

REOPEN LEA COUNTY

A plan to safely re-engage our economy



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INTRODUCTION



Much like the Road Map to Reopening, the White House Plan (WHP) centers on 14-day cycles. Prior to considering the implementation of any reopening plan, the WHP relies upon a decrease in symptoms (both COVID as well as ILI), the number of documented cases, and the ability of hospitals to treat as well as test. Once these milestones are reached, an area may implement the first steps of their plan. Upon another “successful” 14-day cycle, the area would progress to the next step of reopening. The Lea County Plan would be based on the number of positive cases decreasing as well as the capacity of our local healthcare facilities; to include regional facilities in Roswell, Lubbock and the Midland/Odessa area.

As it has been stated in the media, the consideration of reopening is truly an issue of health vs. economy. In order to fund our basic necessities as individuals and functions of government, we must have people employed as well as businesses operating in which the public may spend their earnings. At the same time, we must be very cognizant of the demographic makeup in our area in regards to vulnerable populations. In Lea County the median age is approximately 32.2 years old and 11% of the population or 7,657 residents are 65 or older. Many of the chronic diseases that further complicate a COVID-19 diagnosis are at or above NM’s prevalence. These statistics are being presented to emphasize the point that while we have a relatively low median age, we have a significant population that are very vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus. This infection is extremely virulent and can cause deadly complications for the elderly and those whose health is compromised. Although there are discussions revolving around the development of a vaccine, there is no cure and the probability of a cure is at least 12

months away. When considering this re-opening plan, it is essential that we weigh the delicate balance between protecting our economy and those at greatest risk.

LEA COUNTY TRIGGER POINTS

In regards to the trigger points, below are discussion points to consider:

- Documented decreasing trajectory in positive cases in Lea County:
 - In order to truly provide a representation of the rate of spread in Lea County, we must use data from the following areas:

NEW MEXICO

Lea County
Chaves County
Eddy County
Roosevelt County

TEXAS

Andrews County
Ector County
Gaines County
Lubbock County
Midland County
Terry County
Winkler
Yokum

- Although Lea County has only had two cases of COVID-19, both of which have fully recovered, and a substantial amount of time has passed since the last result we must remain aware of very important factors: our workforce and travel habits of our population.
 - Workforce – as you are very aware, 58% of our local workforce are deemed essential. Due to this, it is more often than not that these individuals are required to travel into areas where infections are spreading at a higher rate. In addition, we have to realize that workers from these areas travel into Lea County as well. This leaves our County vulnerable to more positive cases occurring through community spread.
 - Population habits – Although the majority of our efforts have been focused on supporting local business, it is still the habit of individuals in our area to travel to areas like Lubbock or Midland (higher incidences cases) for shopping or entertainment. Once restrictions are relaxed, it can be hypothesized that the same travel habits will begin again, leading to potential community spread. In order to reduce the likelihood of this occurring, it is an important component of the presented plan to stress essential travel only in order to keep our case counts low.

- Hospital and NMDOH readiness and capabilities:
 - Nor-Lea Hospital District and Lea Regional Hospital need to possess sufficient supplies of COVID19 rapid test.
 - The combined laboratory facilities in Lea County would need to be able to handle up to 200 rapid tests in the event of an outbreak.
 - Laboratories would need sufficient reagent to complete the rapid testing.
 - Facilities like hospitals and departments of health would need to be able to set up and activate drive through or onsite COVID testing facilities within a day.
 - Nor-Lea Hospital District and Lea Regional Hospital need to have a sufficient surge plan in the event of an outbreak of COVID19.
 - Local EMS would need to be available throughout the county to quickly transfer critical COVID19 patients to the most appropriate facilities in the region.
 - Health facilities would need to be able to increase bed capacity by 30 beds to handle a sudden surge in COVID19 patients.
 - All Lea County Hospitals need to have a 90-day supply of PPE to ensure they could handle a surge of patients.
 - NMDOH would need to have the capacity to contact trace any new COVID-19 patients in Lea County and/or train local health care professionals to assist

In the event that our County has met the aforementioned criteria and an outbreak continues, the following actions would be implemented.

- Outbreak of 10 or less in young adults – progression to next step is halted and “clock” is reset. This is based on average wait time to receive results as well as the normal incubation and contagious period.
- Outbreak of 5 or less within an at-risk population, i.e. nursing home, plan progression is halted and consideration by local government and healthcare is taken to decide if regressing a plan step is warranted. This is based on the fact that an outbreak in an at-risk population could consume area health care resources.
- Outbreak of 11 or more in a 10-day period, regardless of age or risk category will require an immediate regression in the plan steps.

PLAN STEPS

The plan to re-open the economy is based on a 4-step approach as found in the accompanying pages of this document. The earliest this plan could go into effect would be May 1, 2020. This date coincides with the original essential business closure order and extension of time issued by Governor Lujan-Grisham. The May 1st target date also allows ample time for local hospitals to ensure that they meet trigger criteria in order to implement the first step, local businesses and individuals to acquire the personal protective equipment (PPE) needed, as well as time to develop and push educational campaigns identified as well as public notification of the adopted plan. Lastly, any potential start date could be affected by the length of time it would take the Governor and NMDOH to concur with our plan to move all of Lea County forward.

CONCLUSION

The authors of this document believe that by presenting the State a respectful request to allow for a safe and well-thought out plan to re-open our businesses will result in serious consideration and probable approval. Provided our low incidence of infection which could be attributed to our early recognition and prevention steps taken, our County could be a “test” site for a plan that could be used in other demographically similar areas of the State to determine if a staged reopening of businesses based on regional factors could limit the spread of COVID-19. Although reopening our County is not free from risk to our vulnerable population, the multiple variables and trigger points presented in this plan are designed to protect all individuals.

In order to show that we are united, we are requesting that each governing body within our County endorse this plan. The approval of this plan by the State hinges on a unified and consistent effort by all to keep our communities and region safe. Finally, education is a key component in this plan. Every person in our County would need to know about and follow the steps outlined in this plan in order to keep us safe while we reopen and reengage our economy.

PLAN STEPS

STEP 1	
BUSINESSES	INDIVIDUALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All businesses (exceptions noted below) are allowed to open at a 20% occupancy. This includes any businesses previously classified as non-essential and non-profits. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Employers are strongly encouraged to provide PPE, to include mask, to employees and require them to use them at all times. ○ Customer's are strongly encouraged to use PPE as well and businesses are strongly encouraged to require customer use. This is a "No shirt, no shoes, no mask, no service concept." <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PPE shortages, specifically masks, can be addressed through similar program NLH used to create the patient masks (10k+). Volunteer effort required to create surgical style masks for the public. Funding and supplies would be obtained through donations and outside government funding sources. • Churches and places of worship would be strongly encouraged to utilize social distancing and streaming of services • Following WHP, gyms would reopen but at only 20% capacity or less. Sanitation protocol must be followed. • Restaurants would continue to provide take-out and delivery. This is due to the fact that other businesses have to have employees and patrons wear a mask. You can't eat in mask. • Bars could not open as social distancing would be a problem. • Assisted living facilities would be closed to visitors. • Hospitals and clinics open to patients only, no visitors. • Recreation fields (baseball, soccer) still closed. This is due to the individual limit for gatherings remaining at 5. • No non-essential travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At risk individuals would remain sheltered in place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Educational campaign on virus and vulnerable populations ○ Meal delivery from Senior Citizen programs would continue for those who qualify ○ Others at risk – work with local businesses to expand home delivery of groceries through employee or local volunteer network (following PPE and screening protocols). • Mask use heavily emphasized when individuals are in public. Required for wear when in businesses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Educational campaign on mask use, mask creation, basic hygiene • Group gatherings of 5 maximum • Social distancing still practiced • No non-essential travel • Individuals travelling to any area with a case count greater than 50 would be strongly encouraged to self-isolate for 14 days.

STEP 2

BUSINESSES

- All businesses (exceptions noted below) are allowed to open at a 40% occupancy. This includes any businesses previously classified as non-essential and non-profits.
 - Employers are **strongly encouraged** to provide PPE, to include mask, to employees and require them to use them at all times.
 - Customer's are **strongly encouraged** to use PPE as well and businesses are **strongly encouraged** to require customer use.
- Churches and places of worship would be strongly encouraged to utilize social distancing and streaming of services
- Gyms open at 40% occupancy, sanitation protocols followed
- Restaurants may allow dine-in, but must ensure 6 feet between tables and groups no larger than 6 at one table. PPE worn by staff and customers must wear when not eating.
- Bars could open at 40% occupancy, no tables.
- Assisted living facilities would be closed to visitors.
- Hospitals and clinics open to patients only, no visitors.
- Recreation fields (baseball, soccer) open, but social distancing must be adhered to and groups of no more than 25.
- No non-essential travel

INDIVIDUALS

- At risk individuals would remain sheltered in place
 - Educational campaign on virus and vulnerable populations
 - Meal delivery from Senior Citizen programs would continue for those who qualify
 - Others at risk – work with local businesses to expand home delivery of groceries through employee or local volunteer network (following PPE and screening protocols).
- Mask use heavily emphasized when individuals are in public. Required for wear when in businesses.
 - Educational campaign on mask use, mask creation, basic hygiene continues
- Group gatherings of 25 maximum
- Social distancing still practiced
- No non-essential travel
- Individuals travelling to any area with a case count greater than 50 would be **strongly encouraged** to self-isolate for 14 days.

STEP 3

BUSINESSES

- All businesses (exceptions noted below) are allowed to open at a 75% occupancy. This includes any businesses previously classified as non-essential and non-profits.
 - Employers are **strongly encouraged** to provide PPE, to include mask, to employees and require them to use them at all times.
 - Customer's are **strongly encouraged** to use PPE as well and businesses are **strongly encouraged** to require customer use.
- Churches and places of worship would be strongly encouraged to utilize social distancing and streaming of services
- Gyms open at 100% occupancy, sanitation protocols followed
- Restaurants may allow dine-in, but must ensure 6 feet between tables and groups no larger than 6 at one table. PPE worn by staff.
- Bars could open at 75% occupancy, no tables.
- Assisted living facilities would be open to visitors at discretion of ownership but PPE must be worn.
- Hospitals and clinics open at discretion of ownership, PPE worn by any visitors.
- Large venues may operate but at 50% occupancy.
- No non-essential travel

INDIVIDUALS

- At risk individuals would remain sheltered in place
 - Educational campaign on virus and vulnerable populations
 - Meal delivery from Senior Citizen programs would continue for those who qualify
 - Others at risk – work with local businesses to expand home delivery of groceries through employee or local volunteer network (following PPE and screening protocols).
- Mask use heavily emphasized when individuals are in public. Encouraged for wear when in businesses.
 - Educational campaign on mask use, mask creation, basic hygiene continues
- No group gatherings maximum
- Social distancing still practiced
- No non-essential travel
- Individuals travelling to any area with a case count greater than 50 would be **strongly encouraged** to self-isolate for 14 days.

STEP 4

BUSINESSES

- All businesses are allowed to open at a 100% occupancy. This includes any businesses previously classified as non-essential. Sanitation emphasis
- Restaurants open at normal occupancy and operations.
- Bars could open as usual.
- Assisted living facilities would be open to visitors but hygiene practiced and emphasized
- Hospitals and clinics open.
- Large venues 100% open

INDIVIDUALS

- At risk individuals use PPE when going in public
- Social distancing still practiced