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Gov. Beshear Contact Tracing Key to Safe Reopening of Economy

Team Kentucky needs you – answer the call

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

FRANKFORT, Ky. (May 18, 2020) – Gov. Andy Beshear on Monday said Kentuckians will continue to defeat the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19), get back to work and safely reopen the economy by being tested and participating in contact tracing.

The Governor called on Kentuckians to support contact tracing: “Team Kentucky needs you – answer the call if a public health worker contacts you. Contact tracing is key to protecting the health of our communities as we begin to reopen our economy. We are relying on more testing combined with increased contact tracing and for everyone to help stop the spread of COVID-19.”

The Governor also announced the appointment of Mark Carter as executive adviser leading the contact tracing efforts in the Office of the Secretary of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS).

“We are excited to have Mark leverage his vast Kentucky health care experience to lead COVID-19 contact tracing. His leadership, along with the team at the Department for Public Health and Kentuckians’ support, will help protect the health and safety of more Kentucky families,” he added.

“Thank you, Governor,” said Carter. “I do sincerely appreciate the opportunity to serve the commonwealth in this capacity. I have long been an admirer of our state Department for Public Health and the local health departments and the work they do every day that is completely unsung.

“We must reopen the economy, but we have to protect our children, our families and friends from another outbreak of COVID-19, and we do that through contact tracing,” he added.

Carter will work closely with Department for Public Health Commissioner Dr. Steven Stack and public health staff. Carter is a certified public accountant and has 40 years of experience in the health care industry.

CHFS Secretary Eric Friedlander noted that Carter’s health care strategy and leadership is critical as we continue to reopen Kentucky for business.

Contact tracing, which is funded through the CARES Act, is expanding to meet both the White House and Governor’s benchmarks for safely reopening the economy. Each state and territory is using contact tracing as a tool to fight the spread of COVID-19.

Carter said the expanded seven-month contact tracing program combines public participation and the power of technology to help public health officials and health care providers contain the spread of COVID-19. Carter said information provided is kept completely private and confidential. Information regarding the individuals who have COVID-19 and people they have made in-person contact with recently is not released or made public. To view a video explaining contact tracing click [here](#).

“Contact tracing is not new, it was used to help eradicate smallpox and is commonly used today to contain tuberculosis and other infections. It makes sense to use the same tools and technology to contain COVID-19,” Carter said. “Kentucky residents will be contacted if they have been exposed to an individual testing positive for COVID-19, to give instructions on how to self-quarantine and help reduce the spread to other individuals.”

The Department for Public Health is working with Deloitte Consulting to launch the statewide effort to gather information about contacts from newly diagnosed patients. Health officials will notify those people of their potential exposure and advise them of precautions they can take to protect their health and the health of those around them.

“This effort will help to best document COVID-positive Kentuckians and quickly track those who may have been in close contact with them so they can take the appropriate steps to prevent any further spread of the virus,” Gov. Beshear said.

Public communications, including posters, videos, PSAs and social media campaigns, will help Kentuckians understand contact tracing and what to do if a public health worker contacts them.

Carter pointed out Kentuckians' role in contact tracing, which includes knowing that:

- Public health workers may reach out to those who have contracted COVID-19 to assess their situation and track any recent in-person contacts.
- Contacts will be notified that they may have been exposed to COVID-19, are provided instructions and connected to local resources.
- By following instructions provided, contacts help stop the spread of COVID-19 and save the lives of Kentuckians.
- Helping to communicate the importance of contact tracing, you are supporting bringing people back to work and reopening Kentucky's economy.

Dr. Stack said: "We are going to hire about 700 people and we will have to deploy these folks very effectively to help contain the infection. Contact tracing is the way we get back to as much as possible what normal used to be like. Contact tracing is the way we act very quickly to localize infection to keep it from spreading and enable us to get back to interacting with each other as much as we can."

The Governor reiterated that every step would be taken to protect Kentuckians' privacy.

On May 1, a request for proposal (RFP) was posted for prospective vendors to fulfill staffing for three job classifications, disease investigators, contact tracers and social support connectors. Currently \$112 million in CARES Act funding for additional contact tracing staffing is effective through Dec. 31, 2020. A final list of all approved vendors will be posted to [KYCOVID19.ky.gov](https://www.ky.gov/covid19).

Case information

As of 5 p.m. May 18, Gov. Beshear said there were at least 7,935 coronavirus cases in Kentucky, 138 of which were newly confirmed [Monday](#) and 122 confirmed [Sunday](#).

"Remember we are not just our brother and sisters' keeper that we know. We are our brother and sisters' keeper for everybody across the state and this country knowing that asymptomatic spread happens," said Gov. Beshear. "We never really know exactly who the virus could possibly reach, but you can do all the steps to make sure you're not spreading it to other people."

Unfortunately, Gov. Beshear also reported three new deaths Sunday and nine Monday, raising the total to 346 Kentuckians lost to the virus.

The deaths reported Sunday include three men, ages 68, 78 and 79, from Jefferson County. The deaths reported Monday include two men, ages 50 and 96, and seven women, ages 69, 76, 77, 79, 83, 89 and 102 all from Jefferson County.

“Let’s continue to shine those green lights,” the Governor said. “Let’s continue to be a really good neighbor and help each other out.”

At least 2,785 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 for [Monday](#) and [Sunday](#).

Child illness update

The Governor said two more children were ill with Pediatric Multisymptom Inflammatory Syndrome (PMIS), a syndrome that is causing serious health problems for some young people.

PMIS is a rare illness being seen in some children who have been infected with COVID-19. About a month after a coronavirus infection, children and teenagers with PMIS develop fever accompanied by abdominal pain and, often, swollen hands, feet and lymph nodes.

The Governor said a 5-year-old was in the hospital but is now home, and an 11-year-old is currently hospitalized. Dr. Stack previously reported that two Kentuckians, a 10-year-old and a 16-year-old, were treated. The 10-year-old remains hospitalized but is improving.

Dr. Stack said the department issued a PMIS advisory last week, which provides guidance, key points about the syndrome, possible symptoms and reporting directions. Dr. Stack said the Kentucky Pediatric COVID-19 Hotline (800-722-5725) staffed by Norton Children’s Hospital is prepared to answer questions from both parents and clinicians about PMIS.

Testing expansion

Gov. Beshear said in partnership with Kroger, new testing locations would open in Richmond, Mayfield, Louisville and Hartford this week. Information on how to register at more than 70 sites throughout the commonwealth can be found at kycovid19.ky.gov.

Long-term care testing

Dr. Stack said testing would occur at 23 long-term care facilities this week. “All major providers are on board,” said Dr. Stack. “Norton will be doing onsite testing at two facilities this week, and over the next two days 1,901 staff and 1,637 residents for a total of 3,538 tests will be completed.”

Healthy at Work

The Healthy at Work [website](#) now includes guidance for barbershops, cosmetology, hair salons, [tanning salons](#) and [tattoo parlors](#). Gov. Beshear said the state would also be expanding June 1 reopening guidance to include aquatic centers (which does not include public pools), fishing tournaments and auto/dirt track racing.

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 daily summaries of the Governor's news conference at [tinyurl.com/kygovespanol](#) (Spanish) and [tinyurl.com/kygovtranslations](#) (more than 20 additional languages).



For official news and updates from the Beshear/Coleman administration, visit [governor.ky.gov/news](#).