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MEDIA CONTACTS:
Dan Tierney: 614-644-0957
Breann Almos: 614-799-6480

COVID-19 Update: Masks in Schools, Rapid Testing, Community Spread and Spread from Faith-Based Settings, Dr. Amy Acton

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Lt. Governor Jon Husted today provided the following updates on the status of the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

MASKS IN SCHOOLS

Governor DeWine announced today that the Ohio Department of Health will issue a health order requiring that K-12 children wear face coverings while at school. The new mandate comes after the Ohio Children's Hospital Association and American Academy of Pediatrics Ohio Chapter [issued a joint letter](#) today recommending widespread use of masks in schools with the following exceptions:

1. Children under the age of 2 years old
2. Any child unable to remove the face covering without assistance
3. A child with a significant behavioral/psychological issue undergoing treatment that is exacerbated specifically by the use of a facial covering (e.g. severe anxiety or a tactile aversion)
4. A child living with severe autism or with extreme developmental delay who may become agitated or anxious wearing a mask
5. A child with a facial deformity that causes airway obstruction

"Without a vaccine, we are limited in the ways that we can protect the people of Ohio," said Governor DeWine. "For schools to have a fighting chance to stay open this fall, widespread face coverings for K-12 students will increase the odds that kids will go to school and stay in school."

RAPID TESTING MULTI-STATE PURCHASING AGREEMENT

Governor DeWine announced that Ohio is entering into a multi-state purchasing agreement with Maryland, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Virginia to expand the use of rapid point-of-care tests.

"Over the past week, we have conducted an average of 22,334 COVID-19 tests a day with Ohio's current testing procedure, but rapid point-of-care tests are faster, simpler, and less expensive," said Governor DeWine. "Expanding the use of this testing will serve as an important screening tool and a critical addition to our plan to limit the spread of COVID-19."

More rapid point-of-care testing will help Ohio detect outbreaks sooner with faster turnaround time, expand testing in congregate settings, and make testing more accessible for the most high-risk and hard-hit communities.

COMMUNITY SPREAD

Governor DeWine today also continued to warn Ohioans about community spread connected to informal gatherings between family and friends.

"The truth is that it is easier to be scared of a stranger than a friend. Maintaining social distance and choosing to not gather together is really a sign that you care about your loved ones," Governor DeWine said.

[New data](#) compiled by the Ohio Department of Health shows the amount of community spread per county over the past two weeks.



LETTER TO FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY

Governor DeWine today announced that he will send a letter to Ohio's faith-based community to share important health information with Ohio churches, synagogues, and mosques and to share ways to better protect their worshippers.

One [case study](#) shows that a man with COVID-19 attended a church service in Ohio, and following that service, 91 additional people from five counties developed symptoms.

"I know that our faith-based leaders want nothing more than to protect their worshippers, but we also know that the virus can easily spread in places where people gather," said Governor DeWine. "It is vital that, any time people gather together, everyone wear masks, practice social distancing, wash hands, and while indoors, making sure there is good ventilation and airflow."



Prevent the spread of COVID-19



DR. AMY ACTON:

Governor DeWine announced that Dr. Amy Acton, Ohio's former director of the Ohio Department of Health, has decided to leave state employment and return to her role at the Columbus Foundation, where she worked previously.

"While it saddens me that she will be leaving my office, she has assured me that she is just a phone call away and will be available to continue advising us as we move through this pandemic," said Governor DeWine.

CURRENT COVID-19 DATA:

There are 95,106 confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 in Ohio and 3,570 confirmed and probable COVID-19 deaths. A total of 11,119 people have been hospitalized, including 2,593 admissions to intensive care units. In-depth data can be accessed by visiting coronavirus.ohio.gov.

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.