

Indiana Government Actions on Covid-19 - Updated 8/14/2020

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Today's update discusses:

- Some Indiana schools that had opened for in-person learning reporting positive cases
- Avon High School resuming e-learning this week, followed by hybrid learning
- Indianapolis' mask mandate and increased enforcement
- Indianapolis' current restrictions remaining in place
- Attorney General issuing opinion on Governor's statewide mask mandate
- Governor's reluctance to allow mail-in voting
- Eviction moratorium ending today
- Health officials' concerns over COVID-19 trends
- Launch of online dashboard tracking in long-term care facilities

EDUCATION

- Many Indiana schools have resumed in-person learning, with some schools offering the option of online learning. However, some schools across the state that brought students back together have already recorded positive cases. Schools with a positive case have had to readjust or even close temporarily while planning how to move forward. Public health experts are encouraging anyone with children doing in-person learning to remember that contact tracing is an important part of lowering the spread of COVID-19, especially in instances where a school reports a positive case.
- Avon High School (located about 17 miles west of Indianapolis) has resumed school for e-learning only while adjusting to and finalizing a hybrid plan to be used through the end of the month. This adjustment comes as the school reported five positive cases after returning to in-person classes. Currently, the plan is to return to in-person learning by August 31. The hybrid model will apply only to the high school.

ATTORNEYS

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GOVERNMENT ACTIONS

- Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett and the Marion County Public Health Department Director stated yesterday that enforcement of the mask mandate will increase, along with social distancing requirements. For example, Marion County businesses and individuals in violation of the public health order could see a \$1,000 fine, while repeat offenders could face a higher fine and repeat business offenders could be shut down. Residents are encouraged to call or email the Department to report violations.
- Mayor Hogsett also announced that Indianapolis will maintain certain restrictions as the pandemic continues. According to the Mayor and Dr. Virginia Caine, Director of the Marion County Public Health Department, bars and nightclubs that did not have a food menu before March of this year will remain closed. In addition, outdoor and indoor dining will remain at 50% capacity, and no more than 250 people will be allowed in the stands at sporting events.
- As previously updated, Governor Holcomb has issued a statewide mask mandate. However, some question his authority to enforce such a mandate. The state's attorney general issued an opinion that stated the governor does not have the authority to issue such a mandate nor to punish those who do not abide by it. The opinion suggests the state's emergency law does not give the governor authority for the mask mandate without consent of the legislature. The opinion does not block the order and is considered nonbinding.
- As the pandemic continues across the nation, many states are working on laws that allow for voting by mail. However, Indiana will not likely be one of them. Governor Holcomb does not believe there is reason to vote by mail, especially when more recently people have been actively going back to work and attending school in person. In a statement last week, he ensured residents, "Indiana will have a safe and secure and healthy, in-person election" this coming November.
- The Indiana moratorium on evictions ends today, and many fear a wave of evictions is coming despite the ongoing pandemic. Governor Holcomb has not indicated he will extend the moratorium, but various rental assistance programs are available for residents.

HEALTH

- At a press conference earlier this week, state officials expressed concern over COVID-19 trends in the state. Dr. Kristina Box, State Health Commissioner, expressed her concerns over the rising hospitalization numbers and positivity rates. In an effort to remind residents how to slow the spread of COVID-19, Dr. Box discussed the importance of listening to and abiding by health guidelines, as well as how crucial it is for individuals to respond to contact tracers who contact them. In addition, Dr. Box announced that the state Department of Health is putting together an online dashboard for tracking COVID-19 school case data.
- The state has announced the launch of an online dashboard specifically for long-term care facilities. The dashboard, which officially launched earlier this week, gives specific data regarding COVID-19 information in nursing homes. Facilities are required to update the state of COVID-19 cases within 24 hours; the online data will be updated weekly.