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Pennsylvania COVID-19 Early Warning Monitoring Dashboard Update for Dec. 25 – Dec. 31: Case Increases Near 40,400; Percent Positivity at 15.0% and All 67 Counties with Substantial Transmission

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](#), highlighting a seven-day case increase of 40,407, a statewide percent positivity of 15.0% and all 67 counties with substantial transmission status.

The update includes the following:

- Level of **community transmission** as a basis for the recommendations for Pre-K to 12 schools to determine instructional [models](#).
- Data on **cases among 5-18-year-olds**.
- Cases that reported **visiting a business** among potential locations where exposures may have occurred.
- Updated **travel recommendations**.

The dashboard is designed to provide early warning signs of factors that affect the state’s mitigation efforts. The data available on the early warning monitoring 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. This week’s update compares the period of December 25 – December 31 to the previous seven days, December 18 – December 24.

“Although the decrease in our statewide positivity rate is small, it is still encouraging,” Gov. Wolf said. “The sacrifices Pennsylvanians took over the holidays to celebrate differently than

usual and with people inside your household are signs of our continued resilience and drive to fight against COVID-19. We must continue these best practices to stay safe and keep our friends, family and loved ones safe while COVID-19 remains a threat in our communities.”

As of Thursday, December 31, the state has seen a seven-day case increase of 40,407 cases; the previous seven-day increase was 48,883 cases, indicating 8,476 fewer new cases across the state over the past week compared to the previous week.

The statewide percent-positivity went down to 15.0% from 15.1% last week. Every county in the state has a concerning percent positivity above five percent. This includes 21 counties with percent positivity at or above 20 percent.

“This week we report a significant decrease in individuals responding to our case investigations,” Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “We continue to urge Pennsylvanians to answer the call and complete the case investigation in order to ensure those they were in close contact with are informed of their exposure. This protects friends, family, loved ones and the health care system. Please answer the call – answer the call when a public health professional is calling, complete the case investigation whether it is over the phone or through the new Connect & Protect Form and answer the call to download the COVID Alert PA free app.”

Community Transmission

As of Friday’s data, all 67 counties were in the [substantial level of community transmission](#), the highest level of transmission.

For the week ending December 31, 67 counties were in the substantial level of transmission.

Cases Among 5-18-Year-Olds

The Department of Health is providing weekly data on the number of statewide cases of COVID-19 among 5 to 18-year-olds.

Throughout the pandemic, there have been 52,917 total cases of COVID-19 among 5 to 18-year-olds. Of that total, 3,929 occurred between December 25 – December 31. For the week of December 18 – December 24, there were 4,698 cases of COVID-19 among 5 to 18-year-olds.

Cases by [demographic group is available on the DOH website](#).

Business Visits

The Department of Health is providing weekly data on the number of individuals who responded to case investigators that they spent time at business establishments (restaurants, bars, gym/fitness centers, salon/barbershops) and at mass gatherings 14 days prior to the onset of COVID-19 symptoms.

It is important to note that due to the recent number of cases, the department is prioritizing case investigations to prevent outbreak. In addition to the need for people to answer the call, the significant number of cases helps contribute to the low percentages in case investigation

data. All of this reinforces the need for Pennsylvanians to take steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Of the 53,947 cases reported between December 20 and December 26, 4.4 percent (2,357) provided an answer to the question as to whether they spent time at a business establishment.

Of those who did provide an answer, 0.3 percent, or 134, answered yes, they visited a business establishment 14 days prior to onset of symptoms:

- 39 percent (52) of those who said yes reported going to a restaurant;
- 34 percent (45) of those who said yes reported going to some other business establishment;
- 19 percent (26) of those who said yes reported going to a bar;
- 5 percent (6) of those who said yes reported going to a gym/fitness center; and
- 16 percent (21) of those who said yes reported going to a salon/barbershop.

Of the 53,947 confirmed cases, 4.4 percent (2,388) answered the question as to whether they attended a mass gathering or other large event. Of the 4.2 percent of cases, 7 percent (101) answered yes to whether they attended a mass gathering or other large event 14 days prior to onset of symptoms.

Compared to data [reported on December 28](#), this week's data saw an increase for people who reported going to a bar (19 percent vs. 13 percent last week) and going to a salon/barbershop (16 percent vs. 7 percent last week). The data saw a decrease for people who reported going to a restaurant (39 percent vs. 41 percent last week) and going to a gym (5 percent vs. 12 percent last week). The number of those who reported going to some other business remained the same (34 percent vs. 34 percent last week). The number of those who attended a mass gathering or other large event remained the same at 7 percent compared to last week.

The numbers above highlight business settings and mass gatherings as possible sites for transmission. With less than 10 percent of those asked about what types of businesses they visited or if they attended a mass gathering responding to the question, the department is again reminding Pennsylvanians that it is essential that they answer the phone when case investigators call and to provide full and complete information to these clinical professionals.

Travel Recommendations

In November, the Department of Health provided an [updated travel order](#) requiring anyone over the age of 11 who visits from another state to provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 test or place themselves in a travel quarantine for 14 days upon entering Pennsylvania. Travel quarantine guidance was changed to 10 days on Dec. 5 based on new CDC guidance.

This order does not apply to people who commute to and from another state for work or medical treatment, those who left the state for less than 24 hours, or those complying with a court order, including child custody.

It is important that people understand that this [Order](#) 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 having either a negative test, or placing themselves in a quarantine.

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. Pennsylvanians are encouraged to wash their hands, social distance, avoid gatherings and download COVID Alert PA.

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