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Promoting an Optimal State of Wellness in Lake County

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Lake County Moving Forward with Opening of Businesses Gary Pace MD, MPH

Lake County, CA (May 20, 2020) – Things are moving in a positive direction! Starting Thursday, May 21, more businesses will be permitted to open in Lake County. Thanks to considerable collaborative efforts with local and State-level leaders, we were able to meet California Department of Public Health (CDPH) criteria to advance to latter phases of Stage 2 of the Governor’s Resilience Roadmap. Our Local Variance Plan was posted on the CDPH website late Wednesday afternoon, thus permitting some business activities to resume Thursday morning:

- Restaurants can open for outdoor dining.
- Permitted retail businesses can open for in-store shopping.
- Childcare is now accessible to all parents, not just essential workers.
- Church offices and one-on-one spiritual counseling are permitted.

There are safety precautions that need to be in place:

- Social distancing, cloth face coverings, and proper disinfection practices are expected at all open businesses.
- All open businesses (including those that were able to open previously) need to complete a Business Self-Certification document and Social Distancing Plan, and post these documents at their entryway.
- To enhance customer confidence as we reopen, the Chamber of Commerce and Cities of Clearlake and Lakeport have signs that can be posted by businesses following safety guidelines, called the “We Care Pledge.”
- Cloth face coverings will be generally required inside businesses, for both workers and patrons. The following exceptions apply:
 - People that have medical conditions leading to difficulty breathing with masks should get a note from their medical provider, excusing them from wearing one.
 - Children younger than two must not wear face coverings due to risk of suffocation.
 - Face coverings are not recommended for children six years or under.
 - Masks may not be appropriate for individuals who would have difficulty removing the covering without assistance.

Resources for business owners are available here:

<http://health.co.lake.ca.us/Coronavirus/Businesses.htm>

<https://covid19.ca.gov/industry-guidance/>

What are the next steps? What businesses are not yet allowed to open?

A further phase of reopening Stage 2 businesses is scheduled to occur in two weeks (as long as COVID-19

activity in the county remains stable), which will include:

- Resumption of indoor dining at restaurants, with proper social distancing.
- Some children's activities will be allowed (these specifics are still being worked out).

The Governor's Resilience Roadmap is continually reevaluated, and we will update our reopening plans however appropriate. Businesses currently not allowed to open (in Stage 2) include:

- Hotels and lodging (other than for essential workers)
- Nightclubs
- Religious services and cultural ceremonies
- Entertainment venues—movies and gaming
- Personal services (cosmetology, hair salons, etc.)
- Hospitality such as bars and lounges
- Indoor museums, kids museums, gallery spaces, and libraries
- Community centers including public pools, playgrounds, picnic areas

Why make masking mandatory now?

The evidence is clear: using face coverings can decrease the transmission of the virus if the user infected but not showing symptoms. With many of the identified cases in Lake County, people's willingness to abide by social distancing and use face coverings when out in public seems to have led to minimal community transmission.

Since we are allowing increased community activity, making face covering mandatory is a sensible, evidence-based way to protect people at risk of severe complications and limit preventable spread of COVID-19. See the new Orders (C20-06) for more details.

What if a business reopens without taking appropriate precautions?

We will be able to continue taking forward steps only if precautions are observed, to keep our communities safe. Anyone that encounters business practices that are not at the expected level of safety can contact MHOAC@lakecountycalifornia.gov, or call 707-263-8174. The businesses will be contacted and educated about the process, with the aim of encouraging partnership to help keep the public safe.

COVID-19 remains a serious threat, particularly for vulnerable individuals.

Protecting the health of the community in the time of COVID has been challenging, since balancing social and economic health with the medical concerns, especially for vulnerable populations, has a real cost.

We now have twelve confirmed cases in the county, and all four active cases tested positive in the past week. The two most recent are stable, and doing well at home. One of the individuals that tested positive last weekend remains hospitalized. Active infections continue in neighboring counties, as well. With the removal of the restrictions on the lake, some businesses opening, and Memorial Day weekend coming, we need to be particularly alert to further new cases.

Vulnerable individuals should continue to isolate at home.

We now know social distancing can help to slow transmission of COVID-19. If the number of cases rises significantly, we may need to add restrictions back in.

If someone believes they may have been exposed, how do they get tested?

We now offer Drive-Thru testing at different locations around the county, open daily during the week. People needing testing can go to the Verily website and get screened and make an appointment: <https://www.projectbaseline.com/study/covid-19/>

Frequently Asked Questions on Drive-Thru Testing are available here:

<http://health.co.lake.ca.us/Assets/Departments/Health/Public+Health+Division/COVID-19/Testing/TestingFacts.pdf>

Moving Forward

Many Lake County residents have shouldered tremendous burdens over the last two months. We've been forced to stay home, schools and businesses have closed, and only essential travel has been permitted. School graduations have been cancelled, as have many beloved community events. Health effects of the virus have been relatively minor here, and some have been understandably frustrated, wondering if such precautions were necessary in the first place.

It is due to all of the efforts of the community that we are now starting to move forward, and get back to some of the activities we love. If people continue to be careful and follow recommended precautions, we are hopeful the incidence of the virus will remain low, and we will be able to continue to identify cases early, and help affected individuals to isolate, so it doesn't spread.

This coming weekend, we will celebrate Memorial Day, when we collectively remember the sacrifices made to protect the freedoms we so treasure and enjoy, as Americans. COVID-19 has restrained some of those freedoms, and we all feel that tension, and want to get back to regular life. As you move about in the community this weekend, perhaps visiting a local restaurant for an outdoor meal, we encourage you to do so responsibly. If we appropriately meld freedom and precautions, greater opportunity to return to normal will come.

For Lake County-specific Coronavirus information, please continue to visit the Lake County Health Services Department's website, <http://health.co.lake.ca.us>.

The Lake County Coronavirus Response Hub has additional valuable resources:
<https://lake-co-ca-coronavirus-response-lakecoca.hub.arcgis.com/>

If you still have questions, please send an email request to MHOAC@lakecountyca.gov or call during business hours: 707-263-8174.

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