



STATE OF WASHINGTON

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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### **COVID-19 County Variance Plan: Moving from Phase 1 to Phase 2**

**Washington State Department of Health**

**May 3, 2020**

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

#### **BACKGROUND**

On March 23, 2020, and subsequently after, Governor Inslee issued Stay Home—Stay Healthy proclamations prohibiting persons from leaving their homes or place of residence except to conduct or participate in essential activities and/or for employment in essential business services. He also prohibited on March 25, 2020, all non-essential business operations except for performing basic minimum operations. On May 1, 2020, Governor Inslee indicated that he would extend the Stay Home—Stay Healthy order through May 31 and that he was allowing smaller counties that did not have a new case of COVID-19 reported in the last three weeks to apply for a variance that would allow them to move from Phase 1 of the Phased Approach to Reopening Washington Plan to Phase 2. This document provides the instructions for counties with populations of less than 75,000 and no COVID-19 cases in the last three weeks to apply for this variance.

#### **REQUEST FOR VARIANCE**

County requests for a variance from the Stay Home—Stay Healthy proclamation are to be directed to Washington State Secretary of Health John Wiesman, DrPH, at [secretary@doh.wa.gov](mailto:secretary@doh.wa.gov). Those variance requests may include moving to all, or a subset of, Phase 2 community mitigation strategies identified in the attached Phased Approach to Reopening Washington Plan. No other variances will be allowed.

#### **Variance Process**

1. The local approval process must follow the outlined steps:
  - a. The process starts with the local public health officer submitting a signed recommendation to the local board of health with one of the following recommendations: not request a variance and stay in Phase 1, request a variance to include all of the Phase 2 modifications, or request a subset of Phase 2 modifications. No other modifications will be allowed.

- b. The local board of health, if it chooses to move forward with a variance request, must achieve a majority vote to request a variance. The vote must identify if all of Phase 2 will be implemented or, alternatively, which subset of Phase 2 elements will be implemented.
  - c. The local hospital(s) must submit a letter certifying that they have adequate bed capacity to serve their community and adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies to keep their workers safe. PPE supplies considered adequate are having at least 7 days of the following supplies in each facility: N95 respirators, surgical masks, face shields, gowns, and gloves. Hospitals using PPE conservation strategies must ensure that any staff wearing any one N95 respirator or surgical mask must not wear it for longer than one shift, along with following other PPE guidance on reuse or extended use in this guidance: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/PPE-Reuse.pdf>. If the county does not have a hospital, or their hospital would routinely refer a COVID-19 patient to another hospital, that referring hospital must certify to the same elements.
  - d. The county commission must vote on the local board of health's variance plan. It cannot alter the board of health's variance plan.
2. Submit a document describing:
- a. Plans and identified resources to make COVID-19 testing available and accessible to everyone in the county with symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
  - b. The number of COVID-19 tests performed in the county by week over the past three weeks.
  - c. The local health jurisdiction's plans and resources to perform case investigations and contact tracing using statewide standardized COVID-19 case and contact investigation protocols. This plan must include the number of people trained and ready to perform case investigations and contact tracing. If the local health jurisdiction is making use of non-local health jurisdiction resources for this purpose, those other entities supplying the resource (e.g., community nonprofit, volunteer organization, Washington State Department of Health, etc.) must provide a letter certifying that they have the resources noted to assist the local health jurisdiction with case and contact investigations.
  - d. Plans and resources to house people in isolation or quarantine who do not have a home or wish to isolate or quarantine themselves outside of their home, if it becomes necessary. If those include non-county resources, documents (i.e., contact or signed letter) must be provided demonstrating a commitment of those resources for this purpose.
  - e. Plans and resources to provide case management services to cases and contacts in isolation and quarantine. If those include non-county resources, documents (i.e., contact or signed letter) must be provided demonstrating a commitment of those resources for this purpose.

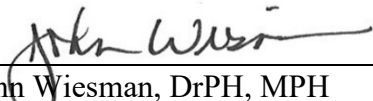
- f. Plans and resources to rapidly respond to outbreaks in the community and within congregate settings.

**DETERMINATION**

The local health jurisdiction director will submit the variance request approved by the board of health and county commissioners to the Washington State Department of Health for determination by the Secretary of Health. The Department of Health will review all variance requests. Additional information may be sought if the application materials are deemed incomplete. Variance requests may be approved as submitted, approved with modifications, or denied. Any approved variance requests may be revoked if circumstances change within the jurisdiction, such as a significant outbreak posing a threat to the community, no or minimal access to COVID-19 testing, no surge capacity in the hospital, inadequate PPE supplies, inadequate case and contact investigations.

**MOVING TO PHASE 3**

Decisions on when and how to allow a county with a Phase 2 variance to move to Phase 3 have not yet been made. That information will be determined in the next two to three weeks.

  
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John Wiesman, DrPH, MPH  
Secretary of Health

May 4, 2020  
Date