

Nebraska State and Legislative Actions:

Elective Surgeries

On Monday, Gov. Ricketts announced that he would be lifting the restriction on elective surgeries beginning May 4. Hospitals and healthcare facilities may resume elective surgeries, at their discretion, if four requirements are met: 30% general bed availability, 30% ICU bed availability, 30% ventilator availability, and a two-week supply of personal protective equipment on site. To read more on the announcement, see [here](#).

Childcare

A new collaborative effort, Nebraska Child Care Referral Network, has launched a new website for parents seeking childcare. From the [website](#):

“The purpose of the Nebraska Child Care Referral Network is to enable families to locate licensed childcare providers in communities across the state. Providers include both family care and center-based care and are available for children from birth through age 12.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is particularly urgent that medical providers, emergency responders, and other essential personnel be able to quickly and easily locate childcare options in their communities. While many childcare programs have temporarily closed due to the health risks of the coronavirus, many remain open and have available capacity to accept children. This website can help those who need emergency childcare to easily find it.”

The Nebraska Child Care Referral Network is a collaborative between the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Nebraska Department of Education, First Five Nebraska, Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska.

Governor Update

Gov. Ricketts began his Tuesday press briefing with an announcement on testing:

Expanded Testing

Nebraska will be launching a program, TestNebraska, through three Utah companies that will open labs in Nebraska. The new labs will enable our state to eventually administer 3,000 tests a day. Gov. Ricketts said he hopes to reach 3,000 tests administered per day within the next five weeks. Currently Nebraska is administering between 600 and 800 test per day.

Testing will be free through testnebraska.com, where participants will be asked to take an assessment prior to being tested. If they meet the criteria, they will then be tested. Gov. Ricketts urged Nebraskans to take the assessment, deeming it a contest entitled ‘#TestNebraskaChallenge.’ Testing locations will be available throughout the state, and the Governor said that the testing is free.

Q&A

Q: What happens if someone tests positive who lives in a nursing home?

A: Dr. Anthone: They will be isolated at the nursing home, unless their condition worsens or there's an outbreak within the facility. If that is the case, residents will be moved to a hospital in either Lincoln or Papillion.

Q: How many tests have been done in Utah through the program Nebraska will be utilizing?

A: Over 80,000 people have taken the assessment, and over the past two and a half weeks nearly 2,800 tests have been done per day.

Q: How many contract tracers are available in Nebraska?

A: Ricketts: We are working on a plan to increase capacity but are currently unsure of the actual number. There will be information on the [DHHS Dashboard](#) soon, Gov. Ricketts said.

Federal:

Congress

Lawmakers struck a deal on Tuesday that will replenish funds to the small business loan program, while adding funds for small-business disaster loans and grants, hospitals, and testing. The nearly \$484 billion package was negotiated between Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, as well as Congressional Leaders. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he was happy with the agreement, as it includes more money for the loan program than Republicans previously requested. ¹ The Senate is expected to pass the legislation through unanimous consent on Tuesday, with the House planning to vote on Thursday.

A breakdown of the package:

- \$322 billion for Paycheck Protection Program
- \$60 billion for small-business disaster loans and grants
- \$75 billion for hospitals
- \$25 billion for testing

Infrastructure

Transportation officials are growing concerned about the effects COVID-19 could have on future road and bridge projects. Because fewer people are on the road as of late, fuel revenue, fuel taxes, and toll fees have diminished.

Leaders have requested \$50 billion from Congress to prevent major cuts to road and bridge projects over the next year and a half, due to the drastic decline in traveling. Leaders are also calling on Congress to allow a long-term plan that doubles the amount of regular funding going to state transportation agencies. States like Missouri and North Carolina have already halted some projects in its state, and many remain in limbo without federal assistance, according to Patrick McKenna, president of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials and director for the Missouri Department of Transportation. ²

¹ <https://www.npr.org/2020/04/21/838864421/bipartisan-deal-reached-on-484-billion-more-coronavirus-aid>

² <https://fox11online.com/news/coronavirus/traffic-drop-from-stay-at-home-orders-imperils-road-funding>