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Pennsylvania Shares Update on COVID-19 Early Warning Monitoring Dashboard, Cases Among Businesses, Age Groups

Harrisburg, PA – Governor Tom Wolf and Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine today released a weekly status update detailing the state’s mitigation efforts based on the COVID-19 Early Warning Monitoring System [Dashboard](#) comparing the seven-day period of August 7 – August 13 to the previous seven days, July 31 – August 6, along with data on cases that reported visiting a business among potential exposures, and age-specific data for 19-24-year-olds.

The dashboard is designed to provide early warning signs of factors that affect the state’s mitigation efforts. The data available on the dashboard includes week-over-week case differences, incidence rates, test percent-positivity, and rates of hospitalizations, ventilations and emergency room visits tied to COVID-19.

“Our percent positivity decreased for the third week in a row, which is a testament to the testing occurring, and that testing is widely available throughout the state,” Gov. Wolf said. “However, with increased testing comes increased case counts. The virus is still circulating, and we must continue to wear masks, practice social distancing and avoid large gatherings to keep our numbers low, stop the spread and allow more freedom.”

As of Thursday, August 13, the state has seen a seven-day case increase of 5,530, the previous seven-day increase was 5,030, indicating a 500-case increase across the state over the past week.

The statewide percent-positivity went down to 4.0% from 4.1% last week. Counties with concerning percent-positivity include Fayette (10.4%), Armstrong (8.9%), Cameron (8.7%), Huntingdon (7.1%), Dauphin (6.5%), Northumberland (6.4%), Mercer (6.3%), Erie (5.9%), Crawford (5.8%), Forest (5.8%), York (5.6%), Indiana (5.5%), Franklin (5.4%), Lawrence (5.3%), and Berks (5.0%). Each of these counties bears watching as the state continues to monitor all available data.

The Department of Health is now providing data on the number of individuals who responded to case investigators that they spent time at business establishments (restaurants, bars, gym/fitness center, salon/barbershop) and at mass gatherings 14 days prior to the onset of symptoms.

Of the 24,468 positive cases reported between July 13 and August 11, less than half of the individuals provided an answer to the question as to whether they spent time at a business establishment. Of those who did provide an answer, 6 percent, or 1,499 answered yes, they visited a business establishment 14 days prior to onset of symptoms:

- 47 percent of those who said yes reported going to a restaurant;
- 24 percent of those who said yes reported going to a bar;
- 19 percent of those who said yes reported going to some other business establishment;
- 10 percent of those who said yes reported going to a gym/fitness center; and
- 9 percent of those who said yes reported going to a salon/barbershop.

Of the 24,468 cases, 52 percent answered the question as to whether they attended a mass gathering or other large event. Of the 52 percent, nearly 12 percent (1,648) answered yes to whether they attended a mass gathering or other large event 14 days prior to onset of symptoms.

Case investigator notes included frequent mentions of visits to bars and restaurants among positive case. To better understand this emerging trend, on July 13, contact tracers began asking more specific questions on types of businesses visited and if individuals attended a mass gathering, defined as more than 250 people in attendance outdoors or more than 25 indoors.

The numbers above highlight business settings and mass gatherings as possible sites for transmission. With approximately half of those asked about what types of businesses they visited or if they attended a mass gathering responding to the question, the department is reminding Pennsylvanians that it is essential that people answer the phone when case investigators call and to provide full and complete information to these clinical professionals.

Also today, the Department of Health [updated its travel recommendations](#), originally announced on July 2, to remove Nebraska, North Carolina, Utah and Wisconsin from the list of states recommended for domestic travelers returning from to quarantine for 14 days upon return to Pennsylvania.

It is important that people understand that this recommendation is in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Pennsylvania. A concerning number of recent cases have been linked to travel, and if people are going to travel, we need them to take steps to protect themselves, their loved ones and their community, and that involves quarantining.

In addition, the department has looked at the percent change in cases among 19-24-year-olds from April through July 14, compared to April through August 14 after the most recent mitigation efforts were put in place:

- The percent of cases among 19-24-year-olds in the SW are down by 12 percent (24 percent as of July 14 to 12 percent as of August 14);
- The percent of cases among 19-24-year-olds in the NC are down five percent (14 percent as of July 14 to 9 percent as of August 14);
- The percent of cases among 19-24-year-olds in the NW are down three percent (12 percent as of July 14 to 9 percent as of August 14);
- The percent of cases among 19-24-year-olds in the SC are down one percent (13 percent as of July 14 to 12 percent as of August 14);

- The percent of cases among 19-24-year-olds in the SE remained the same (17 percent as of July 14 to 17 percent as of August 14); and
- The percent of cases among 19-24-year-olds in the NE remained the same (17 percent as of July 14 to 17 percent as of August 14).

Declines in this age group, where we saw significant case increases prior to July 15 mitigation efforts, indicate the actions are working, but must continue to see further declines across the state.

Gov. Wolf continues to prioritize the health and safety of all Pennsylvanians through the COVID-19 pandemic. Pennsylvanians should continue to take actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, regardless of in what county they live.. This includes wearing a mask or face covering anytime they are in public. COVID-19 has been shown to spread easily in the air and contagious carriers can be asymptomatic.

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