

Harrist noted the Pfizer vaccine was recently made available for 12-15 year olds in addition to anyone over 16. Moderna and Johnson and Johnson (Janssen) vaccines are authorized for adults 18 and over. No COVID-19 vaccine is yet authorized for children younger than 12.

“Unfortunately, COVID-19 has not disappeared completely. We continue to see confirmed cases across the state. The vast majority of recent, new cases have involved people who were not yet fully vaccinated,” Harrist said.

"I strongly encourage anyone who is eligible but who hasn't yet been vaccinated to do so as soon as possible. These vaccines are free, safe and effective. They offer many benefits, such as the ability to avoid quarantine after exposure to COVID-19, and are the best route we have to outsmart the pandemic," she said.

Harrist expects specific protocols for the safe operation of K-12 schools during the pandemic will be determined at the school district level past June 1. "We are, of course, offering guidance and advice and we encourage schools to work closely with their county health representatives. It will be important to monitor local health situations."

WDH continues to recommend but not require masks in indoor public places for people who aren't fully vaccinated when common-sense physical distancing cannot be maintained among those who don't live in the same household.

"There are specific places where precautions such as mask use are still recommended for everyone, such as healthcare settings including nursing homes and assisted living facilities, correctional facilities and homeless shelters," Harrist said. "Private businesses and organizations may also still choose to require masks and other precautions. We ask individuals to be respectful of requirements in those settings."

Information about getting a COVID-19 vaccine in Wyoming can be found at <https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/immunization/wyoming-covid-19-vaccine-information/>.

The updated remaining order, which goes into effect immediately and remains in place through May 31, can be found online at <https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/infectious-disease-epidemiology-unit/disease/novel-coronavirus/covid-19-orders-and-guidance/>.