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Gov. Ricketts (podium) and Judge Vernon Daniels (TV screen) highlight the importance of adoption in Nebraska.

Video from today's briefing is available by clicking here (<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2F%2F88ypff8l66lo05e%2FGov.%2520Press%2520Conf.%252011.09.2020.mp4%3Fd1%3D0&data=04%7C01%7Ccio.webmstr%40nebraska.gov%7C2d408cd7274c4b1d904608d885066ef1%7C04>)

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LINCOLN – This morning, Governor Pete Ricketts announced new Directed Health Measures (DHMs) that will take effect statewide on Wednesday, November 11th. The measures are being implemented in response to rising hospitalizations across the state in an effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Kurth Brashear, VP for Institutional Advancement at Concordia University, also joined the Governor this morning. Kurth is a coronavirus survivor, and he underscored the danger of the disease—even for someone who is healthy. He also talked about the lingering health problems some people experience after having COVID-19.

The Governor also proclaimed November as “Adoption Month” in Nebraska to raise awareness of the need to help children in foster care find permanent homes. Judge Vernon Daniels of the Separate Juvenile Court in Omaha joined the briefing virtually to emphasize the benefits for youth who are adopted out of foster care. Camas Holder, Eastern Service Area Administrator for the Division of Family Services within the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), also took part in the press conference. She highlighted the Nebraska Heart Gallery, an initiative to connect youth in foster care with loving, adoptive homes.

Gov. Ricketts: Hospital Capacity

- We’re closely monitoring our hospital capacity as coronavirus-related hospitalizations rise in Nebraska.
- Since the pandemic began, everything we have been doing has been to protect our hospital system to make sure people get the care they need.
 - Hospital capacity metrics are as follows:
 - Hospital bed availability: 31%
 - ICU bed availability: 31%
 - Ventilator availability: 71%
- Coronavirus-related hospitalizations continue to increase. They’ve reached a high of 794.

Gov. Ricketts: New DHMs

- To protect our hospital capacity, we’re announcing new DHMs. They will take effect statewide on Wednesday, November 11th. The new DHMs are scheduled to remain in effect through at least November 30, 2020.
- Major changes include:
 - **Six (6) feet of separation** between parties is required in all instances for the following: gyms/fitness centers, health spas, restaurants, bars, gentlemen and bottle clubs, weddings, funerals, indoor gatherings, and churches/places of worship.
 - **Masks** are required for staff and patrons at salons, barbershops, massage therapy, bowling alleys, pool halls, body art establishments, and any other indoor businesses where staff and patrons are within six (6) feet of each other for 15 consecutive minutes or more.
 - An exception will be made for all services performed on faces. Patrons will be permitted to remove their mask while receiving services directly. The mask must be worn by the patron at all other times while on the premise.
 - **Extracurricular Activities** (school and club sponsored)
 - Fan attendance for all indoor youth extracurricular activities is limited to household members of participants only.
- An outline of these changes, and additional DHM changes, is available by clicking here (<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dropbox.com%2Fs%2Fbcgfg6nkbierlsc%2FOutline%2520of%2520Changes%2520to%2520DHMs%252011.9.20.pdf%3Fdl%3D0&data=04%7C01%7Ccio.webmstr%40nebraska.gov%7C2d408cd7274c4b1>). Official DHMs for each county will be posted on the DHHS website (<http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/COVID-19-Directed-Health-Measures.aspx>) later in the week.

Kurth Brashear: Taking Coronavirus Seriously

- I live in Seward with my family.
- We’ve followed the State’s public health guidance during the pandemic by wearing masks and limiting in-person interactions.
- In September, we let our guard down when we hosted a gathering of friends at our house.
- Afterward, we learned two persons at our gathering had tested positive for COVID-19.
- We immediately quarantined as directed by our local health department.
- That same day, I began to have a mild cough and tightness of chest. I didn’t worry much about them at first, since I commonly have those symptoms during harvest season.
- Over the next several days, my symptoms intensified. I tested positive for COVID-19 and went into isolation.
- My symptoms continued to worsen. I had:
 - Coughing
 - Shortness of breath

- Back pain
 - Fatigue
 - Very low blood oxygen levels
- I want to Bryan East for treatment. Doctors discovered damage in my lungs and prescribed treatments.
 - My health improved, but I still have lung damage and joint pain in my back. I also continue to have shortness of breath.
 - While deaths from COVID-19 are tragic, we also need to talk about the rest of the 60-80% of COVID-19 patients who have symptoms. Even after getting over the worst of the virus, many people continue to deal with its effects.
 - Don't let your guard down! This doesn't mean living in fear. It means taking steps to protect yourself and your loved ones.

Judge Vernon Daniels: Adoption

- November is a very happy month for us at the juvenile court, as we celebrate adoptions.
- We work with a lot of children that have been scarred and hurt throughout their lives.
- We put together rehabilitation plans in the hopes that parents and children can be reunited. Unfortunately, that does not always happen.
- If it doesn't work out, we seek permanency for children by looking for adoptive homes.
- As they're waiting, we're blessed to have foster parents step up to provide care for these children.
- Our social workers, case managers, mental health professionals, and guardian ad litem attorneys at law also meet with children and families and look out for their welfare.
- I'd like to thank all of the adoptive families who do so much to welcome youth into their home.

Camas Holder: Adoption

- I am the Eastern Service Area (ESA) Administrator for the DHHS Division of Children and Family services. I provide leadership for our child and family service programs in the ESA, which encompasses Douglas/Sarpy counties.
- Our team works diligently to ensure children and families are safe and provided with the services and resources needed to thrive.
- Whenever a child is placed into state custody, we first work to identify non-custodial parents, relatives, or kin who can provide care and permanency for the child. When those options have been exhausted, placement occurs with a licensed foster care home.
- For our youth in foster care, joining an adoptive home means that they belong and are connected to a family that will support them into adulthood and beyond.
- An adoptive home is more than just a physical space. It's a relational bond providing the nurturing and unconditional support that we all need to be successful.
- People often associate adoption with young children, but there is a great need in our Nebraska communities for adoptive homes for older youth and teens.
- In 2005, The Child Saving Institute created the Heart Gallery as a way to highlight this need.
- You can find the Nebraska Heart Gallery online at [nebraskaheartgallery.org](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnebraskaheartgallery.org%2Fheart-gallery.html&data=04%7C01%7Ccio.webmstr%40nebraska.gov%7C2d408cd7274c4b1d904608d885066ef1%7C043207dfe6894bf6902001038f11f0b1%7C0%7C0%7C637405609971773214%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWlji) (<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnebraskaheartgallery.org%2Fheart-gallery.html&data=04%7C01%7Ccio.webmstr%40nebraska.gov%7C2d408cd7274c4b1d904608d885066ef1%7C043207dfe6894bf6902001038f11f0b1%7C0%7C0%7C637405609971773214%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWlji>)
- On the Heart Gallery's website, you can read more about the youth available for adoption in Nebraska and their stories, pictures, and needs. Older youth and teens want to be a part of the decisions made about their lives, and the Heart Gallery specializes in hearing their voice in the process.
- Additionally, you can contact 1-800-7-PARENT to learn more about becoming a foster or adoptive parent.
- During National Adoption Month, we honor those who have already expanded their families through adoption.
- There's a continued need for additional adoptive families, especially those able to consider the unique joy of adopting an older youth or teen.

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