

WEST VIRGINIA STRONG – THE COMEBACK

On Monday, April 27, 2020, Gov. Jim Justice unveiled his comprehensive plan to reopen various aspects of the state and its economy, putting West Virginia on the road to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The plan is called “West Virginia Strong – The Comeback” and allows businesses in certain sectors to reopen in phases over the next six weeks if the rate of positive COVID-19 cases in the state remains low.

Opening Criteria

If the statewide cumulative percent of positive test results (available at [Coronavirus.wv.gov](https://coronavirus.wv.gov)) remains below 3% from Monday, April 27, through Wednesday, April 29, the six-week reopening process will begin.

The Week 1 phase of reopenings will begin on Thursday, April 30. From there, each phase of the reopening process for Weeks 2-6 will begin on Monday of each subsequent week. Case numbers will continue to be monitored throughout the entire reopening process.

Reopening is a Choice, Not a Requirement

Businesses included in each phase of this reopening plan are not required to resume operations on any specific date. This plan provides the option for reopening, not a requirement.

Week 1

In the Week 1 phase of reopenings, hospitals across West Virginia will be able to resume elective medical procedures, provided that they have a plan in place to safely phase-in procedures based on clinical judgement while following all CDC guidelines – as ordered by Gov. Justice last week. Additionally, hospitals seeking to resume elective procedures must also have adequate inventories of personal protective equipment (PPE) and a plan to respond if there is a surge of COVID-19 patients in the future. Each hospital has the discretion to determine the best time to apply to restart elective medical procedures at their facility. The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Office of Health Facility Licensure & Certification will approve each application.

Also during Week 1, outpatient health care operations may resume, including primary care, dentistry, physical/occupational therapy, psychological/mental health, and similar practices. However, providers must follow guidance issued by their boards and/or associations to which are designed to keep healthcare professionals and patients as safe as possible.

Additionally during this period, testing of daycare staff across the state will begin.

Week 2

All businesses included in the Week 2 phase of reopenings will be required to operate with physical distancing measures in effect. Businesses will also be required to implement efforts to increase sanitation and the use of face coverings.

Further guidance on reopening requirements for each business sector included in the Week 2 phase of the plan will be available soon.

Any small business with fewer than 10 employees would be able to resume operations during Week 2. Additional guidance for small businesses will be available soon.

Additionally, all businesses providing professional services, such as hair salons, nail salons, barbershops, and pet grooming will be permitted to reopen. However, customers will be required to make appointments to utilize these services and must wait in their vehicles rather than inside the business. Additional guidance for professional service businesses will be available soon.

Outdoor dining at restaurants will be permitted under strict physical distancing restrictions. Additional guidance for outdoor dining establishments will be available soon.

Although churches and funeral homes were deemed essential, many chose to stop in-person services. During Week 2, those that wish to resume in-person services will be encouraged to follow additional guidelines such as limiting seating to every other pew, maintaining physical distancing and wearing face covering restrictions. Additional guidance for churches and funeral homes will be available soon.

Weeks 3-6

Several additional types of businesses will be permitted to reopen from Weeks 3-6. The opening schedule for these businesses will

be based upon the recommendations of state medical experts and upon testing data available at that time.

These businesses include office/government buildings, specialty retail stores, parks and/or restrooms and facilities at parks, gyms, fitness centers, recreation centers, dine-in restaurants, hotels, casinos, spas/massage establishments, and other businesses.

The Governor's Office will announce which of these businesses will be able to reopen at least one week in advance of its respective reopening date. Additional guidance on reopening will be made available for each of these businesses at that time.

Conditions for Reopening to Slow, Stop, or Reverse

In the event that West Virginia's number of positive COVID-19 cases surges above the 3% threshold, the schedule of reopenings may be slowed, stopped, or reversed.

Additionally, any unexpected increase in COVID-19 positive hospitalizations or any significant outbreaks of community-based transmission (not including clusters or outbreaks in nursing homes or other vulnerable communities) may slow, stop, or reverse the reopening process as deemed necessary by Gov. Justice and state health experts. Businesses With No Timeline for Reopening Right Now Due to safety concerns, at this time, there is still no timetable to reopen visitation at nursing homes. Additionally, entertainment venues such as movie theaters, sporting events, and concerts will remain closed for the foreseeable future.

West Virginians Should Continue to

As the reopening process gets underway, West Virginians should continue to practice good social distancing, maintaining at least six feet of separation between each other.

Additionally, people are encouraged to continue wearing face coverings in public where other physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

The Governor's Stay At Home order will remain in place until lifted at a later date.

Individuals are also required to continue following all county health department regulations and businesses are encouraged to continue allowing employees to telework if possible.