FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
June 29, 2020

COVID-19 Update: Increases in Hospitalizations and Positivity Rate, Counties of Concern, Nursing Home Visitation, Order Extension

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)— Ohio Governor Mike DeWine today provided the following updates on Ohio's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

HOSPITALIZATIONS:

Last week was the first week of increasing COVID-19 hospital utilization in Ohio after over two months of decreasing utilization since late April. From June 21, 2020, to June 27, 2020, Ohio had approximately 500 to 550 total COVID-19 patients in hospitals statewide. This week, there are approximately 650 COVID-19 patients in hospitals statewide.

In comparison, the number of standard hospital beds occupied by COVID-19 positive patients had peaked in late April and early May at about 1,000 and reached a low of 513 on June 20th.

"Thankfully, ICU and ventilator utilization at the state level is still holding steady, but we are seeing increases in some areas of the state, such as in the Cleveland, Dayton, and Cincinnati areas," said Governor DeWine. "In other regions of the state, COVID-19 hospital occupancy had been declining but now appears to have leveled off."

Although COVID-19 utilization in hospitals is increasing, there is still adequate overall capacity available across the state as of today. No region has reached the concern threshold of 80 percent overall utilization for ICU beds, however lessons of recent history in NYC, Houston, and Arizona indicate that this can quickly change.

POSITIVITY RATE:

Governor DeWine explained that the increase in positive COVID-19 cases is not fully due to Ohio's increase in testing.

"Ohio's positivity rate has increased slightly as our testing totals have increased," said Governor DeWine. "If the spread of this virus remained at a low level, more testing should show a lower positivity. The increase of our positivity rate, even as we are doing more testing, means that we are likely picking up signs of broader community spread."

HAMILTON COUNTY:

At the end of May and into early June, Hamilton County had an average of 30 cases per day per 100,000 people. As of this past week, the average new cases per day in Hamilton County increased to approximately 100 cases per 100,000 people. Due to the delayed diagnosis, these numbers may continue to grow for this reporting period.

In addition, more people are visiting their doctors and being diagnosed with COVID-19 in Hamilton County more often. Between June 15 and June 22, those numbers nearly doubled from 40 to 78 visits per day.

In Hamilton County and the surrounding Southwestern Ohio region, hospital utilization by COVID-19 positive patients reached their lowest levels of this epidemic during the first and second weeks of June. Since then the number of COVID-positive patients being treated in standard hospital beds, ICU beds, and on ventilators has started to increase. For example, in Hamilton County, the number of COVID-positive patients doubled from a low of 65 patients on June 11 to more than 130 patients this weekend.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY:

In Montgomery County, there is a noticeable increase in cases over the last month from an average of about 10 cases a day at the end of May to about 40 cases a day in the most recent week. The community is also experiencing early signs that more people are seeking medical care for COVID-19 symptoms. For example, outpatient visits in Montgomery County grew from an average of nearly seven visits per day to 27.

For the hospitals in the West Central region, the number of COVID-positive patients in standard hospital beds, ICUs, and ventilators has also doubled since the first week of June. COVID-specific hospital utilization is approaching levels not seen since the earlier peak of the pandemic in April.

"To make sure we have enough hospital and ICU beds to treat everyone who needs care, including those who need emergency surgery, are in a car crash, or are suffering from a stroke, we need the help of all Ohioans," said Governor DeWine. "I'm asking everyone, especially those in Hamilton, Montgomery, and surrounding counties, to redouble their efforts to social distance, wear a mask in public, and follow good hand-washing protocols."

NURSING HOME VISITATION:

Governor DeWine announced that beginning July 20, 2020, nursing homes are permitted to begin outdoor visitation as long as all safety standards are met.

When assessing their readiness to permit outdoor visitation, nursing homes should consider:

- Case status in the surrounding community
- Case status in the nursing home
- Staffing levels
- Access to adequate testing for residents and staff
- Personal protective equipment supplies
- Local hospital capacity

The decision to move forward with outdoor visitation considered requests from families and residents and the impact on the quality of life that a prolonged loss of connection can have on an individual. The plan was made in consultation with advocates and providers in the aging and development disabilities communities. Guidelines for visitation were jointly developed by the Academy for Senior Health Sciences, Leading Age Ohio, the Ohio Assisted Living Association, the Ohio Health Care Association, and the Ohio Medical Directors Association.

"We are confident that our approach provides each facility the flexibility needed to assess their readiness to safely facilitate outdoor visitation and to do so in a transparent way that keeps residents and families informed," said Governor DeWine.

The order and related guidance will be made available at coronavirus.ohio.gov. Questions may also be directed to the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, an office within the Ohio Department of Aging, at 1-800-282-1206.

EXTENSION OF ORDERS:

Governor DeWine announced that he is extending existing health orders through this week as his administration finalizes vital plans to help local schools safely reopen, as well as plans to keep Ohioans healthy and safe.

"These plans will take us into the next phase, a distinct and different phase of continuing to keep Ohio open as we head into the second half of 2020," said Governor DeWine.

Details on this new phase are anticipated to be released on Thursday.

CURRENT OHIO DATA:

There are 51,046 confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 in Ohio and 2,818 confirmed and probable COVID-19 deaths. A total of 7,746 people have been hospitalized, including 1,961 admissions to intensive care units. In-depth data can be accessed by visiting coronavirus.ohio.gov.

Ohio is offering free COVID-19 testing for all residents at pop-up testing sites across Ohio. Pop-up testing locations for June 29 - July 2 are listed below.

Video of today's full update, including versions with foreign language translation, can be viewed on the Ohio Channel's YouTube page.

For more information on Ohio's response to COVID-19, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov or call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH.