

## Washington State Coronavirus Response (COVID-19)

# Five Washington counties approved for early move to next phase of reopening

May 08, 2020

**Camp Murray, WA** — Today Washington State Secretary of Health John Wiesman approved applications from Columbia, Garfield, Lincoln, Ferry and Pend Oreille counties to move into Phase 2 of Gov. Jay Inslee's Safe Start plan early.

"We recognize COVID-19 is impacting some parts of our state in different ways and some counties will be ready to move forward earlier than others," Secretary Wiesman said. "While recognizing that reality, we set cautious, thorough requirements for counties that want to apply for a variance. Each of the counties approved to enter Phase 2 has demonstrated strong planning and capability in the areas necessary to protect public health in their communities."

Businesses in the counties approved to move into Phase 2 must wait to reopen until guidance has been released for their industry on how to keep workers and the public safe. They must comply with all health and safety requirements outlined in that guidance to reopen.

To apply for a variance, counties must have a population of less than 75,000 and no new cases of COVID-19 in the last three weeks. The application process requires support from the local health officer, the local board of health, local hospitals, and the county commission/council.

Each county must demonstrate they have adequate local hospital bed capacity as well as adequate PPE supplies to keep health care workers safe. The application must include plans for:

- Making testing available and accessible to everyone in the county with symptoms
- Staffing case investigations and contact tracing
- Housing people in isolation or quarantine who can't or don't want to do so at home
- Providing case management services to those in isolation and quarantine
- Responding rapidly to outbreaks in congregate settings.

The variance requests are reviewed by the secretary of health, who can approve the plans as submitted, approve with modifications or deny the application. If circumstances change within the jurisdiction, the variance can be revoked.

In addition to the counties approved today, Kittitas, Skamania, and Wahkiakum Counties have applied for a variance and their applications are under review. Stevens County has applied, however they are not yet eligible based on the outlined criteria. The state is still working to determine when and how counties with a Phase 2 variance can move to Phase 3, and considering additional options to support different regional needs in reopening.

Learn more about [county variances](#) and the statewide response to COVID-19 at [coronavirus.wa.gov](https://coronavirus.wa.gov).

For more information on COVID-19, visit the [Department of Health's website](#) or call 1-800-525-0127. You can also text the word "coronavirus" to 211-211 to receive information and updates on your phone wherever you are.

# # #

**Governor Inslee**

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

**WA Department of Health**

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

**WA Emergency Management Division**

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

Sign up for email/texts

[Partner Toolkit](#)

[Report Accessibility Concerns](#)

[About](#)

[Privacy Notice](#)

This is Washington State's official COVID-19 site maintained by the state Joint Information Center | Copyright © 2020