



Local Government Engagement on Mitigation Strategies:

The 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is an unprecedented global event that has impacted every part of the globe and every part of the Commonwealth. In the early months of the pandemic, the Commonwealth responded aggressively by implementing mitigation efforts such as issuing orders to close schools and non-life-sustaining businesses and to restrict large gatherings. This decision to respond aggressively proved to be essential and effective in reducing the spread of the virus and saving lives.

Pennsylvania has remained resilient throughout the pandemic, but as we move into a nationwide surge of the virus, we must once again take steps to flatten the curve. The pandemic is rapidly evolving and unfolding very differently in each community it touches. Because of the overwhelming scope of the virus, control of COVID-19 depends on the fullest engagement of local leaders in collaboration with the health care sector and public health officials.

Given the importance of local engagement, the Department of Health has provided recommendations for local municipal leaders, as well as countywide leadership to consider. While statewide mitigation steps are necessary, to the extent local leaders can implement their own orders, ordinances, or directives in order to protect health and safety, it is strongly recommended that they do so. The support of local government can go a long way to bringing local jurisdictions into compliance with statewide Orders or bringing more attention to important public health efforts. The Commonwealth has seen several great examples of ordinances, public support of public health efforts, and public-private partnerships that bring communities together in support of mitigation tactics. Examples of local actions in Pennsylvania include:

- Borough of State College – [Temporary Emergency Ordinance](#) – The Borough of State College issued a temporary emergency ordinance to require the wearing of face coverings, set maximum gathering size, and other regulations to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.
- Media Borough – [Mask Ordinance](#) – During a Borough Council meeting, the Media Borough Council adopted an ordinance to require the wearing of face coverings by persons attending events for which a mass gathering permit has been issued, and authorized the Media Borough Police Department, Health Office, and Code Officials to enforce this ordinance by the issuance of citations.
- Chester County – [Simple Ask: Wear a Mask](#) – The Chester County Board of Commissioners launched a public health campaign to support wearing masks. The campaign directly supports local businesses and restaurants by providing funding as well as free toolkits including 10,000 masks, signage, and other messaging.
- Mifflin County – [Mifflin County Officials Urge Residents to Wear Masks](#) – The Mifflin County Commissioners have publicly supported the wearing of masks as well as alerted their community to increasing concerns around hospital capacity and cases of COVID-19 in long-term care facilities.

- Pocono Mountains Visitor Bureau – [Pocono Promise](#) – The Pocono Promise is an example of a public-private partnership created by the Visitors Bureau. Business owners and County Commissioners are among those who have signed the pledge, which includes promises to stay home when sick, to practice social distancing(also known as physical distancing), and to require staff to wear face coverings.

Local leaders at all levels of government should exercise their authority and influence to support public health efforts that will protect residents and local economies. Mayors, borough councils, and township-level leaders can all make strong statements for public health and implement efforts in their communities. Additionally, county leaders should also consider taking strong public health actions to support their communities. When local leaders engage, their constituents understand that they are supported in adopting and sustaining preventive behaviors.

Levels of Community Spread:

The charts below identify thresholds representing low, moderate, or substantial community transmission of COVID-19, and corresponding actions to be taken by county and municipal leaders. A county’s threshold may change week-by-week as incidence and percent positivity rates rise and fall. Leaders should implement more public health actions rather than fewer if their county is between thresholds. To determine level of community transmission, counties should use the Department of Health’s [COVID-19 Early Warning Monitoring System Dashboard](#).

Incidence Rate per 100,000 Residents (Most Recent 7 Days)	AND/OR	PCR Percent Positivity (Most Recent 7 Days)	Level of Community Transmission in the County
Less than 10	AND	Less than 5%	Low
10 - 100	OR	5% - 10%	Moderate
Greater than 100	OR	Greater than 10%	Substantial

Actions Associated with Level of Community Spread:

Level of Community Spread	Actions for Municipal and County Leaders
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize Communications/Public Information Efforts • Collaborative Mitigation Planning • Enforce Statewide and Local Orders, Ordinances, and Directives

Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue Recommendations from Low Category • Increase Communications/Public Information Efforts • Issue Local Orders, Ordinances, or Directives • Strengthen Enforcement of Existing Statewide and Local Orders, Ordinances, and Directives
Substantial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue Recommendations from Moderate Category • Further Increase Communications/Public Information Efforts • Issue Stricter Local Orders, Ordinances, or Directives • Intensify Enforcement of Existing Statewide and Local Orders, Ordinances, or Directives

Recommendations for LOW Community Spread:

- **Utilize Communications/Public Information Efforts to Promote Mitigation Efforts and Effective Disease Control Practices**
 - Share and promote Department of Health or Commonwealth messages on social media. Social media resources can be [found here.](#)
 - Support usage of the [COVID Alert PA Mobile App](#) through press release or other promotion. Resources can be [found here.](#)
 - Encourage local restaurants to utilize the Self-Certification process. More information can be [found here.](#)
 - Ask influential community leaders or community influencers to publicly support public health messaging.
 - Ensure county/municipal staff and constituents are fully aware, informed of, and adhering to statewide mitigations efforts such as the [Updated Order of the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health Requiring Universal Face Coverings](#) and [Order of the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health for Mitigation Relating to Travel](#)
 - Promote cooperation with public health officials on contact tracing and case investigation. Encourage community members to “answer the call” and participate in contact tracing efforts.
 - Promote the flu vaccine and its importance.
 - Ask constituents to utilize contactless delivery and pick-up options at restaurants, grocery stores, and retail establishments.
 - Promote and support already existing local efforts.
- **Begin Collaborative Mitigation Planning Efforts for Local Orders, Ordinances, or Directives**
 - Have appropriate conversations with solicitor or legal counsel to prepare to issue local orders, ordinances, or directives.
 - To the extent authorized by law to do so, pre-draft local orders, ordinances, and directives that can be released when community spread increases.
 - Prepare press statements or media efforts that may accompany local mitigation efforts.

- Establish a community-based COVID-19 taskforce with local leaders, hospitals and health care providers, and school leadership to share information and resources. Task force meetings should be held virtually.
- **Enforce Statewide and Local Orders, Ordinances, and Directives**
 - Partner with local law enforcement to enforce current statewide orders and any established local orders, ordinances, and directives.
 - To the extent authorized by law, consider utilizing municipal employees such as code enforcement to assist with enforcement or to conduct site visits to businesses, bars, restaurants, and other retail locations to issue warnings and ensure public health compliance.
 - If applicable, consider employees who may be idled or furloughed (due to the pandemic) to do this work.
 - Partner with local higher education institutions in your community, if applicable, to address off-campus gatherings.
 - Remain vigilant about fire code, noise, and other violations that indicate gatherings are occurring.

Recommendations for MODERATE Community Spread:

- **Increase Communications/Public Information Efforts to Promote Mitigation Efforts and Effective Disease Control Practices**
 - Implement all recommendations from the “Low” Category.
 - Implement a public information campaign to remind the public of the importance of wearing face coverings or masks, physical distancing, hand washing, and limiting gatherings.
 - Work with local faith leaders to incorporate public health messaging into services.
 - Ask local media and community partners to highlight community members, with their consent or the consent of loved ones, who have died from COVID-19 or who have been very ill and recovered to highlight the seriousness of the virus.
 - Work with local business community, economic development organization, or chamber of commerce to develop materials for businesses to share with customers.
- **Issue Local Orders, Ordinances, or Directives to Require Mitigation and Effective Disease Control Practices**
 - Implement all recommendations from the “Low” Category.
 - To the extent authorized by law, implement local ordinances that require face coverings, limit gathering sizes, or address other community issues.
 - Conduct all municipal meetings, town halls, or other gatherings utilizing a virtual platform.
 - Require that all county and municipal level employees that *can* work from home *must* work from home.
 - Do not issue event permits for gatherings on municipal or city property. Examples of this could include, not issuing a park permit for a family reunion or 5K race event.
 - Utilize influence and authority to recommend that schools and organizations cancel or postpone in-person gatherings such as sporting events, dances, plays, concerts, parent meetings, or other activities.
- **Strengthen Enforcement of Statewide and Local Orders, Ordinances, and Directives**

- Implement all recommendations from the “Low” Category.
- Utilize Pennsylvania Intra-State Mutual Aid System (PIMAS) to determine if additional mutual aid is available for counties.
- Determine if additional law enforcement is necessary to control large events or gatherings. Request support through established Pennsylvania State Police channels.

Recommendations for SUBSTANTIAL Community Spread:

- **Further Increase Communications Efforts to Promote Mitigation Efforts and Effective Disease Control Practices**
 - Implement all recommendations from the “Low” and “Moderate” categories.
 - Utilize platforms to prepare the community for potential hospital capacity overflow.
 - Remind the community that the virus will more severely impact long-term care facilities if not controlled.
- **Issue Stricter Local Orders, Ordinances, or Directives to Require Mitigation and Effective Disease Control Practices**
 - Implement all recommendations from the “Low” and “Moderate” Categories.
 - To the extent authorized, implement local curfews as necessary.
 - To the extent legally permissible, enforce penalties for those who do not isolate or quarantine in accordance with state policies.
 - Ask restaurants to further limit indoor capacity or consider other limitations such as limiting the number of people who can sit at a table to discourage large groups.
 - For example, many bars and restaurants chose to close during ‘Saint Patty’s Day’.
 - Ask businesses to further limit indoor capacity.
 - For example, local businesses may choose to reduce the number of customers in their store at one time for Black Friday or other holiday events.
 - Ask businesses to implement other restrictions such as parking limitations in business districts to limit shoppers.
 - For example, several tourist towns in neighboring states closed public parking to non-residents to limit crowds.
- **Intensify Enforcement of Existing Statewide and Local Orders, Ordinances, or Directives**
 - Implement all recommendations from the “Low” and “Moderate” Categories.
 - Utilize Facebook or other situational awareness tools to determine when and where gatherings are occurring.
 - Ask staff to call venues where events are happening to ensure compliance, then direct law enforcement to enforce orders and ordinances as needed. If applicable, consider employees who may be idled or furloughed (due to the pandemic) to do this work.
 - Continue to utilize established request processes to receive resource support for any realized or anticipated capacity shortfalls.