

LARAMIE COUNTY RECOVERY PLAN

Effective Date: March 16, 2021

This version supersedes all previous versions

Planning Subcommittee

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IMPORTANT NOTICE #1

This version of the Recovery Plan is consistent with the Twenty-Third Continuation of Statewide Orders effective March 16, 2021 and extending through March 31.

The improved COVID-19 situation in the state and county has allowed further relaxation in restrictions for certain indoor and outdoor activities.

Statewide Order #1 and #2 have been further relaxed, and the statewide mask order has been lifted completely.

Events that fall outside current State orders also must be approved as “variances” by both the County and State Health Departments. This report contains a section on variances, and how to apply for one.

IMPORTANT NOTICE #2

Wearing a face covering or mask in public, when social distancing is not possible, protects members of society from infection as well as indicating a commitment to the safety of others. As of March 16, there are no public health mask orders in Laramie County or Wyoming. We still urge the use of masks in public, however.

Any organization, commercial or otherwise, that is open to the public, may continue requiring mask use by its employees or volunteers, and may require face mask use by the public.

IMPORTANT NOTICE #3

Several new variants of SARS-CoV-2 have appeared and one of those (the UK variant) has been identified in Teton County. The Wyoming Department of Health is currently checking positive COVID-19 tests for the new variants by a process known as genome sequencing.

Viruses frequently mutate, so the appearance of new variants is not surprising. Currently, we know that these variants are more easily spread (i.e., more contagious). Whether they cause more severe disease is not yet clear.

We believe that the vaccines currently available in the U.S. elicit good immunity to the new variants that we are seeing in this country. Therefore, we are continuing with our current vaccination program and we will continue to make the vaccine widely available, as increasing supplies permit.

The appearance of these new variants does not change the public health response. Mask use (when in public areas), social distancing, hand washing, and vaccination are still the cornerstones of control.

More information on these variants is available on the CDC web site:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/index.html>.

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Section 1 – Background

The Cheyenne/Laramie County Health Department (C/LCHD) continues to follow the lead of the current statewide orders and guidance from Governor Gordon and the Wyoming Department of Health. The Twenty-Third Continuation of these orders has been released and forms the basis for this plan in its current form.

The state-wide mask mandate, issued on November 7, 2020 by the Wyoming Department of Health, has also been continued. The state order supersedes the Laramie County mask mandate previously issued by the C/LCHD, and at this time only the state order is in effect.

Current Statewide Orders

Statewide Orders are periodically reissued and amended to reflect current COVID-19 activity in the state. The current orders are:

- Twenty-Third Continuation and Modification of Statewide Public Health Order #1 Regarding Bars, Restaurants, Theaters, Gymnasiums, Childcare Facilities, K-12 Public Schools, Colleges, Universities and Trade Schools
- Twenty-Third Continuation and Modification of Statewide Public Health Order #2 Regarding Gatherings of More Than Ten (10) People

General Strategy

The strategy for relaxing restrictions in Laramie County (and Wyoming in general) continues to rely on four concepts:

- The need for life to return as close as possible to normal
- The need to do this as safely as possible
- Expanding vaccinations to as many people as possible, as quickly as possible
- Non-pharmacological mitigation methods, including social distancing, hand washing, and mask use – these still remain important

Pending vaccine availability, the state and county strategy has relied on these non-pharmacologic methods.

Section 2 – What’s New This Time?

This section lists some highlights in the new orders. For further details or questions, we advise looking at the orders themselves, or contacting us at the health department. The orders are posted on the C/LCHD and WDH web sites.

The principal changes include:

- Elimination of restrictions on restaurants, bars, gymnasiums, and theaters
- Clarification of requirements for indoor events in school settings
- Elimination of requirement for face mask use when outdoors in school settings
- Further easing of restrictions on indoor events
- Elimination of restriction on outdoor events
- Removal of limitation on organized sports and artistic performances

Order #1:

- Removal of restrictions on restaurants, bars, gymnasiums, and theaters.
- Clarification of requirements for indoor events in school settings.
 - Individuals must always wear face coverings during indoor school events, with exceptions.
 - Distancing should be maintained by individual groups.
 - An indoor event of more than 500 spectators/attendees must be held at no more than 50% of venue capacity.

Order #2:

- Limitations on personal gatherings are removed.
- Indoor events of more than 500 people may be held at 50% of venue capacity. Face mask protocols remain in place for large indoor events, with exceptions.
- Restrictions on outdoor events are removed.
- Removal of 50 person limit in organized sporting events and artistic performances.

Statewide-wide mask order

- Order #4, the statewide mask order, has been discontinued. The Wyoming Department of Health and the Cheyenne/Laramie County Health Department continue to recommend the use of face masks when in public places and when six feet of physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Any organization, commercial or otherwise, that is open to the public, may continue requiring mask use by its employees or volunteers, and may require face mask use by the public.

Section 3 – Current Status of COVID-19 in the US

Here are some important national numbers as of March 17, 2021¹.

- Laboratory-confirmed U. S. cases: over 29.6 million.
- Confirmed U. S. deaths: over 536,000.
- While most people who contract COVID-19 recover, many require hospitalization, and many experience prolonged symptoms including shortness of breath, trouble concentrating and other symptoms.

Mortality data for all causes, including COVID-19, come from death certificates completed by physicians who cared for the patients. Details are available at the National Center for Health Statistics: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/index.htm>.

In December 2020, nearly 77,000 Americans died due to COVID-19², and on a month-to-month basis it remains the leading cause of death in the U.S., ahead of heart disease and cancer. This trend is expected to continue for the first part of 2021.

Some other historical causes of death in the U.S. are:

- US deaths due to traffic accidents in 2018: 36,560³
- Combat casualties during the Vietnam War: 58,220⁴.
- Combat casualties in World War 2: 416,800⁵.

¹ Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

² <https://covidtracking.com/data/charts/us-daily-deaths>

³ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, <https://www.nhtsa.gov/traffic-deaths-2018>

⁴ National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-statistics>

⁵ <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers/student-resources/research-starters/research-starters-worldwide-deaths-world-war>

Section 4 – Evolving Approach and Metric Overview

Wyoming’s Evolving Approach to COVID-19

Laramie County, and Wyoming in general, are currently relying less on restrictions and more on the vaccination program. Vaccinations across Wyoming, and in Laramie County, have begun, but vaccine supplies are currently limited.

Three vaccines, made by Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson (also known as the Janssen vaccine) are currently being administered in Wyoming. See *Section 6 – Vaccinations* on page 9 for more information.

State-Wide Metrics

The Wyoming Department of Health (WDH) monitors a set of general state-wide COVID-19 metrics.⁶ There is no single metric that triggers a return to pre-pandemic activities. The metrics are continuously updated and provide a statewide snapshot of two broad areas:

- Overall disease and testing data
- Hospital capacity, including ICU bed availability

WDH also provides county-level data which will include:

- Percent of cases attributable to the risk factor referred to as “community spread”
- Daily lab testing volume
- Percent of positive test results
- Age group data
- Number of cases recovered
- Statewide hospital resources related to COVID-19. These are posted online at <https://sites.google.com/wyo.gov/exec-covid19/hospital-resources>.

Laramie County Metrics

The Cheyenne/Laramie County Health Department (C/LCHD) monitors various specific county-level metrics (goals) but in general will not move faster than current state public health orders allow.

There are five important county-level metrics that C/LCHD follows, and they are summarized here.

1. County-level epidemic curve – New Daily Cases

Figure 1 on the next page shows new daily lab-confirmed cases in Laramie County for the period from March 2 through March 15, 2021. A somewhat more revealing graphic is shown in Figure 2, which shows the longer-term trend over time. The large drop-off in cases since the surge in November coincides with improved compliance with the use of face coverings in public places – a key tool in controlling the spread of COVID-19. A mask mandate in Laramie County went into effect on October 30, 2020 and was later superseded by a statewide mask order. All public health mask orders are dropped as of March 16, but mask use in public is still strongly recommended.

⁶ Wyoming Department of Health, <https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/infectious-disease-epidemiology-unit/disease/novel-coronavirus/>

Individual establishments may, at their discretion, continue to require mask use by the public in their facilities.

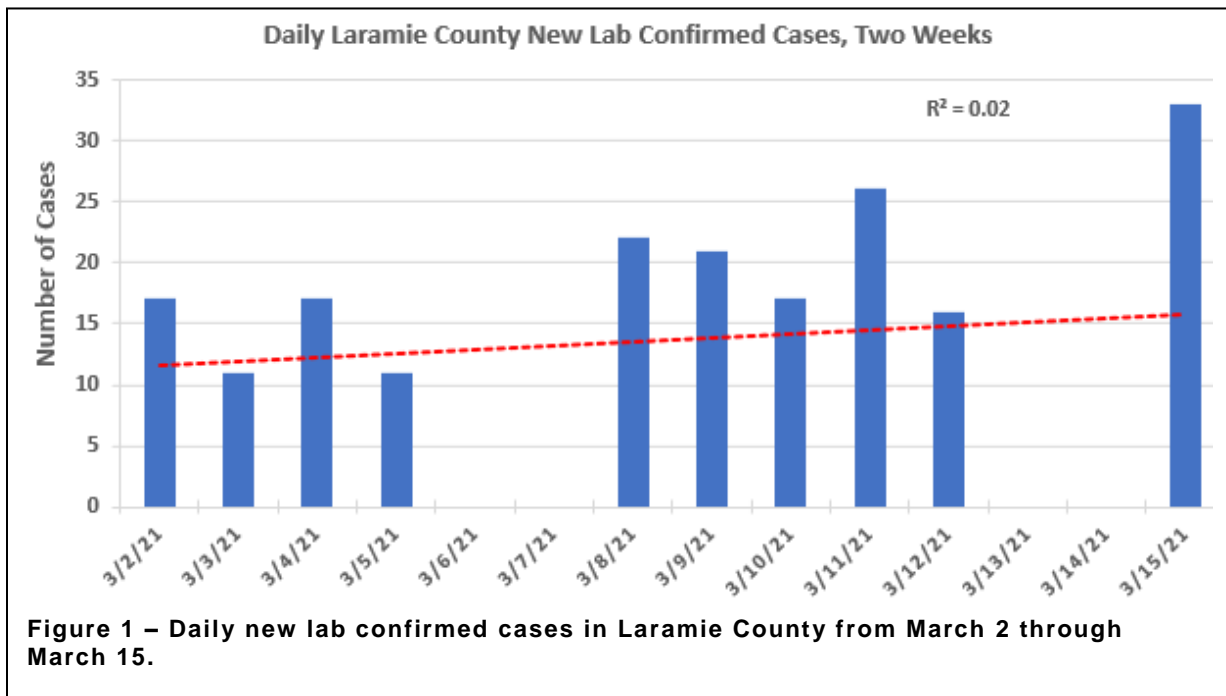


Figure 1 – Daily new lab confirmed cases in Laramie County from March 2 through March 15.

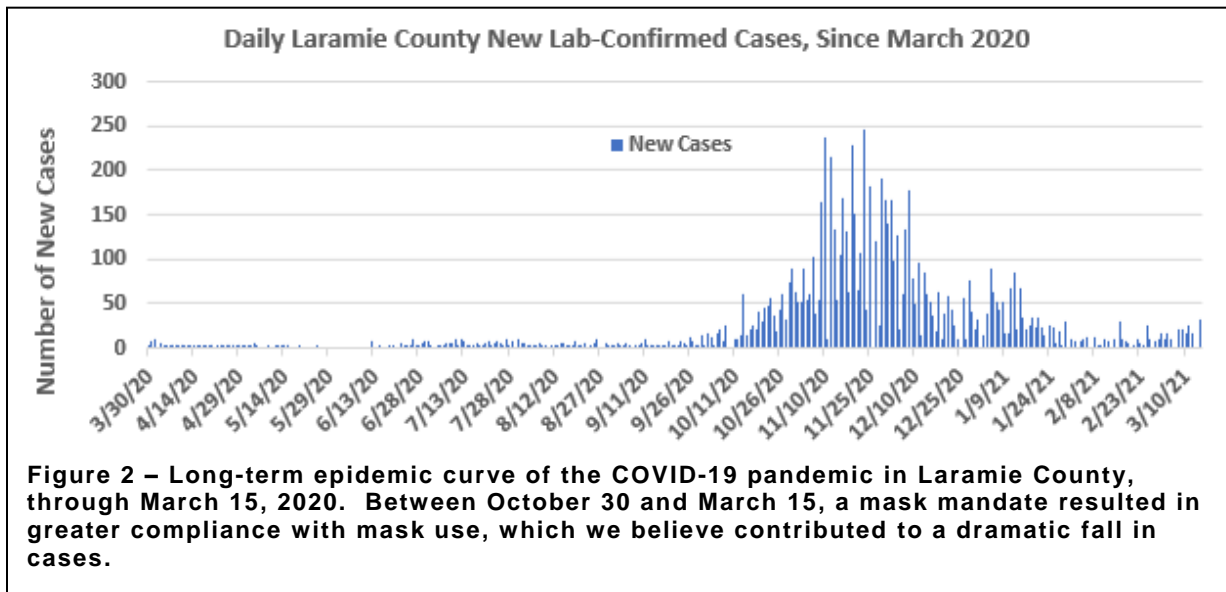


Figure 2 – Long-term epidemic curve of the COVID-19 pandemic in Laramie County, through March 15, 2021. Between October 30 and March 15, a mask mandate resulted in greater compliance with mask use, which we believe contributed to a dramatic fall in cases.

2. Percentage of cases due to community spread

“Community spread” is defined as cases who have no identified contact with another lab-confirmed case, and therefore are assumed to have contracted the disease due to a random contact. As of March 13, 30.1% of cases in Laramie County were due to community spread, with infected individuals not able to identify a known contact. This has been constant for several months.

3. Total hospital admissions due to COVID-19

As of March 16, 2020, there were only 4 patients hospitalized at CRMC due to COVID-19, with three of those on life support. The virus is still there and is still dangerous.

These lower numbers are nevertheless encouraging, and a significant improvement. By comparison, during November and December 2020, there were as many as 65 patients in the hospital with COVID-19, nearly a dozen on life support.

4. Percentage of ICU beds occupied by COVID-19 patients

CRMC has a 15-bed ICU and as of March 16, three of these beds were occupied by COVID-19 patients, for an ICU occupancy rate of 20% by COVID-19 patients. On December 1, 2020 87% of the ICU beds at CRMC were occupied by COVID-19 patients.

5. Percentage of COVID-19 tests that are positive

With increased testing, we expect to find more positives. Therefore, the **percentage** of tests that are positive is a better indicator of overall disease activity than the total number of tests. On December 5, 14.9% of all COVID-19 tests in Laramie County were coming back positive. As of March 16, the two-week rolling average of test positivity in the County was down to only 2.27%, up slightly from February 13 when it was only 1.22%. It is too early to say whether this is a positive trend.

Laramie County Stoplight Report

Figure 3 shows the current “stoplight report” for Laramie County. Metrics that move into the “red” column would suggest heightened concern and the need for public education, and perhaps consideration of new restrictions – although **renewed restrictions, at this point, would be a measure of last resort**. Continuing with our aggressive vaccination process would remain a top priority.

Metrics in the “yellow” column suggest caution, but do not necessarily preclude relaxation of restrictions. Metrics in the “green” column suggest a more favorable outlook, with the possibility of relaxing some restrictions on activities, if appropriate.

Ongoing adherence to the use of face coverings in public, hand washing and social distancing are still recommended.

County Metrics	GREEN LIGHT Improving Metric	YELLOW LIGHT Cautionary Metric	RED LIGHT Danger Metric
County level epidemic curve		X	
Percentage of cases due to community spread		X	
Total hospital admissions due to COVID-19	X		
Percentage of ICU beds occupied by COVID-19		X	
Percentage of COVID-19 tests that are positive	X		

Figure 3 – Laramie County dashboard report as of February 14, showing improvement in several key pandemic conditions in the County.

Since the last report, two of the metrics have shifted to the “yellow” column. The county-level epidemiologic curve (**Figure 1 on page 5**) and the percent occupancy of the ICU by COVID-19 patients have both shown a small but worrisome increase in the last two weeks.

This is a cause for concern, but not alarm.

We emphasize that numerous metrics in the “green” column do not necessarily mean that we can start dropping precautions and return quickly to pre-pandemic normalcy.

However, the improving pandemic situation makes it possible to relax restrictions further, although we remain concerned about a possible surge in new cases with those relaxations, and with the advent of new viral variants.

Section 5 – Statewide Orders

There are two (2) statewide orders in force that are issued under the emergency proclamation signed by Governor Gordon in March 2020, and they apply to most counties in Wyoming (some counties have variances based on local conditions). The State modifies the orders as needed to adapt to the changing pandemic situation.

The Wyoming Attorney General (AG) reviews all state and county public health orders to assure compliance with legal and constitutional standards. Any county orders (currently there are none) undergo additional scrutiny by the County Attorney prior to the review by the State AG.

The current orders are posted on the Wyoming Department of Health web site at <https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/infectious-disease-epidemiology-unit/disease/novel-coronavirus/covid-19-orders-and-guidance/>.

They are also posted on the C/LCHD web site at https://www.laramiecounty.com/departments/health/coronavirus_info.aspx.

The main points of the current orders are summarized in “*Section 2 – What’s New This Time?*” on page 2.

Section 6 – Vaccinations

Vaccination Sites in Laramie County

Figure 4 below is current as of March 16, 2021. More sites are currently being added. Updated information can be found at the C/LCHD web site:

<https://www.laramiecounty.com/departments/health/pdfs/2021/Vaccine%20Locations.pdf>

Laramie County Vaccine Distribution	
<p style="background-color: yellow; display: inline-block; padding: 2px 5px;">Available to residents in Phase 1A and Phase 1B</p> <p>Laramie County is vaccinating all subgroups of Phase 1B. Providers with further criteria are highlighted below.</p> <p>For detailed Wyoming Department of Health phases and subgroups please visit HERE.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ALL LOCATIONS BY APPOINTMENT ONLY NO WALK-INS</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>North Star Pharmacy and Infusion</u> 7121 Commons Dr 82009 Scheduling: Please call 307-637-4300 or visit HERE.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Safeway/Albertsons</u> All three Laramie County locations Scheduling: Please register HERE.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Walmart Pharmacy</u> 2032 Dell Range Blvd/ 580 Livingston Ave Scheduling: Please register HERE.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Sam’s Club Pharmacy</u> 1948 Dell Range Blvd 82009 Scheduling: Please register HERE.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Stitches Acute Care</u> 2001 Central Ave 82001 Scheduling: Please call 307-829-7850 or 307-829-7849 or email info@stitchescare.com</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>HealthReach Urgent Care</u> 2030 Blue Grass Cir 82009 Scheduling: Please register HERE.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cheyenne Regional Medical Group</u> 800 E 20th St, Suite 250 82001 Scheduling: Please call 307-432-5037</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>UW Family Medicine</u> 820 E 17th St 82001 Scheduling: Please call 307-632-2434</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cheyenne-Laramie County Health</u> 100 Central Ave 82007 Scheduling: Many appointments full. Other locations likely have earlier available dates. Schedule HERE.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Affinity Family Practice</u> 903 S Greeley Hwy Suite A 82007 Scheduling: Please call 307-514-1523</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Pine Bluffs Health Clinic</u> 117 E 4th St Pine Bluffs 82082 65+ Existing patients and all subgroups of 1B Scheduling: Please call 307-245-3666</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Babson and Associates</u> 1331 Prairie Ave Suite 1 82009 65+ Existing patients and all subgroups of 1B Scheduling: Please call clinic at 307-632-0728</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cheyenne VA Hospital</u> 2360 E Pershing Blvd 82001 Eligible Veterans Scheduling: Please call 307-778-7550 option 8</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>HealthWorks</u> 2508 E Fox Farm Rd 82007 65+ Existing patients and all subgroups of 1B Scheduling: Please call 307-635-3618</p>

Figure 4 – Approved vaccination sites in Laramie County as of March 16, 2021. All locations offer vaccinations by appointment only, as vaccine supplies permit.

Vaccination Overview

Vaccinations continue in Wyoming and Laramie County with two approved vaccines, and a third vaccine from Johnson & Johnson has received Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) and is currently available. As of March 15, nearly 30,000 doses of vaccine have been given in Laramie County, with nearly 40% of those being second doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine.

Numerous vaccination sites for the general population are currently approved in Laramie County, as shown in Figure 4, and more are being added. C/LCHD will keep a current list of vaccination sites on its web site at:

https://www.laramiecounty.com/departments/Health/_pdfs/2021/Vaccine%20Locations%201.2.pdf.

C/LCHD also has an interactive web page at: <https://covid19-clcgisc.hub.arcgis.com/pages/vaccination-information>.

The Wyoming Department of Health has extensive information on the state vaccination program available at: <https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/immunization/wyoming-covid-19-vaccine-information/>

Although the supplies of vaccines for Wyoming and Laramie County remain limited, we expect the supply chain to speed up quickly. The Cheyenne/Laramie County Health Department and its community partners are committed to making vaccine available to the people of Cheyenne and Laramie County as soon as doses become available.

Even fully vaccinated individuals are urged to continue mask use when in public.

Section 7 – Variance Requests

None of the current public health orders require the complete closure of any businesses or organizations, although the worsening pandemic situation has caused the state to impose some new limits on gathering sizes in general, and certain hours of operation (for bars and restaurants). Some businesses and organizations may still find the current restrictions unduly onerous.

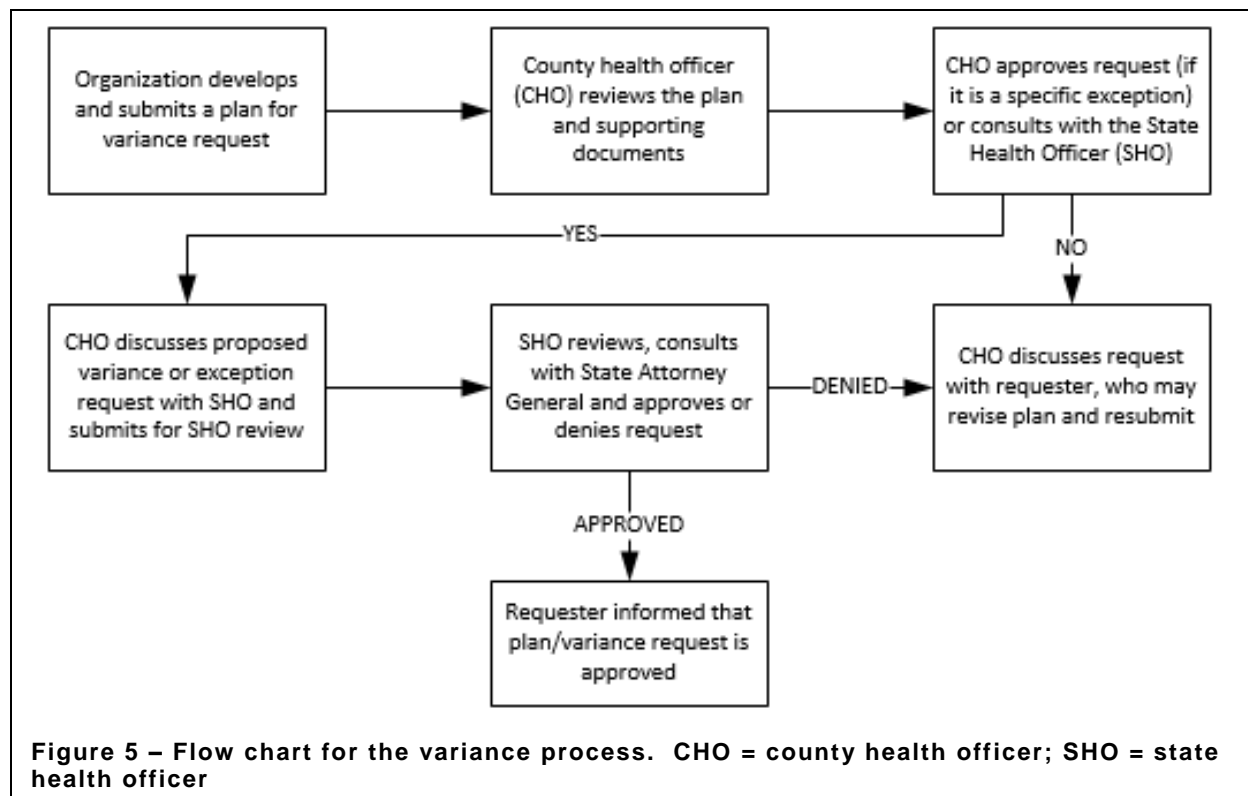
There is a procedure for requesting a county-wide variance or exception request. **However, before requesting a variance, businesses and organizations should contact C/LCHD to find out if current pandemic conditions make a variance feasible.**

The Health Department is currently calling a temporary moratorium on variance requests until the pandemic situation stabilizes, but hopes to resume considering variance requests soon.

In the meantime, organizations should develop a plan to operate effectively under the current orders. Some examples of possible approaches may include:

- Changes to the prior business model to make it more adaptable to the current reality
- Re-engineering key processes to minimize disease risk and maximize safety of staff and clientele, while allowing the business to operate efficiently
- Re-arranging or redesigning work areas to increase capacity and maintain safety

As soon as it is feasible to begin considering variance and exception requests, Figure 5 shows how the process will flow.



Section 8 – Definitions

- Community spread – cases appearing in patients who, after contact tracing, have no identifiable contact with someone with COVID-19.
- Contact tracing – a primary intervention by public health to mitigate the spread of disease. It consists of interviewing individuals with a contagious disease, eliciting that person's social contacts, and following up with those individuals for symptom monitoring, counseling, and referral for appropriate treatments and services. This activity is a cornerstone of public health practice.
- Masks and face coverings – These refer to any fabric covering of the lower face including the mouth and nose. Overwhelming evidence indicates effectiveness in reducing the spread of coronavirus. Masks are especially important when social distancing cannot be maintained.
- SARS-CoV-2 – a short form of “Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2”, the name of the virus that causes COVID-19. COVID-19 is the name of the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2. The term COVID-19 is an acronym for **C**orona **V**irus **D**isease 2019, for the year it first emerged.
- Social distancing – the practice of staying at least six feet away from other people while in public, except for others who share the same household. Because the virus that causes COVID-19 is transmitted through the air and on contaminated surfaces, social distancing (along with frequent cleaning and hand hygiene) is a primary method for preventing spread of the disease.
- High-risk populations at risk for severe COVID-19 disease:
 - Persons 65 years or older, regardless of baseline state of health.
 - Individuals with underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune system is compromised (such as by cancer therapy, or certain medical conditions).