



COLORADO

Governor Jared Polis

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Governor Polis Extends Safer at Home and Updates Protect Our Neighbor Framework, Announces Closure of Bars

DENVER - Governor Jared Polis today extended the [Safer at Home and in the Vast, Great Outdoors Executive Order](#), and provided an update on Colorado's next steps during the COVID-19 pandemic, introducing more details on the [Protect Our Neighbors framework](#). The Governor was joined by Jill Hunsaker Ryan, the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment; Dr. Rachel Herlihy, the state's top epidemiologist; Joni Reynolds, the Gunnison County Public Health Director; and Jason Vahling, the City and County of Broomfield Public Health Director.

“Protect Our Neighbors will allow Colorado to respond more swiftly and effectively at the community level in the event of another surge of cases. We live in a diverse state with cities, booming suburbs, small resort towns, and rural areas with plenty of wide-open spaces. Each community is having their own unique experience with this virus. Going forward, we want to increase our ability to tackle outbreaks at a community level and only issue statewide orders when absolutely necessary,” said Gov. Polis. **“We are making some much-needed investments in our local public health agencies, so they can contain and quell an outbreak before it gets out of control. The fate of Colorado in both virus suppression and economic recovery is largely in the hands of Coloradans. If we continue taking the critical steps of staying at home, wearing masks when leaving the house and following social distancing practices, then we will get through this together.”**

The Governor did not announce any additional relaxing of restrictions today, but described the new phase: [Protect Our Neighbors](#) that will give local communities more freedom to provide economic opportunity while ensuring that they have the necessary public health capacity. The introduction of the new phase means that different parts of the state could be at different phases of reopening, based on local conditions and capabilities.

“Each day, we make progress to build the capacity of our public health system -- from ramping up statewide testing sites to onboarding new case investigators and contact tracers systemwide, to identifying creative ways to aggressively acquire PPE. I am proud of the team at CDPHE who have stood strong during this very difficult time, and I'm grateful for our local public health partners who are leading the response against COVID in their communities,” said Jill Hunsaker Ryan, executive director of the Colorado Dept. of Public Health and Environment. **“It is important that Coloradans don't let up now, and this new phase - Protect Our Neighbors - isn't just words. It means we all accept personal responsibility for the things we can do every day to keep ourselves and others healthy.”**

Moving forward, communities that can demonstrate strong public health and health care systems, paired with low virus levels, can take on more control over their reopening plans. In order to reopen to this greater extent, communities must have:

- Low virus prevalence;
- Health care capacity to handle a surge; and
- Strong public health capacity to contain outbreaks and surges locally, including the ability to test, track, and trace.

In order to qualify for Protect Our Neighbors, a county (or region) must do two things:

- **Certify qualification** according to the scientific metrics; and
- **Submit a mitigation and containment plan** on what the county or region will do if they fall out of compliance with any of the metrics. This containment plan must be accompanied by letters of support from local elected leaders including county commissioners and mayors, the hospitals that serve that community, law enforcement, county emergency management, local public health, and if applicable, tribes.

The certification process will begin next week. To learn more about how a community can qualify, [click here](#).

Communities in Protect Our Neighbors will be able to permit all activities to occur at 50 percent of pre-pandemic capacity, with at least six feet between non-household members and no more than 500 people in one setting at a time. Local communities may issue more detailed guidelines or public health orders for different settings, so long as the capacity does not exceed these caps.

The Governor also discussed funding and support for local governments as Colorado looks to move into Protect Our Neighbors. In total, the state is investing \$346 million in state and local capacity, with \$75 million going directly from the state to Local Public Health Agencies. Gov. Polis also announced two new sources of available funding: a Planning Grant or Infrastructure Strengthening Grant.

All counties or local public health agencies can apply for a Planning Grant of up to \$50,000. If counties have already identified infrastructure needs, they may apply for Infrastructure Strengthening Grants, with a maximum state award of \$150,000 and a maximum total grant of \$300,000. These grants will require local matching funds and can be spent on investments such as technology, community resource coordination, communication activities to increase compliance with the public health orders, funding for community-based partners and cultural brokers, and enhanced prevention and containment efforts.

Governor Polis announced the closure of bars. Bars that have taken steps to open as restaurants may continue to operate in-person service, so long as they have patrons seated with their own party only in set seating, spaced six feet apart, and with no mingling. Bars are permitted to sell alcoholic beverages to-go for takeout or delivery consumption if the alcoholic beverages are sold with food. All of the guidelines previously in place around social distancing still apply. Bars may still operate if open under a county variance pursuant to the terms of that county variance. More information can be found in the Governor's [Executive Order](#).

View the [Governor's presentation](#). Watch the full news conference on the [Governor's Facebook page](#).