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Gov. Beshear Provides Update on COVID-19

Visit the Governor's [Facebook](#) page to watch today's news conference

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 25, 2020) – Gov. Andy Beshear on Tuesday updated Kentuckians on the state's continuing efforts to fight the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) in the commonwealth.

'Fast 4 at 4'

Gov. Beshear is beginning his briefings with the "Fast 4 at 4," which will highlight a variety of issues of importance to Kentuckians and the commonwealth.

- Today, the Governor reminded voters they now can go to www.GoVoteKy.com to request an absentee ballot for the Nov. 3 general election, if they are concerned about COVID-19 and voting.

"If we believe we are patriots and doing our patriotic duty, certainly we ought to be voting," the Governor said.

- Gov. Beshear encouraged Kentuckians to spread the word about the most important action we all can take to fight the coronavirus, by using the social media hashtag #MaskUpKY to model good behavior.

"The federal government says it's working. State government says it's working. All the public health officials all the way up and down say it's working," Gov. Beshear said. "So it's easy: Just wear a mask. If you refuse to, just know that you could be spreading it to someone else.

Regardless of how you feel about it, everyone else is willing to go through the discomfort. Why won't you?"

- The Governor spoke about efforts to ensure Kentucky continues to have enough personal protective equipment (PPE) for our health care workers and others.

"When someone walks into a COVID wing in a hospital, look how much they have on," the Governor said. "That ought to tell us when there's a large crowd, that means there's likely COVID-19 there. Why would we walk into it when we see what it takes to be safe?"

In particular, Gov. Beshear highlighted some recent donations, which are key to keeping Kentuckians safe. He said uniform and equipment company Galls, which has a Kentucky headquarters in Lexington, has donated 37,500 isolation gowns with a value of \$130,000. Michigan-based Dow Chemical Co., meanwhile, has donated 2,000 isolation gowns valued at \$8,000.

- Information about COVID-19 cases related to schools is being collected and is posted online.

"This is a highly contagious, aggressively spreading virus. We need to be very very careful, and this is one of the reasons I still don't think it's safe for schools to open before Sept. 28," Gov. Beshear said. "It's just very important when it's our kids' health that's on the line that we have this at a place that where if we're going to put 15, 20 or 30 kids potentially in a room and expose one adult to all of them in some way or another that we want to make sure we have this under the best control that we can."

To view the reports, [click here for K-12](#) and [here for colleges and universities](#).

'Last Mile' Internet Service

Today, Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman announced a plan to allocate \$8 million to provide "Last Mile" internet service to all Kentucky students from kindergarten through 12th grade.

"COVID-19 has not only created new and unique challenges we must confront, it has brought to surface issues that have been plaguing our communities for generations. These underlying issues disproportionately affect communities of color and Kentuckians who live in poverty," the Lieutenant Governor said. "One of these issues is lack of access to high-speed internet."

Lt. Gov. Coleman noted that as schools have transitioned to using more nontraditional-instruction (NTI) days, it has broadened the educational gap for many communities. She said before the pandemic, approximately 90% of Kentucky's K-12 students had internet access. That has grown to 95% over the past five months.

“We have to do better for the remaining 5% of students who do not have internet access in their homes,” Lt. Gov. Coleman said.

The Lieutenant Governor said the \$8 million in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding will help reduce the monthly cost for low-income parents to pay for internet access for their K-12 child. A request for proposals is being sent out with a goal by Sept. 15 of identifying providers that can supply high-speed internet service for all Kentucky K-12 students in low-income homes at no more than \$10 per month for the next two to three school years.

Students currently without internet access from low-income homes will be eligible to have the full \$10-per-month cost paid through the next school year. Students with internet access from low-income homes will be eligible to have nearly all of the monthly cost paid through the federal Lifeline program for the next two or three school years.

The “Last Mile” internet service includes wireless options like hotspots connected to a student’s cellphone, satellites and fixed wireless capabilities. It also includes wired options like traditional services from a cable, telephone or utility company.

Details will be posted to the Kentucky Department of Education website early next week.

Case Information

As of 4 p.m. Aug. 25, Gov. Beshear said there were at least 44,568 coronavirus cases in Kentucky, 688 of which were newly reported Tuesday. Ninety-six of the newly reported cases were from children ages 18 and younger, of which 12 were children ages 5 and under. The youngest were two 8-month-olds.

“This continues to grow the percentage of kids testing positive, and we know not as many kids are being tested. But with people going back to sports, go get your kid tested,” the Governor said. “Don’t show up to a big group activity if they haven’t been tested in the last couple of weeks. Please make sure they get tested.”

Unfortunately, Gov. Beshear reported 10 new deaths Tuesday, raising the total to 895 Kentuckians lost to the virus.

The deaths reported Tuesday include an 81-year-old man from Bell County; a 59-year-old man from Daviess County; an 89-year-old man from Jefferson County; three women, ages 80, 84 and 85, from Lewis County; an 87-year-old woman from Logan County; an 84-year-old man and a 92-year-old woman from Scott County; and a 79-year-old man from Webster County.

“When you’ve got a loved one that’s just in the hospital, just in the hospital with COVID-19, you are scared to death. When they go to the ICU, you almost lose hope. And when they are on the ventilator, you are thinking and making decisions that no one should have to,” the Governor said. “So let’s make sure that we don’t partake in actions that would result in any family being in this situation.”

As of Tuesday, there have been at least 831,302 coronavirus tests performed in Kentucky. The positivity rate currently stands at 5.07%. At least 9,594 Kentuckians have recovered from the virus.

For additional information, including up-to-date lists of positive cases and deaths, as well as breakdowns of coronavirus infections by county, race and ethnicity, [click here](#). To see all recent daily reports, [click here](#).

Pandemic Benefits

Eric Friedlander, secretary of the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, spoke Tuesday about the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program.

Since late May, Kentucky families with students who normally receive free or reduced-cost meals at school have been eligible for financial assistance to replace those meals through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) P-EBT program, part of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

“About 173,000 students in Kentucky’s public and private schools have been approved for these benefits,” Secretary Friedlander said. “They’ve received a preloaded P-EBT card, and cardholders have been able to shop for food at local groceries, Amazon.com and Walmart.com.”

However, Secretary Friedlander said more than 115,000 eligible Kentucky households have not applied for the P-EBT benefits they deserve.

Secretary Friedlander said the deadline to apply for the P-EBT program is Monday, Aug. 31, benefind.ky.gov.

“There is no cost to the recipient, and families who receive P-EBT benefits will not have to pay back the benefits,” Secretary Friedlander said. “These benefits are not taxable.”

Commutations

On Tuesday, Gov. Beshear and J. Michael Brown, secretary of the Governor’s executive cabinet, once again announced the commutation of sentences for hundreds of medically vulnerable inmates and inmates who are nearing the end of their sentence in an effort to reduce the chances of spreading the coronavirus.

Secretary Brown said all of those receiving a commutation had been screened to ensure they had not been convicted of violent crimes or sex offenses.

The Governor noted that this is the latest round of commutations aimed at protecting inmates and staffers. Three previous rounds of commutations by Gov. Beshear covered 1,235 inmates, under the same criteria announced today. As of July 6, 2020, the total number of inmates released was 1,171.

“I believe the last round of commutations was fairly successful at getting people back in society and making sure they are healthy, and we are looking for the same here,” Gov. Beshear said. “I wish each of those individuals a better life moving forward, one that is constructive, one that they can find purpose in, whether that be faith, family or a good job. Let’s help make sure we can work with these individuals and give second chances.”

Secretary Brown said the latest commutations followed the same guidelines as the last.

“Today’s signed [executive order](#) has 646 individuals receiving commutation from the Governor,” Secretary Brown said.

He noted that 121 of the commutations are for inmates who are medically vulnerable, according to guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and with less than five years left to serve of their sentences. Another 525 are inmates who have less than six months left to serve.

“The Governor’s actions today are taken to ensure that all Kentuckians, including those behind bars and the hardworking staff of corrections officers and deputy jailers, are given a chance to be healthy and safe in this fight against COVID-19,” Secretary Brown said.

“On Aug. 26, 2019, the Department of Corrections had 24,200 inmates. Today, we have 19,689,” said Secretary Brown. “That’s a reduction of 4,511 in our prison system. That’s good for everyone in the commonwealth.”

Evictions

On Monday, Gov. Beshear announced new rules to provide protections and clarity surrounding evictions during the coronavirus crisis. Landlords now must give tenants 30 days’ notice of an intent to evict for nonpayment of rent and work to come to an agreement during that time.

At the same time, Gov. Beshear said his administration is dedicating \$15 million of federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act money to create a *Healthy at Home* Eviction Relief Fund that will provide relief to eligible landlords.

Read the Governor’s full [executive order](#).

More Information

Read about other key updates, actions and information from Gov. Beshear and his administration at governor.ky.gov, kycovid19.ky.gov and the Governor's official social media accounts [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

Kentuckians can also access translated COVID-19 information and summaries of the Governor's news conferences at teamkentuckytranslations.com.

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