

State Public Health Officials Announce New COVID-19 Mitigation Efforts to Take Effect in Region 4

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METRO EAST – Governor Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) are announcing new COVID-19 mitigation efforts that will be implemented in the Metro East area beginning Tuesday, August 18. Region 4 is now reporting three consecutive days of a test positivity rate of 8 percent or higher, triggering implementation of mitigation efforts as outlined in the state’s COVID-19 Mitigation Plan.

The new mitigation measures were developed in close coordination with local public health administrators and county officials and account for the unique characteristics of the region. Measures include the closing of bars, restaurants, and casinos by 11 p.m., the closing of party buses and the reduction of gathering sizes to the lesser of 25 people or 25 percent of room capacity. These measures will remain in effect over a 14-day period after which time more stringent mitigation measures, such as the closing of indoor bars and dining, can be implemented if metrics do not improve. View the new mitigations online [here](#).

“Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, I have made it clear that neither arbitrary dates on a calendar nor political pressure will dictate Illinois’ efforts to protect our people. If the data shows we need to go backwards in our reopening, I won’t hesitate to tighten restrictions to protect our collective health,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “Region 4 of our statewide 11 reopening regions – the Metro East – has now surpassed an 8 percent seven-day rolling average positivity rate – a trend that I have made clear would trigger stricter mitigations when this plan was announced in July. Working with local officials in the Metro East region and across the border in St. Louis, we are implementing stricter mitigations that account for the unique factors in this region. Dr. Ezike and I are imploring local leaders and residents alike: if you haven’t been taking this seriously yet, now is the time to start.”

“As we warned when we began reopening Illinois, we are seeing an increase in cases, emergency department visits, and other indicators that the virus is circulating more widely in the community,” **said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike**. “Region 4 is the first of the 11 regions to reach resurgence criteria, but we hope it will be the last. By implementing additional mitigations, such as decreased indoor capacities and limiting hours, we hope to reduce the spread of the virus in the Metro East, and also help prevent an increase in cases, hospitalizations, and death in other regions of the state.”

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is monitoring each region in the state for several key indicators to identify early, but significant increases of COVID-19 transmission in Illinois, potentially signifying resurgence. Indicators include an increase

in COVID-19 cases with a simultaneous decrease in hospital capacity, or three consecutive days greater than or equal to 8 percent test positivity rate (7 day rolling). These indicators can be used to determine whether additional community mitigation interventions are needed for a region to prevent the further spread of COVID-19.

Once a region meets resurgence criteria, mitigations will be implemented. For Region 4, mitigation measures taking effect August 18, 2020, include the following:

- Meetings, social events, and other gatherings are now limited to the lesser of 25 individuals or 25 percent of overall room capacity
- All bars, restaurants, gaming facilities, and casinos will close at 11 p.m., matching the newly imposed closing times for St. Louis
- All reception halls closed
- Party buses not allowed to operate
- Reservations required for each party at restaurants and bars, and no congregating indoors or outdoors
- Indoor tables reduced to six people or less
- No dancing indoors
- Removal of bar stools at bars to help prevent congregating
- Tables should continue to be six feet apart

IDPH will track the positivity rate in Region 4 to determine if mitigations can be relaxed, if additional mitigations are required, or if current mitigation should remain in place. If the positivity rate averages less than or equal to 6.5 percent over a 14-day period, the region will return to Phase 4 mitigations under the Restore Illinois Plan. If the positivity rate averages between 6.5 percent and 8 percent, IDPH will continue to monitor the region to determine if additional mitigations are needed. If the positivity rate averages greater than or equal to 8 percent after 14 days, more stringent mitigations will be applied to further reduce spread of the virus, which can include the closure of indoor bars and dining.

A full list of mitigation measures pertaining to some businesses and industries may be found on the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) website at www.dceocovid19resources.com/restore-illinois. For Region 4, these mitigation measures will supersede the Restore Illinois Phase 4 guidelines.

IDPH has been working closely with local health departments in the Metro East to provide education to the public and offer information to businesses and organizations on safe ways to reopen. The State has also provided guidance to retail stores, restaurants, offices, and businesses, as well as guidelines for outdoor events, sports, and recreation. The significance of face coverings, social distancing, and hand washing have been continuously emphasized by the administration throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

In early May, the State of Illinois opened a community-based testing site at the Jackie Joyner-Kersey Center in East St. Louis to make testing more readily available for anyone. An average of approximately 44,000 tests are resulted every day in Illinois from IDPH, hospital and commercial labs. Currently, there are 11 state-operated community-based testing sites across Illinois, as well six mobile teams that set up temporary testing sites in communities seeing outbreaks or an increase in cases, and six mobile teams that travel to congregate facilities, such as long-term care facilities, to provide testing. Anyone can be tested at these State sites regardless of symptoms and at no cost to the individual. In addition, there are almost 300 locations providing testing and be found on the [IDPH website](#).

IDPH is also awarding approximately \$300 million in grants to local health departments and community-based organizations to conduct contact tracing, education, and support services. Every local health department is now utilizing an electronic contact tracing reporting system to collect consistent information to accurately capture the contact tracing efforts in Illinois and reduce further spread of the virus.