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PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Marilee Johnson, Logan County Public Information Coordinator
970-522-0888 Ext 253

Logan County Application for Variance from Public Health Order Approved

Logan County's application for variance from Public Health Order 20-28 Safer at Home, was approved on May 23 by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE).

The county's application to relax certain restrictions of the public health order was made to address the recovery of the local businesses' economic health while maintaining the public health safeguards for the community. According to the letter of approval from Jill Hunsaker Ryan, CDPHE executive director, the variance approval is limited to the four functions for which Logan County requested a variance, which include restaurants, movie theaters, places of worship, and gyms. In all other respects, the requirements of the Safer At Home Executive Order and Public Health Order remain in effect for Logan County.

According to Ryan, when reviewing a variance request, CDPHE evaluates the current prevalence of COVID-19 in the jurisdiction, including whether cases are increasing, stable, or decreasing.

"In reviewing Logan County's current status with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, we note that the county has a two week disease incidence rate of 46 per 100,000 people during the last 2 weeks," Ryan stated. "Your application describes a strong public health system run through the Northeast County Health Department, and also includes the support of the local hospitals that indicate they have the resources to provide care to those in need."

The approval to open restaurants, movie theaters, places of worship and gyms includes additional requirements listed below.

For all settings, the following requirements apply:

- In each confined indoor space, in order to achieve 6 ft. social distancing, the limit is 50% of the posted occupancy code limit ensuring a minimum 28 square feet per person not to exceed more than 100 people at any given time.
- Employees must be screened for symptoms each day before beginning work, and those who are symptomatic must be excluded from the workplace and required to isolate for 10 days, per CDC guidance. Information on symptom screening can be found [here](#).
- Employees and contracted workers must wear face coverings that cover the nose and mouth at all times.
- Employers must provide accommodations to vulnerable employees who are required to follow the Stay at Home requirements.

For movie theaters, the following requirements must be met:

Environment

- The facility must track the number of individuals in a theater to create appropriate distancing as follows:
 - Capacity shall be limited by the number of seats per theater
 - Customers must be separated by a minimum of at least three seats to the side, and must alternate every other row
 - Individuals residing in the same household will be considered one customer
 - Six feet distance must be maintained between customers
- The theater must be cleaned and disinfected between movie showings.
- Mark concession lines for a minimum of six feet distancing
- Implement or maintain physical barriers for high-contact settings (e.g. Cashiers).
- Offer touchless payment options wherever possible.
- Perform environmental cleaning and disinfection of bathrooms and high touch surfaces every 2 hours and maintain a cleaning log.

Customers

- Customers should be encouraged to wear face coverings into and inside the movie theater.
- Customers must be asked whether they have COVID-19 symptoms at the door and excluded from the facility if symptomatic.

For gyms, the following requirements must be met:

Environment

- Do not allow participants to wait in the lobby or in lines outside of the doors.
- Post signs at entrances regarding face coverings, and post signs throughout the facility as needed to remind guests of social distancing and proper hygiene.
- Implement one-way entry/exit and directional walkways as much as possible.
- Spread participants out so that there is at least a 6-foot distance between individuals throughout the facility.
- An employee must disinfect equipment after every use.
- Perform regular environmental cleaning and disinfection of bathrooms and high touch surfaces and maintain a cleaning log.
- Locker rooms, saunas and shared spaces for gatherings must remain closed

Participants

- Participants should be encouraged to wear a face covering while using the facility, when physically possible.
- Make reasonable accommodations for vulnerable populations who are still under the Safer at Home advisement. (e.g. assistance with equipment cleaning, special hours).
- Participants experiencing symptoms of any illness MUST exclude themselves from using the facility.

- Use of equipment in the gym must be limited to no closer than every other machine so that participants are not exercising right next to each other and smaller exercise rooms with poor ventilation should be discouraged from use.
- No equipment may be shared between customers unless they are household contacts
- Personal training is allowed while strictly adhering to social distancing guidelines and limited to 4 people, plus the instructor.
- Group classes are not allowed
- On-site childcare facilities must remain closed

According to the CDPHE, the variance approval is granted based on the facts and circumstances today as described in Logan County's request. If the county were to exceed a 15% positivity rate or more than 100 cases per 100,000 population in a two week period (22 cases in two weeks) among county residents who are not inmates at the Sterling Correctional Facility, the variance is automatically rescinded.

Additionally, CDPHE reserves the right to modify or rescind this variance approval as circumstances warrant. This approval is in effect until the final expiration of PHO 20-28, which will be extended in some capacity beyond the current expiration date next week.

"I appreciate your thoughtful approach to these challenging issues, and wish you all the best in your continuing efforts to ensure that Logan County residents are safe and healthy as we deal with this global pandemic," Ryan stated.

The Logan County Commissioners first applied for a variance on April 29. That request was denied on May 12 by CDPHE based on concerns about vulnerabilities due to a high rate of positive COVID-19 cases associated with offenders in the Department of Corrections Sterling Facility. The county's second application, submitted May 15 and approved today, included sufficient data addressing the prison's outbreak containment as well as the resources available at Sterling Regional MedCenter.

The Logan County Commissioners express their appreciation to Ryan, as well as the Northeast Colorado Health Department, for their partnership, consideration and approval of their application for variance, and to Colorado District 65 Rep. Rod Pelton for his support of the commissioners' efforts to provide leadership for the citizens and businesses of Logan County.

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