

Cuomo outlines additional guidelines for phased plan to reopen New York

Announces creation of 'New York Forward' reopening advisory board

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo on Tuesday outlined additional guidelines for the phased plan to reopen New York on a regional basis. Each region of the state – Capital Region, Central New York, Finger Lakes, Mid-Hudson Valley, Mohawk Valley, New York City, North Country, Long Island, Southern Tier and Western New York – must follow these guidelines as part of the reopening plan.

✓ **CDC Guidelines:** Based on CDC recommendations, once a region experiences a 14-day decline in the hospitalization rate, it may begin a phased reopening.

✓ **Industries:** Businesses in each region will reopen in phases. Phase one will include opening construction and manufacturing functions with low risk. Phase two will open certain industries based on priority and risk level. Businesses considered “more es-

sential” with inherent low risks of infection in the workplace and to customers will be prioritized, followed by other businesses considered “less essential” or those that present a higher risk of infection spread. Regions must not open attractions or businesses that would draw a large number of visitors from outside the local area.

✓ **Business Precautions:** Each business and industry must have a plan to protect employees and consumers, make the physical work space safer and implement processes that lower risk of infection in the business.

✓ **Building Health Care Capacity:** To maintain the phased reopening plan, each region must have at least 30% of hospital beds and ICU beds available after elective surgeries resume.

✓ **Testing Regimen:** Regions must implement a testing regi-

men that prioritizes symptomatic persons and individuals who came into contact with a known COVID-positive person, and conducts frequent tests of frontline and essential workers. Regions must maintain an appropriate number of testing sites to accommodate its population and must fully advertise where and how people can get tested. The region must also use the collected data to track and trace the spread of the virus.

✓ **Tracing System:** There must be at least 30 contact tracers for every 100,000 people. The region must also monitor the regional infection rate throughout the reopening plan.

✓ **Isolation Facilities:** Regions must present plans to have rooms available for people who test positive for COVID-19 and who cannot self-isolate.

✓ **Regional Coordination:**

Regions must coordinate the reopening of schools, transportation systems, testing and tracing with other surrounding regions.

✓ **Re-imagining Tele-Medicine**

✓ **Re-imagining Tele-Education**

✓ **Regional Control Rooms:** Each region must appoint an oversight institution as its control room to monitor regional indicators during the phased reopening, including hospital capacity, rate of infection, PPE burn rate and businesses.

✓ **Protect and Respect Essential Workers:** Regions must continue to ensure protections are in place for essential workers.

Cuomo also announced the creation of the “New York Forward” reopening advisory board to help guide the state’s reopening strategy. The advisory board will be chaired by former secretaries to

the governor Steve Cohen and Bill Mulrow and includes over 100 business, community and civic leaders from industries across the state.

“We’ve come up with a phased plan to reopen New York so every region in the state has the same opening template as we begin this process,” Cuomo said. “We have to be smart about this – emotions can’t drive our reopening process – and we’ve come up with factual data points that each region must monitor as they begin to reopen. We’ve also created a ‘New York Forward’ reopening advisory board made up of business, academic, community and civic leaders from across the state to help guide this process and ensure businesses are following the necessary guidelines to preserve public health as we work towards a ‘new normal.’”

Kaleida: Hospitals still safest place to receive health care

Across the country, emergency departments previously bursting at the seams and hospitals that were operating at capacity have seen a significant reduction in patient volumes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At Kaleida Health – Buffalo General Medical Center/Gates Vascular Institute, DeGraff Memorial Hospital, Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital and Oishei Children’s Hospital – emergency room visits have slowed to about 50% of the normal volume.

But where have all the sick patients gone?

David Hughes, M.D., chief medical officer, Kaleida Health, said fear is causing people to not seek care for urgent conditions, which could lead to an even greater threat to the health of the community.

“We are still seeing people coming in with chest pains and stroke symptoms. Just not the sheer volume that we had before,” Hughes said. “And there are some nation-

al statistics to show that people are staying away. We want people to seek care immediately if they are experiencing any signs or symptoms of a serious condition.”

The number of visits for other critical medical issues, like inflamed appendixes, infected gall bladders and bowel obstructions, has decreased significantly at Kaleida Health’s hospitals. This trend has medical professionals worried that patients are putting themselves at greater risk by not seeking the appropriate care in time.

“The longer these patients delay treatment, the sicker they may become,” Hughes explained. “Trying to avoid COVID-19 exposure could put their health at serious risk for other preventable conditions and complications.”

Hughes said he hopes to reassure the public about the safety of visiting Kaleida Health’s hospitals and clinics during the COVID-19 crisis.

“We understand the public’s ap-

prehension to visit emergency departments because of the risk of COVID-19 exposure,” he said. “At this point, the hospital is among the safest places to be right now with the extreme precautions that we have taken to protect patients and staff and to limit the spread of COVID-19.”

Kaleida Health has instituted universal masking, requiring all providers and staff as well as any patients and anyone coming into the emergency department to wear a mask. In addition, Kaleida Health implemented even more frequent and rigorous cleaning protocols to ensure facilities and high-touch areas are sanitized and safe.

Staff caring for COVID-19 patients are wearing personal protective equipment – such

as N95 masks, gloves, gowns, face shields/eye protection – to protect themselves and prevent spreading the virus to other patients.

If a person is feeling ill, Kaleida Health’s emergency departments and outpatient clinics now offer the option of being seen by a doctor for medical issues from the safety of one’s own home by scheduling a video or telephone visit.

“For some medical issues, like potentially broken bones, lacerations needing stitching or more serious medical needs, an in-person visit will be necessary,” Hughes said.

But for other medical issues, a video visit using a smartphone, tablet or computer eliminates an individual’s exposure to germs

and reduces the risk of getting or transmitting illness from or to others. Kaleida said, “By utilizing telehealth video or phone visits, patients will get the same great care without leaving their house. Video visits are fast, easy and safe.”

“Ultimately, we want the community to know that we are still available – both in person and virtually – to provide the safest, highest-quality care – whether you are having a baby, need emergency surgery, or are experiencing symptoms of a heart attack or stroke,” Hughes said. “We are ready to provide the same great care our community expects and deserves.”

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