

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kristin Prelipp, Communications Manager and
Public Information Officer

kprelipp@orangecountync.gov or (919) 245-2462

[LINK TO MEDIA RELEASE](#)

Orange County Moves to “Safer at Home” Phase Two

HILLSBOROUGH, N.C. May 21, 2020 –Governor Roy Cooper announced Wednesday that North Carolina will take a cautious step toward Phase Two of its reopening plan, effective at 5 p.m. on Friday, May 22nd. Phase Two lifts the Stay At Home order and moves the state into a “Safer At Home” recommendation, especially for people at high risk for serious illness.

Orange County Health Director Quintana Stewart said, “A crowd is still going to be a dangerous thing until we are further along in defeating this virus. It’s something we need to continue to avoid. The best defense against this virus, until there is a vaccine, is physical distance from other people. We know those who are infected do not always show symptoms so we must all be vigilant.”

Orange County Board of Commissioners Chair Penny Rich said, “The responsibility to reopen our community in a smart manner is on all of us as individuals. This disease is still affecting people in Orange County, and we know the virus does not care about county lines. Even as we open, people should be wearing face coverings, staying 6 feet apart from others, and continuing to wash their hands frequently – these are keys to our success moving forward.”

The order allows restaurants to open at reduced capacity and also allows personal care, grooming, tattoo shops, and swimming pools to open with distancing and cleaning requirements.

The Orange County Emergency Declaration differs from the state order by:

- Requiring restaurant, personal care, grooming, tattoo and retail employees and staff to wear a face covering while on duty. This requirement does not apply to people whose religious beliefs prevent them from wearing a face covering, people who cannot wear a face covering due to a medical or behavioral condition, and people who are under twelve years of age.
- Recommending that all businesses require customers to wear a face covering while inside the business.
- Tables at restaurants are limited to no more than six people (the state order allows up to 10). However, more than six people may sit together at the same table if they are members of the same household.

- Clarifying that meetings of public bodies (such as elected or appointed boards, commissions or councils) are limited to no more than 10 people indoors. Worship services, spiritual gatherings, weddings, and funerals are exempt from this restriction.

Face Coverings in Public

The state's executive order strongly recommends that people wear a cloth face covering on the nose and mouth when they leave home and may be within six feet of other people who are not household and family members. This would include indoor community, public, and business settings. These coverings function to protect other people more than the wearer. Face coverings should also be worn outdoors when you cannot stay at least six feet away from other people.

Some populations experience increased anxiety and fear of bias and being profiled if wearing face coverings in public spaces, but everyone should adhere to this guidance without fear of profiling or bias. If someone is the target of ethnic or racial intimidation as the result of adhering to the protective nose and mouth covering guidance or as a result of the pandemic, they are encouraged to report the matter to local law enforcement agencies.

Mass Gatherings

The Executive Order maintains a limit of 10 people for mass gatherings indoors but exempts worship services, spiritual gatherings, weddings and funerals. The limit on mass gatherings is expanded to 25 for outdoor gatherings. Physical distancing requirements remain in place.

Bars, bowling alleys, movie theaters, gyms, exercise facilities, museums, nightclubs and other locations must remain closed. However, gyms may conduct outdoor activities in groups of 25 or smaller while meeting the physical distancing requirements.

The order allows indoor and outdoor swimming pools to open, with capacity restrictions, and provides guidance for day and overnight summer camps.

The order allows public parks and trails to open and that individual groups cannot exceed the limit of 25 for outdoor mass gatherings. Playgrounds remain closed, including those in public parks.

Helpful Links

- NCDHHS Guidance for various sectors: <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/guidance>
- FAQ about the Executive Order from the Governor: <https://files.nc.gov/governor/documents/files/Phase-2-FAQ.pdf>
- Executive Order 141: <https://files.nc.gov/governor/documents/files/EO141-Phase-2.pdf>
- Amendment to the Declaration of State of Emergency in Orange County: <https://www.orangecountync.gov/DocumentCenter/View/11163/Orange-County-Declaration-5-21-20-Amendment-v4>

- Frequently Asked Questions on Cloth Face Coverings: <https://files.nc.gov/ncdhhs/documents/files/covid-19/FAQs-Cloth-Face-Coverings.pdf>
- Shopping tips: <https://assets.hillsboroughnc.gov/media/documents/temporary/shopping-tips-NrlootKuEBJdJRB1.pdf>
- Takeout tips: <https://assets.hillsboroughnc.gov/media/documents/temporary/takeout-tips-ZPMvPNfkKuZHxdoz.pdf>

Additional Tips to Flatten the Curve

To lower the risk of spreading respiratory infections, including COVID-19, the Orange County Health Department also encourages everyone to:

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid contact with sick people.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Call your doctor if you are experiencing symptoms.

Face coverings are recommended when you leave the house and may be near other people who are not family or household members.

Reliable Information

For the latest information and guidance relating to Orange County's COVID-19 response:

- Visit www.orangecountync.gov/coronavirus.
- Receive daily text updates on the crisis by texting 888-777 with OCNCEALTH for English speakers and OCNCSALUD for Spanish speakers.
- Sign up for a twice weekly e-newsletter about the COVID-19 response via the [county website](#).
- Follow the Orange County Health Department on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
- The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services updates its [COVID-19 case count dashboard](#) daily at 11 a.m.

###