COVID-19 Update

Key Points for May 15

- ✓ Maryland reported 1,083 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, bringing the statewide number to 36,986.
- ✓ There are 65 positive cases in Talbot County with 48 of those cases having recovered. 17 total cases in Talbot County have been hospitalized since the start of this pandemic.
- ✓ A Drive-Thru Food Distribution will take place at Chapel District Elementary School in Cordova for Talbot County Residents on May 20, 2020 starting 10 a.m.

For Immediate Release
May 15, 2020

Begin to Open the Doors, But Use Caution
Talbot County Follows Governor Hogan's Stage One Recovery Plan

Talbot County residents and business owners are eagerly anticipating 5 p.m. on Friday when Gov. Larry Hogan's stay-at-home order is lifted. While Talbot County health and government officials have agreed to follow the direction of the governor, they urge caution as Stage One begins.

"I have spoken with elected officials from each of the towns, and they have confirmed their commitment to support local businesses in their reopening plans," says Talbot County Council President Corey Pack. "We are all supportive in getting our local economy back to work, but we must reopen in a safe and appropriate manner."

Maryland has been under a stay-at-home order since March 30. When the order is lifted on Friday, businesses will begin to reopen. Small retail stores may reopen at 50% capacity and with safety measures in place, along with churches and houses of worship. Some personal services also will be allowed to open at 50% capacity, by appointment only.

"I think the governor summed it up very well," says Dr. Fredia Wadley, Health Officer for Talbot County. "It's not that the threat is over, but we also know the economy is suffering. Let's start safely and see what happens."

For more than two months, leaders from Talbot County, its incorporated towns, and many agencies and organizations have worked collaboratively to address the public health and economic crises caused by the

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COVID-19 pandemic. Together, they have agreed to adhere to state guidelines, but have stressed some points that should be followed throughout Talbot County.

- Masks must be worn by employees and customers in retail establishments and appropriate safety guidelines must be in place to encourage social distancing.
- Outdoor seating at restaurants is prohibited by the governor's executive orders. Customers must pick up their orders and vacate the premises immediately. Patrons are not allowed to sit outside restaurants to eat carry-out meals.
- County businesses are encouraged to place the "Maryland Strong Back to Business Pledge" in their storefronts.

Talbot County's business community will play an important role in protecting workers and citizens from another surge in COVID-19 infections. "Talbot County currently has the third lowest number of COVID-19 cases in the state," says Director of Emergency Services Clay Stamp. "For us to continue this level of success, we must promote personal responsibility and business best practices to limit the spread of this virus. The consequences are real."

To help prepare business owners for a successful reopening, the Emergency Operations Center assembled the following guidance for business.

1. **Develop a cleaning and sanitation plan.** To protect employees and customers, every business will need an enhanced cleaning plan. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta has issued guidance on cleaning and disinfecting for businesses. Many local companies also offer sanitation services. Consider designating one employee during each shift to oversee and enforce your company's cleaning and sanitation policy.

2. **Develop a new operational plan.** Maintaining a safe environment and preventing a rise in infections will mean doing business differently. Identify any necessary changes in your store or office layout or the work plans for each employee. The Maryland Retailers Association has created checklists for both retailers and customers based on public health best practices.

3. **Reorganize your workspace to support COVID-19 safety and physical distancing measures.** Design the layout of your business based on your new operational and sanitation plans. Calculate your maximum occupancy so you can adapt to mandated occupancy restrictions. Consider adding sneeze guards in front of cashiers or frontline workers, barriers between work stations, floor decals to maintain physical distancing, hand sanitizer stations, and health signage on COVID-19 safety practices. The CDC has free materials you can download, and local office supply chains and sign stores offer pre-made resources.

4. **Purchase face coverings, sanitizer, and cleaning supplies before you reopen.** The supply of these items continues to be limited. You will need face coverings for all employees. These can be cloth masks that can be washed daily. Surgical masks for health professionals are limited, expensive, and difficult to obtain. Hand sanitizers and sanitizer wipes are needed unless you chose another method of sanitizing surface tops several times a day. Gloves are not necessary for most employees in retail. It is better and safer for employees to wash their hands and use sanitizer frequently because gloves can become contaminated and transmit the virus.

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5. **Prepare for employee rehiring and a return to work.** Update your Human Resources policies and job descriptions based on your new COVID-19 operational plan. Educate yourself on new federal and state guidelines for unemployment and COVID-19 family leave policies.

6. **Train staff on new operations and safety procedures.** Share your COVID-19 plans with staff members ahead of time. Consider hosting virtual webinars with your team, ask for their feedback, and answer any questions or concerns. Once they return to work, be sure all staff attend a formal training process and document the training for your records.

7. **Communicate regularly with your employees.** Keep employees updated on new workplace policies and your plans for reopening. Learn about their concerns and hurdles in returning to work such as childcare and health issues that make them high risk. Identify how many former employees will be returning and how many more you may need. Share your expectations for the future and how they fit into your plans.

8. **Communicate with your customers.** The businesses that prosper are the ones that will be able to show their customers and employees that they are doing all they can to create a safe environment. Let customers know about your new cleaning and sanitation policies as well as your expectations for customers to do their part to keep our community safe. Adjust your advertising campaign to reflect your current operating conditions. Use social media as an inexpensive way to communicate with your customers. Contact your marketing and advertising vendors and begin pricing advertising packages.

9. **Revise your business plan.** Do not expect your business to quickly return to pre-pandemic levels. Build a new business plan around conservative estimates on cash flow. Identify ways you can control expenses, identify new and creative ways to increase revenue, and plan accordingly.

Guidance for Churches

Governor Hogan's Executive Order, Number 20-05-13-01 of May 12, 2020, began the process of reopening Maryland with Stage One of Maryland's Recovery Plan for COVID-19. Page four of that order gives the following guidance for religious facilities:

Religious Facilities. Subject to applicable Local Orders, effective as of 5:00 P.M. on May 15, 2020, churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and other similar religious facilities of any faith in the State of Maryland ("Religious Facilities") may open to the general public, *provided, however,* that the total number of persons permitted in a Religious Facility at any one time shall not exceed 50% of the Religious Facility's Maximum Occupancy (defined below).

Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta can be found at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/guidance-community-faith-organizations.html

Health Officer Dr. Fredia Wadley has also added some clear, practical guidance for church leaders that is easily understandable.

1. The safest way to have services is virtual. If you can continue in this mode, you should consider doing so to help protect members with chronic conditions who need to stay at home for their safety.

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2. The next safest service is an outdoor service. The ventilation and sunlight are very beneficial in decreasing the spread of this virus. Even with outdoor services, physical distance of 6 feet is needed and masks or face coverings should be worn.

3. Though they are now allowed, indoor services are the least safe. However, if you plan to have a service indoors you should carefully plan how to keep members 6 feet apart, avoid clusters, and wear face coverings. Of course, household members do not need to stay 6 feet apart from each other while at the service.

4. The Governor's Executive Order allows only 50% capacity in religious facilities. Buildings have occupancy limits so that people can exit the building safely if there is a fire. This number has little to do with limiting the spread of infectious diseases. Your occupancy limit should now be calculated to keep people 6 feet from one another. When you determine the number you can allow inside while also keeping a distance of 6 feet between people, consider having more than one service to serve your members and still keep them safe.

5. Studies have shown the increased spread of COVID-19 with singing. To understand the risk individuals can visit https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6919e6.htm .
   Choirs and congregational singing are high-risk activities at this time and should be omitted. Inspirational music can be played, and members will be safe and comforted with music.

6. Signage at the front entrance should inform your members of what you expect of them:
   A. Wear face coverings.
   B. Stay 6 feet apart.
   C. Follow directions for walking and seating.

7. You want to keep contact between persons and objects at a minimum.
   A. If you are not singing, you will not need hymnals. Keep in mind that these can't be sanitized between usage by individuals, so it is better to not use any book during services.
   B. Passing the collection plate carries a greater risk than having members drop their offering in a "container" at the entrance/exit. Mail-in offerings would also be beneficial.

8. Crowd control as people enter and exist may need some assistance with signage, markings, and reminders.
   A. Put tape on walkway into facility to indicate 6-foot distances and also inside churches in aisles.
   B. Have someone at the door to keep people moving and to avoid clustering.
   C. Leave off the hand shaking and elbow bumping.
   D. Outside, coming or going, there can be greetings and discussions as long as people stay 6-feet apart and wear face coverings.

9. Have hand sanitizers in the church for members to use.

10. Develop a good cleaning plan for your facility including wiping down hard surfaces. This will be especially important if you plan to have more than one service a day. The top portion of a pew is often touched by the people entering and existing a pew and would need to be disinfected between services.

11. Have a group think through what you do at a service to help you identify actions that are high risk and need to be altered.

Most importantly, the overarching guidance is this: We all share responsibility for keeping our community and ourselves safe from COVID-19. Just because we can do something doesn't mean that it is safe for everyone to do it.

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- Older persons and those with chronic conditions are safer at home.
- Individuals willing to go outside their homes must be willing to accept responsibility for protecting their health and follow guidelines in order to protect their own health as well as the health of their faith members.
- Groups holding religious services owe their members the safest environment they can create.
- Reopening is not about what I CAN do but what I SHOULD do.

Talbot County Public Schools

TCPS meals will be distributed on Tuesday, May 19 and Friday, May 22 from 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. at all school sites. Sodexo is now providing frozen food items that require refrigerated storage and reheating. If you are unable to pick up meals and need emergency delivery, please call Crystal Miller at 443-432-5091.

The TCPS Instructional Technology Help Desk will be open on Tuesday, May 19 from 9:00 a.m. to noon and Friday, May 22 from noon to 3:00 p.m. at Easton High School and St. Michaels Elementary School. Please send an email to helpdesk@talbotschools.org for virtual support or to schedule a help desk appointment for iPads or laptops.

TCPS encourages parents to wear masks/cloth face coverings during meal pickups or IT Help Desk visits to help fight the spread of COVID-19.

Please continue to share photos of graduating seniors wearing gear and/or holding signs to celebrate their commitments to college, career, or the military by emailing them to their guidance counselors or to dgardner@talbotschools.org.

"We are looking forward to sharing our Class of 2020 Graduation Videos on June 1 at 6:00 p.m. for St. Michaels Middle High and June 2 at 6:00 p.m. for Easton High," said Dr. Kelly Griffith, Superintendent. "Many thanks to the phenomenal TCPS Teams at both high schools for making this happen, and to ALL of our Class of 2020 families for their enthusiastic support. CONGRATULATIONS and Stay Tuned, Stay Healthy, and Stay Hopeful!"

Choice One Urgent Care - UMMS

For Immediate Release
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Nine ChoiceOne Urgent Care Centers in Maryland Now Offering COVID-19 Testing

LUTHERVILLE, MD (May 15, 2020) – ChoiceOne Urgent Care (ChoiceOne), a part of the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS), announced today they are now offering coronavirus (COVID-19) testing at nine of their locations in Maryland.

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COVID-19 testing is being offered for symptomatic patients at provider discretion at all ChoiceOne centers in Baltimore County, Caroline County, Harford County and Talbot County. With testing now available, the patient flow process within the centers has been completely transformed to ensure patient safety. Patients with respiratory-like symptoms will be directly taken back to a private suite.

Patients will be offered a symptomatic test that will detect active COVID-19 disease; tests will be validated by an outside laboratory to ensure accuracy of results, with results due back to patients within one to three days. Patients will be responsible for their standard visit fee although the symptomatic test is at no cost to the patient.

"We are honored to be one of the first urgent cares in the area to start offering this access to testing," said Nicholas Bower, DO, Chief Medical Officer at ChoiceOne. "Our centers, teammates and providers are ready and equipped to provide testing to their communities, while maintaining health and safety standards for any patient seeking medical care for non-COVID like symptoms."

In addition to the testing sites, ChoiceOne has expanded its telehealth services, now offering a virtual care visit option, available for all patients, which will allow patients to speak with a licensed medical provider from the convenience and comfort of their home.

All ChoiceOne centers remain open seven days a week. For more information, location hours or to check-in online, visit https://choiceoneuc.com.

Where to Find More Information

- **CDC COVID-2019 Website:** https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html
- **Talbot County COVID-19 Information** www.talbotcovid19.org
- **Shore Regional Health COVID Information** https://www.umms.org/shore/patients-visitors/coronavirus
- **Maryland Department of Health Website:** https://health.maryland.gov/pages/home.aspx
- **Talbot County Health Department Website:** https://health.maryland.gov/talbotcounty/Pages/home.aspx
- **Maryland COVID-19 Website:** https://governor.maryland.gov/coronavirus