

COVID-19 UPDATE: Gov. Justice announces bill to exempt unemployment benefits from state income tax

3/19/2021

Gov. Justice holds press briefing on COVID-19 response - March 19, 20...



CHARLESTON, WV – Gov. Jim Justice joined West Virginia health leaders and other officials today for his latest daily press briefing regarding the State’s COVID-19 response.

UNEMPLOYMENT INCOME TAX EXEMPTION

During Friday's briefing, Gov. Justice announced that he has submitted a bill to the Legislature to exempt the first \$10,200 of unemployment benefits received last year by West Virginians from the state income tax for the 2020 tax filing year.

"Some other states are requiring their people to pay taxes on the unemployment they received as a result of the pandemic," Gov. Justice said. "We're not going to do that in West Virginia. We need to stand rock solid with all of our fellow West Virginians who had to endure some really tough times over the past year."

Over 197,000 West Virginians received some amount of unemployment benefits in 2020.

As a result, the Governor's proposed exemption would apply to nearly \$1.36 billion in unemployment compensation benefits.

"It is a huge tax break for people that are really struggling, through no fault of their own," Gov. Justice said. "We absolutely can and should do this."

The exemption follows the recent federal tax code changes made in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, signed on March 11, 2021.



[CLICK HERE TO VIEW PHOTO ALBUM](#)

(<https://www.flickr.com/photos/govjustice/albums/72157718705206711>)

GOVERNOR ORDERS INVESTIGATION INTO DEATH DATA

Also on Friday, Gov. Justice announced that the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) recently **discovered** (<https://dhhr.wv.gov/News/2021/Pages/COVID-19-Daily-Update-3-19-2021.aspx>) that another 20 COVID-19-related deaths were not properly reported by various healthcare facilities across the state.

This is in addition to the 165 improperly reported COVID-19-related deaths the Governor **announced** ([/News/press-releases/2021/Pages/COVID-19-UPDATE-Gov.-Justice-honors-West-Virginians-lost-to-COVID-19-after-DHHR-death-data-updated.aspx](https://governor.wv.gov/News/press-releases/2021/Pages/COVID-19-UPDATE-Gov.-Justice-honors-West-Virginians-lost-to-COVID-19-after-DHHR-death-data-updated.aspx)) last week.

As a result, Gov. Justice said that he is now ordering a “complete investigation” into the reason why these deaths have not properly been reported.

“This is absolutely unacceptable to me,” Gov. Justice said. “We are going to flip every rock to where we can absolutely, without question, pinpoint where the shortcomings are. “If it’s in my house – the DHHR – it will not be a good day. We will do what is necessary with a swift correction. If it falls with our nursing homes or our hospitals, we will try in every way we possibly can to correct that as well. We are disrespecting great West Virginians and there’s no excuse for that.

“Yesterday, the governor of Kentucky announced that he had 604 unreported deaths. So it’s a problem that’s affecting others, not just West Virginia, but that doesn’t make it any better,” Gov. Justice continued. “West Virginia has always led the way, and I want West Virginia to be that shining star all the time.

“I will always be just what I have been from day one, and that is completely transparent. I will absolutely get to the bottom of the ‘why,’ because there is no excuse.”



ALL SCHOOL EMPLOYEES DESIRING VACCINE NOW VACCINATED

Additionally Friday, Gov. Justice announced that all West Virginia school employees who wanted a vaccine have now been vaccinated.

"I am very happy to announce this," Gov. Justice said. "Because we opened up our prioritization to essential workers of all ages, we were able to offer vaccinations to all school employees."

"Governor Justice put a very, very aggressive timetable on prioritizing educators. I don't know that everybody even realizes just how aggressive that timetable was," said State Superintendent of Schools Clayton Burch. "We just found that we're now up over 38,000 vaccines, and that means everybody who was asked for one – whether you're a teacher, service personnel, a substitute teacher, a coach, and so on in our public and non-public schools – got a vaccine."

"It's just an amazing feat," Superintendent Burch added.

Despite the accomplishment, Gov. Justice and Superintendent Burch also took time to remind everyone involved in the West Virginia school system to remain cautious and vigilant by wearing their masks, practicing social distancing and good hygiene, and following all other safety protocols.

"It is clear that, when safety guidelines are followed, we see a reduction in outbreaks and cases in our schools. This is really important, especially when you are outside of school, participating in extracurricular activities with your friends and families," Gov. Justice said. "COVID-19 never takes a day off. So I will tell all of our school employees and teachers; it is not time to let our guard down. We must stay vigilant and keep following the guidelines until we beat this virus."

"It's also really important that everyone involved in extracurricular activities also follow the mitigation strategies as stringently, if not more stringently, than in the schools," Superintendent Burch said.



THREE FIXED-LOCATION CLINICS TO BE ORGANIZED TO VACCINATE WEST VIRGINIA'S WISDOM

Also on Friday, Gov. Justice announced that, to ensure that every single West Virginian age 65 and older who wants a vaccine is being vaccinated, he has directed the Joint Interagency Task Force to set up three fixed-location clinics across the state to vaccinate West Virginians in this age range.

"If you're 65 or older and you can get to one of these three locations, we'll get you vaccinated even if you're still on a waitlist," Gov. Justice said. "I've also directed our Joint Interagency Task Force to make certain that we're clearing out our pre-registration list so we do not miss anyone. We're going to go back to the list and, if we've got to put a hundred people on telephones calling everybody, then that's what we'll do."

To date, 221,180 West Virginians age 65 and older have chosen to be vaccinated – 64% of West Virginia's population in this age range – including 144,997 who are now fully vaccinated.

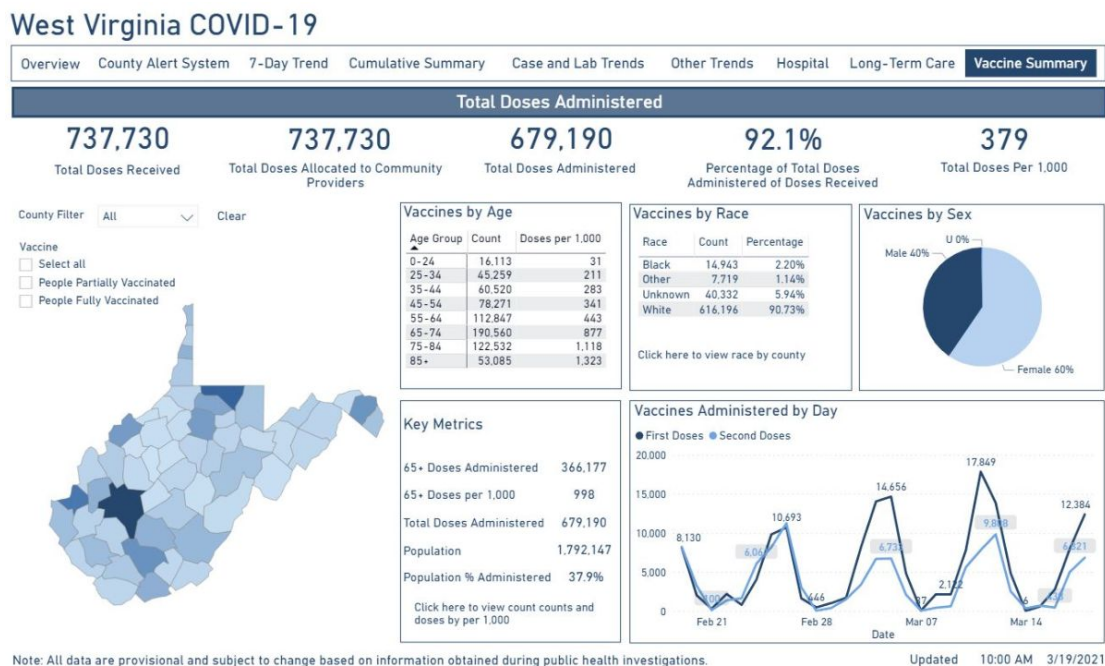
VACCINE DISTRIBUTION UPDATE

Additionally Friday, Gov. Justice reported that West Virginia has now successfully administered 679,190 doses after receiving a total allotment of 737,730 doses from the federal government to date; an overall administration rate of 92.1%.

West Virginia currently boasts a first dose administration rate of 97.1% and a second dose administration rate of 84.9%.

- First doses: 419,823 administered / 432,240 allotted
- Second doses: 259,367 administered / 305,490 allotted

West Virginia COVID-19 Dashboard (<https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx>) (Click "Vaccine Summary" tab)



(<https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx>)

Gov. Justice once again encouraged all West Virginians age 16 and older desiring to be vaccinated to **pre-register at vaccinate.wv.gov** (<https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Vaccine.aspx>) or by calling **1-833-734-0965**.

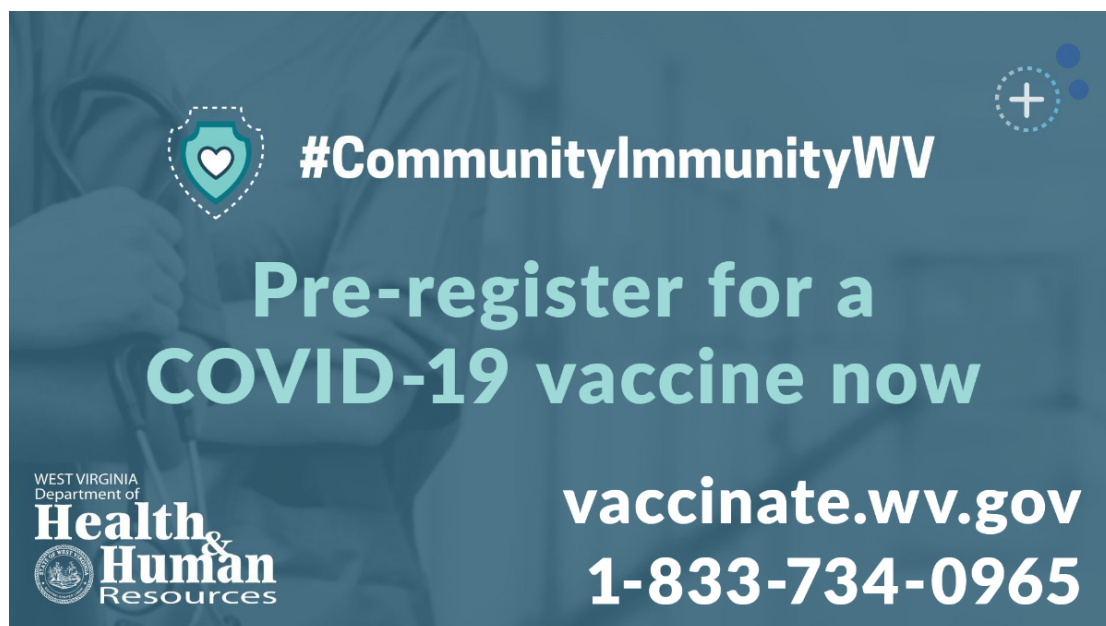
Vaccinations are currently available to all West Virginians age 50 and older, education workers age 40-50, all West Virginians age 16 and older with qualifying pre-existing medical conditions, and all essential workers.

West Virginians who are age 65 and older will continue to be prioritized first until all state residents in this age range who desire the vaccine have been vaccinated.

Any West Virginians age 65 and older who are still waiting on an appointment are urged to call the **West Virginia Vaccine Info Line: 1-833-734-0965** to ensure that they are scheduled to be vaccinated. The info line is open Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Free COVID-19 vaccination clinics either already have been or will be held in all 55 counties across West Virginia this week through operation "Save Our Wisdom."

Each clinic location has its own, unique schedule. Names are being pulled from the **West Virginia COVID-19 Vaccine Registration System** (<https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Vaccine.aspx>) to fill out appointments. All clinics require appointments and walk-ins will not be accepted.



(<https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Vaccine.aspx>)

Vaccine supplies are limited, so pre-registration does not mean immediate access to vaccination. Pre-registration offers West Virginians the opportunity to receive real-time updates on vaccine availability and schedule an appointment when available as vaccine supplies allow. The vaccine registration system allows people to select their preferences for communication through text, email, or voicemail over regular phone lines.

The Governor went on to say that increased emphasis on pre-registrations is needed in a handful of counties across the state, including Berkeley, Calhoun, Clay, Gilmer, Hampshire, Jackson, Jefferson, Lincoln, Mason, McDowell, Mercer, Mineral, Mingo, Morgan, Ritchie, Upshur, Wayne, and Wood counties. The Governor urged West Virginians in these counties with friends and family age 65 and older to help these individuals get pre-registered.

HELP your Friends and Family **PRE-REGISTER**

1-833-734-0965
vaccinate.wv.gov

 **YELLOW COUNTIES**
50+ encouraged
to register today

#CommunityImmunityWV

WEST VIRGINIA
Department of
**Health & Human
Resources**

(<https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Vaccine.aspx>)

INCOME TAX FILING DEADLINE EXTENSION REMINDER

Also, Gov. Justice offered a reminder that yesterday he directed the West Virginia Tax Department to extend the West Virginia income tax filing and payment deadline until Monday, May 17, 2021, to correspond with the **federal government's recent tax filing extension** (<https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/tax-day-for-individuals-extended-to-may-17-treasury-irs-extend-filing-and-payment-deadline>) to the same date.

Individual taxpayers do not need to file any forms or call the West Virginia Tax Department to qualify for this extension.

This relief does not apply to estimated tax payments that are due on April 15, 2021. These payments are still due on April 15.

Click here to read more (</News/press-releases/2021/Pages/Gov.-Justice-announces-extension-of-state-tax-filing-deadline-for-individuals-to-May-17%2c-2021.aspx>).



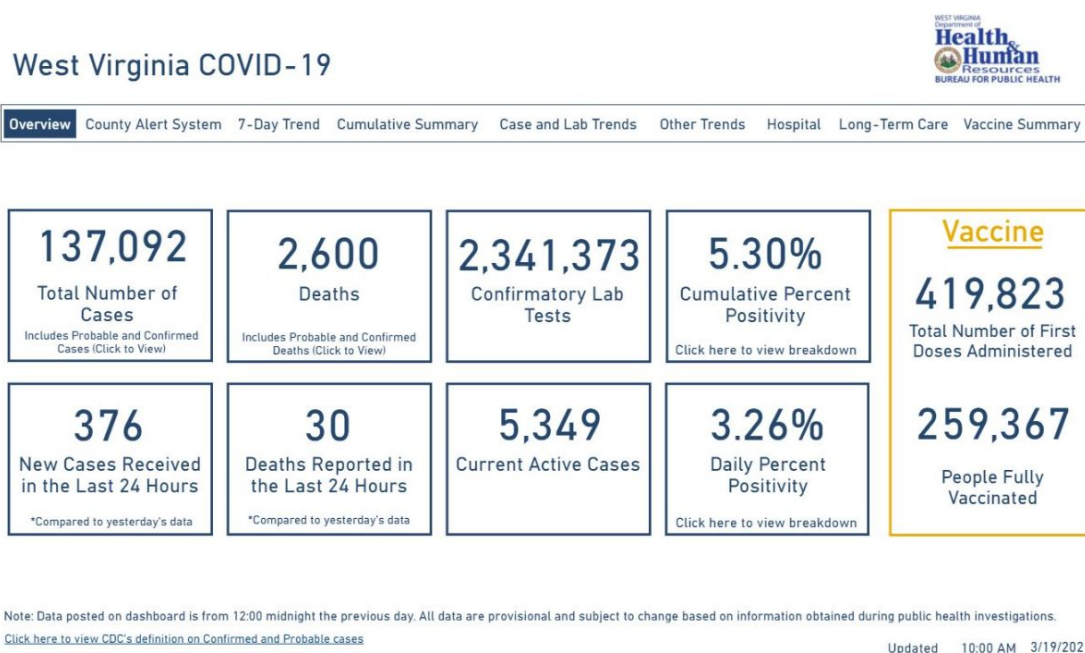
COVID-19 CASE NUMBERS UPDATE

Additionally Friday, Gov. Justice reported that the current number of active cases in the state is now 5,349, up from 5,206 as of his previous COVID-19 briefing on Wednesday.

The number of active hospitalizations is now 199, up from 190 on Wednesday. Of those currently hospitalized, 68 patients are in the ICU, down from 70 such patients on Wednesday.

The cumulative percent of positive cases is now 5.30%, down from 5.31% on Wednesday.

Click here to view the latest COVID-19 data (<https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx>).



(<https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx>)

FRIDAY MAP UPDATE

Also on Friday, Gov. Justice provided a look at West Virginia's latest mid-week County Alert System map update.

The map is updated live on the **DHHR's COVID-19 Dashboard** (<https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx>) (Click "County Alert System" tab) throughout the week.

Red counties: **1**

Orange counties: **12**

Gold counties: **0**

Yellow counties: **10**

Green counties: **32**

West Virginia COVID-19

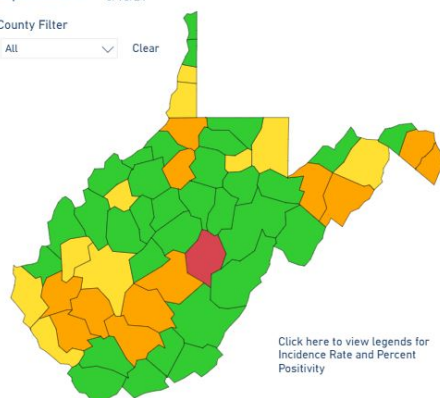
Overview **County Alert System** 7-Day Trend Cumulative Summary Case and Lab Trends Other Trends Hospital Long-Term Care Vaccine Summary

Note: There are two ways to assign a color code to the county map: an infection rate or percent positivity. The lower of the two metrics is used to designate the color for the county. The Lower of the Two Indicators row shows the metric that is used to designate the color on the county map. Each indicator is calculated for 7 or 14 days (*dependent upon population).

Map colors as of: 3/18/21

County Filter

All Clear



Please Note: The West Virginia Department of Education School Alert System Map is located here: [West Virginia Department of Education](#)

[Click here for nursing home information from Office of Health Facility Licensure and Certification](#)

Note: All data are provisional and subject to change based on information obtained during public health investigations.

Updated 10:00 AM 3/19/2021

Click here to view Infection Rate breakdown		Click here to view Percent Positivity breakdown						
County		03/12/21	03/13/21	03/14/21	03/15/21	03/16/21	03/17/21	03/18/21
Barbour - Population: 16,441 (7-Day)								
Lower of Two Indicators		2.51	2.69	2.59	2.43	1.86	1.79	1.87
Infection Rate		19.12	20.85	19.98	19.12	13.90	13.03	13.03
Percent Positivity		2.51	2.69	2.59	2.43	1.86	1.79	1.87
Berkeley - Population: 119,171 (7-Day)								
Lower of Two Indicators		5.94	6.42	6.74	7.09	7.33	7.44	6.72
Infection Rate		19.78	21.82	23.26	24.93	25.77	25.53	24.57
Percent Positivity		5.94	6.42	6.74	7.09	7.33	7.44	6.72
Boone - Population: 21,457 (7-Day)								
Lower of Two Indicators		4.17	4.73	4.93	4.83	4.65	4.24	5.18
Infection Rate		16.64	19.31	19.97	20.64	20.64	19.97	25.92
Percent Positivity		4.17	4.73	4.93	4.83	4.65	4.24	5.18
Braxton - Population: 13,957 (14-Day)								
Lower of Two Indicators		0.46	0.84	0.93	1.27	1.74	1.99	2.24
Infection Rate		2.05	3.58	3.58	5.12	7.16	8.19	9.21
Percent Positivity		0.46	0.84	0.93	1.27	1.74	1.99	2.24
Brooke - Population: 21,939 (7-Day)								
Lower of Two Indicators		0.89	0.74	0.46	0.60	0.94	0.79	1.19
Infection Rate		3.26	3.26	1.95	2.60	3.91	3.26	4.56
Percent Positivity		0.89	0.74	0.46	0.60	0.94	0.79	1.19
Cabell - Population: 91,945 (7-Day)								
Lower of Two Indicators		1.86	1.96	2.17	2.10	2.16	2.27	2.28
Infection Rate		9.94	10.88	11.50	11.34	11.81	12.12	12.27
Percent Positivity		1.86	1.96	2.17	2.10	2.16	2.27	2.28
Calhoun - Population: 7,109 (14-Day)								
Lower of Two Indicators		0.84	0.86	0.87	1.07	1.28	1.51	1.74
Infection Rate		4.02	4.02	4.02	5.02	6.03	7.03	8.04
Percent Positivity		0.84	0.86	0.87	1.07	1.28	1.51	1.74

Numbers for Hardy county will be updated at 1:00PM 03/19/2021

* Infection Rate Cases Excluded: cases residing in nursing homes, state or federal prisons and university/college isolation dorms are excluded.

* Percent Positivity Rate Cases Excluded: cases residing in nursing homes, state or federal prisons and university/college isolation dorms are excluded.

(<https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx>)

OUTBREAK REPORT

Additionally Friday, Gov. Justice reported that there remain seven active church-related outbreaks in West Virginia. These outbreaks are located in Fayette, Monongalia, Nicholas, Raleigh, and Webster counties and account for a total of 85 cases, up from 54 as of the Governor's previous briefing on Wednesday.

There is now just one outbreak in all of the long-term care facilities across the state, down from two such outbreaks on Wednesday.

The Governor also reported that there are now 31 inmate cases across the West Virginia Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DCR) system, up from 28 on Wednesday. Meanwhile, there are now just three active staff cases across the DCR system, down from eight on Wednesday. To view the latest DCR case update, **click here** (<https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Correctional-Facilities.aspx>).

AGGRESSIVE TESTING CONTINUES ACROSS STATE

Also on Friday, Gov. Justice provided an overview of the 52 counties across the state that have free testing events scheduled through the Governor's Aggressive Testing initiative.

Free COVID-19 Testing

Counties with Testing Sites March 19

Times and locations available online:
coronavirus.wv.gov

New locations added daily.

This testing is available to all individuals in the selected counties, including asymptomatic individuals. Proof of insurance is NOT required. Identification, such as a driver's license or proof of address, will be required to be tested. Those under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.
NOTE: Testing will be conducted on a first-come, first-served basis.

1-800-887-4304

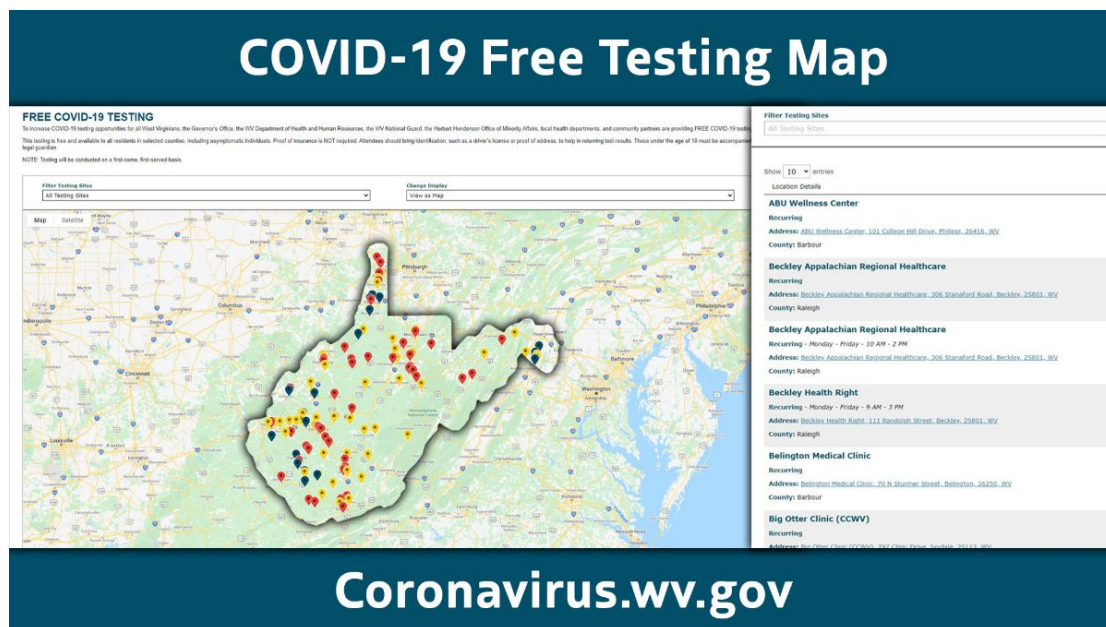
(<https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx>)

This testing is available to all residents, including asymptomatic individuals. Proof of insurance is not required. Attendees should bring identification, such as a driver's license or proof of address, to help in returning test results. Those under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

An interactive online map of all free testing locations across West Virginia is available online. Users can filter the map by type of testing site, including daily testing events, recurring testing events, as well as Walgreens and Fruth Pharmacy testing locations. Users can also filter by county. Each location is marked on the map with a pin. After finding a testing location nearby, users are able to click on the pin for more information about that particular testing site, including the specific location and timeframe during which testing will be held.

[Click here to view all locations, dates, times, and more details](https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx)

[\(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx\)](https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx)



[\(https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx\)](https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/pages/testing.aspx)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**Click here to view all Executive Orders and other actions**

([https://governor.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?](https://governor.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=d525ab9ade4d860d2b5772468&id=3029d4fcc4&e=5c140b96bc)

[u=d525ab9ade4d860d2b5772468&id=3029d4fcc4&e=5c140b96bc](https://governor.us15.list-manage.com/track/click?u=d525ab9ade4d860d2b5772468&id=3029d4fcc4&e=5c140b96bc)) taken by Gov.

Justice to combat the spread of COVID-19 in West Virginia.

For more information about COVID-19 prevention and more, call the State's toll-free hotline at **1-800-887-4304** or visit **[Coronavirus.wv.gov](https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx)** (<https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx>).



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