

State and Legislative Updates:

SNAP

Today the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services issued emergency allotments to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly known as SNAP. From the [press release](#):

“SNAP recipients will not have to take any action to receive supplemental support as recipients will be issued increased benefits directly on their EBT cards. Households receiving SNAP benefits will see supplements to their benefits based on a maximum allotment scale. If there are four individuals in a household and that household is currently receiving \$500 in benefits, the supplement will raise their benefits to the maximum allowed for households of four, which is \$646 per month – or an increase of \$146. Total benefits will be different based on each household’s regular monthly allotment for the month of May.

Nebraska Children and Family Services (CFS) Director Stephanie Beasley hopes this supplemental allotment will be renewed for additional months, “The impact of extending SNAP allotment funds for the months of March and April was significant,” she said. “If Congress continues to give states the ability to extend supplemental SNAP benefits for additional months we will work to make sure it happens here in Nebraska.”

Governor Update

Gov. Pete Ricketts began his Thursday conference by announcing TestNebraska would host sites next week in Lincoln, Omaha, Hastings, Kearney, Beatrice, Seward, York, and Clay Center. He also offered updates in regard to restrictions that will change in June.

Directed Health Measures

Ricketts announced a new batch of lifted restrictions for June. All guidelines for elective surgeries, daycares, restaurants, and salons will stay in place. On and after June 1, the only people who will need to self-quarantine after traveling will be people who have traveled internationally. Gov. Ricketts said use common sense when traveling domestically and to avoid places that have large outbreaks. Also effective June 1 for 89 Nebraska counties (including Lincoln and Omaha):

- Bars, bottle clubs, and gentlemen’s clubs will be able to reopen, under the same guidelines as restaurants. No arcade games, darts, or pool allowed.
- Gatherings in June will be allowed to host up to 25 people, or 25% of a venue’s rated occupancy—not to exceed 3,000 people. This applies to arenas, auctions, conference centers, auditoriums, movie theatres, zoos, and pools. Dances and parades will remain prohibited. If a venue is expecting more than 500 people, the local health department will need to sign off first.

- Gyms and fitness centers can continue to operate at 50 percent of rated occupancy.
- Wedding receptions and funerals can resume with 25 guests, or 50 percent of rated occupancy. Tables will need to be separated 6 feet apart, with no more than 6 people at each table. No dances are allowed, and guests will need to remain at their tables to maintain social distance. Buffets and salad bars are not permitted.
- Parades, carnivals, street dances, etc. are prohibited.

For the four remaining counties of Hall, Hamilton, Merrick, and Dakota not included in the guidelines above: those counties will begin Phase 1 of loosened restrictions. This includes allowing childcare centers to occupy with 15 children per room, restaurants to open for dine-in under specific guidelines, and for elective surgeries to begin again.

Unemployment

Labor Commissioner John Albin provided an update on unemployment claims:

- Numbers have decreased each week, including the last
- 64,000 claims left to process
- 90% of claims filed since March 1 are processed
- Albin predicts in two weeks they will have the remaining claims processed

Q&A

Q: Do the current guidelines still hold true for Memorial Day?

A: Ricketts: Yes, the 10-person rule is still in place for May. Keep your group small, social distance, wash your hands, and follow other guidelines.

Q: What are the statistics on Omaha and Lincoln hospital beds?

A: Dr. Anthone: Lincoln is well preserved—with 41% hospital beds and 46% ICU beds available. Douglas County is approaching 30% bed and ICU availability and has 62% of ventilators available.

Q: Is take-out alcohol still allowed when bars/restaurants reopen?

A: Ricketts: Absolutely.

Federal:

Congress

The Senate has moved to amend a provision in the CARES Act relating to the Paycheck Protection Program. ¹ Currently, PPP loans are expected to be used in full within eight weeks. However, many businesses have been urging lawmakers to extend the timeframe so they can use the money over a longer period of time. Currently senators from both political parties are working behind the scenes to determine how long the timeframe to spend PPP loans should be, and if it's possible to pass the amendment through unanimous consent.

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/21/politics/senate-ppp-small-business-vote/index.html>