

Grow Wabash County COVID-19 Updates; March – December 2020

Sunday, 12/27: President signs second COVID-19 relief bill

After much debate, President Donald Trump signed a second COVID-19 relief package that will include \$600 Economic Impact Payments to be sent to American citizens in the coming days. The package will also include another round of the Paycheck Protection Program with expanded eligibilities for non-profits and other types of businesses.

For more information about this second stimulus package, visit the [IRS' Economic Impact Payments page](#).

Wednesday, 12/16: State urges safety during holidays, outlines early vaccine roll-out plans

During Gov. Eric Holcomb's weekly press conference on Wednesday, Dec. 16, Indiana State Health Commissioner, Dr. Kristina Box urged Hoosiers to continue to be vigilant and observant of social distancing guidelines as the holidays begin. As of Tuesday, Dec. 15, Wabash County remains an ORANGE county with a 7-Day positivity rate of 13.87%

As a reminder this requires gatherings, regardless of if they are indoor or outdoor, can only be limited to 50 people maximum and no exceptions will be made by local health departments to expand the capacity. Masks are also requires under the statewide mandate.

For more information, visit the [ISDH COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

Dr. Box also announced during the press conference, that the state of Indiana has received its first round of COVID-19 vaccines which are currently being administered to frontline health care workers. There are five hospitals that had the vaccine on Wednesday, but ISDH Chief Medical Officer Lindsay Weaver advised that the goal was to have vaccines in at least 50 hospitals by week's end.

Dr. Weaver also gave a clearer picture of what Hoosiers can expect regarding the vaccine. As of right now, vaccines are only being administered to frontline health care workers. The State of Indiana will take it cues from the federal government which will determine how many vaccines will be delivered to the state weekly and overall. Both Drs. Weaver and Box urged Hoosiers to be patient as they administer vaccines to those on the frontlines and essential workers, and that will likely take until spring at the earliest to make the vaccine widely available to the general public.

For more information about the COVID-19 Vaccines, visit the ISDH's [Vaccine Information and Planning page](#).

In the meantime, according to Dr. Box, Hoosiers must not loosen up their vigilance. She emphasized that the arrival of a vaccine does not mean all other precautions can be ignored. Hoosiers are still expected to socially distance, wear masks, stay home when sick and get tested when necessary.

Wednesday, 12/9: Wabash County classified as "orange" county, Holcomb implements crowd restrictions

Updated data from the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) sees Wabash County currently classified as an orange county with a composite score of 2.5. In regards to capacity, Wabash County must limit the number of people in close proximity, indoor or outdoor, to 50 people.

During Gov. Eric Holcomb's weekly press conference this afternoon, local health departments are no longer allow to give exceptions to event organizers that expect more than 50 people to attend an indoor or outdoor gathering.

For more information, visit the [ISDH COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

Wednesday, 11/25: Wabash County classified as "red" county by ISDH

Per data from the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH), Wabash County has been classified as a red county due to its rising case count and a positivity rate of 16.09%

As a result, Wabash County must follow certain guidelines pertaining to crowd sizes.

The requirements for Red Counties include:

- Social gatherings, inside or outside, may not exceed 25 people.
- Events expecting more than 25 people MUST submit a safety event plan to the local health department for approval.
- All businesses are required to place signage at all entrances to inform customers and employees that masks are required.
- Businesses should only allow entry and service to customers wearing masks.

For more information, visit the [ISDH COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

Wednesday, 11/11: Holcomb announces new restrictions in light of spike in COVID-19 positivity rates

During his weekly press conference, the newly re-elected Gov. Eric Holcomb gave insight into the current state of affairs in Indiana regarding COVID-19.

Since opening up the state to Stage 5 in late September, the positivity rate has jumped from 3.9% to 10.3%, per Holcomb. As a result, Holcomb announced that the State of Indiana will no longer be in Stage 5, and that specific restrictions would be placed upon counties based on their positivity rates that are identified as being "red" or "orange" counties.

This walk back, according to Holcomb and Health Commissioner Dr. Kristina Box, is due to Hoosiers "letting their guard down," meaning a lack of enforcement of the mask mandate, failure to follow social distance guidelines. As a result, hospitalizations for COVID are at an "all time high" with expectations that cases could as much as double in the coming weeks without proper action being taken.

As of Sunday, Nov. 8, Wabash County has been identified as an ORANGE county with a positivity rate of 7.4%. This number and color status is subject to change according to updated data.

The requirements for Orange Counties include:

- Social gatherings, inside or outside, may not exceed 50 people.
- Events expecting more than 50 people MUST submit a safety event plan to the local health department for approval.
- All businesses are required to place signage at all entrances to inform customers and employees that masks are required.
- Businesses should only allow entry and service to customers wearing masks.

The requirements for Red Counties include:

- Social gatherings, inside or outside, may not exceed 25 people.
- Events expecting more than 25 people MUST submit a safety event plan to the local health department for approval.
- All businesses are required to place signage at all entrances to inform customers and employees that masks are required.
- Businesses should only allow entry and service to customers wearing masks.

Monday, 10/26: City of Wabash announces drive-up COVID testing

The Indiana State Department of Health and the City of Wabash have worked together to provide increased access to COVID-19 testing for Wabash County residents.

Wabash County residents can get tested for FREE at the drive-up testing site located at 1360 Manchester Avenue in Wabash. People do not need symptoms or a doctor's referral to get tested. Insurance is not required to get tested.

The drive-up testing site will be open Oct. 27 - Oct. 31 as well as Nov. 3 - Nov. 7 from 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Wednesday, 9/23: Eric Holcomb announces Indiana will enter Stage 5

During his weekly press conference on Wednesday, Sept. 23, Gov. Eric Holcomb announced that in light of a continual drop of positivity rates across the state, Indiana will move into the fifth and final stage of the Back on Track Indiana plan. Holcomb stressed that even though capacities and crowd sizes have been loosened, Hoosiers should still be mindful when it comes to being in large crowds.

Holcomb also advised that a close watch is still being kept on positivity rates and numbers and should cases begin to rise again, the stage of opening may change.

The mask mandate still remains in effect as of this announcement.

Stage 5- Sept. 26 - Nov. 14

- Face coverings are required for all Hoosiers according to Executive Order 20-43
- Maintain social distancing of 6 feet, especially in public spaces and when you are in close contact with others who are not members of your household
- Wash your hands frequently; use hand sanitizer when hand-washing is not available
- Do not go to work or other locations when you feel sick or symptomatic
- Hoosiers 65 and older and those with known high-risk medical conditions should remain vigilant about protecting their exposure to COVID
- Limit gatherings with those outside of your household or regular social bubble
- Hoosiers who will be in contact with individuals 65 and older and those with known high-risk medical conditions should remain vigilant about exposure

[Download the full Stage 5 overview.](#)

Monday, 9/14: Applications OPEN for Wabash County small business grant funding

Grow Wabash County will grant out nearly \$200,000 in business grants made possible by \$160,000 of grant funding awarded from the [Office of Community and Rural Affairs](#) (OCRA) COVID-19 Phase II Response Program, coupled with \$40,000 committed to the grant program by the [Wabash County Commissioners](#).

The primary goal for these grants will be to help high risk businesses with long-term recovery efforts after COVID19 and the resulting restrictions that led to shutdowns and layoffs in many of our workplaces. These funds will focus on helping businesses retain low- to middle-income (LMI) jobs.

Grants will be awarded out in the amounts of \$2,000 to \$10,000 per qualifying business, based on employee counts and community impact. Grant funding can be used for working capital, continued operations, and/or to support remote work.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Must be located in Wabash County
- Must be a for-profit business.
- Must be a small business (100 employees or fewer) OR a "micro-enterprise" (5 or fewer employees, including owner)
- The collective batch of applicants must have at least 51% LMI jobs total.

**** NOTE:** Applicants not previously served by OCRA grant funding from the City of Wabash or Town of North Manchester will take priority.**

APPLICATIONS OPEN Now - October 2.

Step 1: [Complete the online application](#) to demonstrate your company's needs.

Step 2: [Complete the LMI Employee Survey](#) for EVERY employee.

Questions regarding this grant or the application process can contact Grow Wabash County by emailing info@growwabashcounty.com or by calling 260-563-5258.

Wednesday, 8/26: Gov. Eric Holcomb extends Stage 4.5 until Sept. 25

Governor Eric Holcomb announced during his weekly press conference on Wednesday, August 26, that Stage 4.5 of Indiana's Back on Track would be extended statewide until September 25. As such, there will be no changes to capacities, namely for bars, restaurants and entertainment venues.

Dr. Kristina Box, Commissioner of the Department of Health, reported that hospitalizations have continued to run higher than numbers reported in June, contributing to the state's decision to remain in Stage 4.5 for the next 30 days.

Dr. Box also informed the public that starting next Wednesday, a regularly updated, color-coded map outlining cases and positivity rates in each county would go live online to allow for up to date information and expected actions to be taken by the county.

Stage 4.5 August 27 - September 25

- Remote work encouraged as needed/where possible.
- Face coverings highly recommended. May be required in some businesses.
- Gatherings limited to 250 people with emphasis placed on following CDC social distancing guidelines.
- Outdoor visitation permitted at assisted living facilities, nursing homes.
- Restaurants allowed to operate at 75% capacity.
- Cultural sites, theaters, bars and nightclubs allowed to operate at 50% capacity.

[Download the full Stage 4.5 outline.](#)

Wednesday, 7/29: Indiana to remain in Stage 4.5 through August

During his weekly press conference, Governor Eric Holcomb informed the public that the State of Indiana would remain in Stage 4.5 through August 27. The mask mandate that went into effect on Monday, July 27 will also remain indefinitely.

Stage 4.5 July 4 - August 27

- Remote work encouraged as needed/where possible.
- Face coverings highly recommended. May be required in some businesses.
- Gatherings limited to 250 people with emphasis placed on following CDC social distancing guidelines.
- Outdoor visitation permitted at assisted living facilities, nursing homes.
- Restaurants allowed to operate at 75% capacity.
- Cultural sites, theaters, bars and nightclubs allowed to operate at 50% capacity.

[Download the full Stage 4.5 outline.](#)

Wednesday, 7/22: Holcomb to sign executive order mandating masks

Gov. Eric Holcomb has announced that he will sign an executive order that will require all Hoosiers ages 8 years and older to wear masks in public indoor and commercial spaces, on public transportation and outdoors when social distancing is not possible.

The executive order will go into effect Monday, July 27th.

Holcomb stated that the mandate will be signed in hopes that businesses and facilities will be able to stay open and the spread of COVID-19 will drop.

[Learn more about the Mask Up Hoosiers initiative.](#)

Wednesday, 7/15: Holcomb announces Indiana will remain at "Stage 4.5" for at least two more weeks

In light of recent upticks in additional cases of COVID-19 over the past few weeks, Gov. Eric Holcomb has announced that the State of Indiana will remain at "Stage 4.5" for what Gov. Holcomb emphasized would be for "at least" two more weeks.

This middle stage continues the capacity limits outlined in Stage 4 (see link below for chart) for local businesses and venues such as restaurants, bars and retail stores. The use of face masks and other PPE are still encouraged by Holcomb and State Health Commissioner, Dr. Kris Box.

[Download the full Stage 4.5 outline.](#)

Wednesday, 7/1: Holcomb puts brakes on state's full re-open scheduled for July 4

During his weekly press conference on Wednesday, July 1, Gov. Eric Holcomb announced that the State of Indiana will progress to "Stage 4.5" starting on Saturday, July 4, as opposed to fully opening the state as originally outlined in Stage 5, due to an increase in Hoosiers being hospitalized or admitted due to COVID-19.

This mid-stage will run from July 4-18 and will put a pause on expanding capacities for facilities such as restaurants, bars and entertainment venues, keeping them at the capacities outlined in Stage 4. Crowd sizes will remain limited to 250 people.

Holcomb emphasized that outdoor events such as fireworks displays, parades, etc. may still continue, but proper social distancing guidelines must be in place.

Wednesday, 6/10: Indiana to enter Stage 4 beginning Friday, June 12

During a press conference on Wednesday, June 10, Gov. Eric Holcomb announced that the majority of the State of Indiana, including Wabash County, will be able to move into Stage 4 of the [Back on Track Indiana](#) roadmap starting on Friday, June 12.

Stage 4 - June 12-July 3 (dates subject to change)

- Social distancing guidelines still encouraged.
- At-risk populations asked to remain cautious when in public, high-traffic spaces.
- Face masks optional.
- Social gatherings of up to 250 people permitted.
- Retail and commercial businesses may open at full capacity.
- Restaurants may open to 75% capacity.
- Bar seating permitted at 50% capacity.
- Bars and nightclubs may open to 50% capacity.
- Cultural, entertainment, and tourism businesses may open at 50% capacity. This includes museums, zoos, bowling alleys, aquariums, and like facilities.
- Recreational sports leagues and tournaments permitted.
- Employers may resume onsite work instead of remotely.

[Download the full Stage 4 outline.](#)

Monday, 6/8: Senate passes Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act

The United States Senate has signed the [Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act](#) into law. This act will adjust several aspects of the original Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) including extending the forgiveness period for PPP loans from eight weeks to 24 weeks, allowing recipients more time to expend the funds granted to them.

[Learn more about the PPP Flexibility Act.](#)

Tuesday, 6/2: Holcomb approves \$30 million for Small Business Restart Fund

Gov. Holcomb has approved \$30 million in federal funding for small business restart grants, to help accelerate the speed of economic recovery in the state. The grants will help small businesses by providing working capital to cover certain expenses related to the global pandemic.

Eligible Indiana small businesses can seek reimbursement for up to 80% of qualified expenses, such as rent/mortgage payments, utilities, lease payments for real or personal property, and safety investments, such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and infrastructure improvements.

Eligibility requirements:

- Business must be registered to operate in Indiana
- Business must have had less than 50 employees at of 12/31/2019
- Business must have had less than \$5 million in revenue in 2019
- Business must have been profitable in 2019
- Businesses must demonstrate a monthly revenue loss of at least 40% compared to pre-COVID-19 revenues
- Business must *not* have used funding from the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL), or Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

Small businesses that meet the eligibility requirements can be awarded up to \$2,500 or up to \$5,000 for each month in which the business demonstrates a revenue loss of at least 40 percent or of at least 80 percent, respectively, with grants issued up to \$10,000 per company. Of the \$30 million allocated to the fund, at least \$5 million will be reserved for certified minority- and women-owned businesses.

To better prepare the necessary information for the application, small business are encouraged to ready the following documentation:

- 2019 State of Indiana Tax Return
- Monthly Profit and Loss Statement (2019 and 2020)

- Form 1040, Schedule C (if sole proprietorship)
- Expense documentation if planning to use funding for:
 - Copy of paid mortgage statement or lease agreement
 - Copy of paid utility bills
 - Lease payment receipts for real or personal property
 - Receipt for safety improvements/PPE

Wednesday, 5/20: Gov. Holcomb announces majority of state to enter Stage 3 on May 22

During his regularly scheduled public address on Wednesday, Gov. Eric Holcomb stated that he felt with "comfort and confidence," that the majority of the State of Indiana will be able to transition to Stage 3 on Friday, May 22.

Stage 3 starting on May 22 will allow:

- Social distancing guidelines still encouraged.
- At-risk populations do not need to quarantine, but should remain cautious.
- Social gatherings of up to 100 people permitted.
- Retail and commercial businesses may open to 75% capacity.
- Movie theaters may open to 50% capacity.
- Gyms and fitness centers may open with restrictions and adherence to social distancing guidelines.
- Playgrounds, tennis courts, basketball courts, community pools and similar venues may open.
- Employers encouraged to continue to work remotely where possible.

[Download the full Stage 3 outline.](#)

Tuesday, 5/5: Grow Wabash County awards Duke Energy grant to two Wabash County businesses

Grow Wabash County and [Duke Energy](#) are thrilled to recognize two Wabash County businesses that have gone above and beyond to serve their community during this pandemic despite financial challenges.

In Wabash, the grant will be awarded to [Cannonball Lanes](#) in recognition of owner Cindy Solloway's efforts to make and donate face masks. Despite having sewn very little before the pandemic, Solloway felt as though making masks would be a great way to serve her community during this challenging time. So, she brought out the sewing machine and taught herself how to make the masks.

Solloway's project grew quickly and soon, she became one of the leaders of the "Wabash Strong" Facebook group that has made and donated dozens of masks to essential employees in Wabash County.

[Webb Pharmacy](#) in North Manchester will also receive a grant for its innovative actions to fill community needs throughout the pandemic. Not only has the compounding pharmacy provided access to necessary medications and prescriptions to its customers, but it has also become a source for critically needed personal protective equipment (PPE). Owner Harry Webb and store manager, Yi Yang, were able to successfully coordinate with Chinese PPE producers to increase local access to PPE.

The compounding pharmacy has also been making its own hand sanitizer to sell during the pandemic when quality antibacterial products like this have become hard to find. Webb advised Grow Wabash County that he intends to use the grant funds from Duke Energy to purchase more materials to make hand sanitizer as well as purchase more PPE so that he can donate both to essential businesses and employees that need it.

[Read the full press release here.](#)

Friday, 5/1: Gov. Eric Holcomb announces five-stage "Back on Track" Indiana plan

During his daily press conference on Friday, May 1, Gov. Eric Holcomb announced that the majority of the State of Indiana will be able to enter the second stage of "Back on Track" Indiana starting on Monday, May 4. The goal is to have the state fully open by July 4, but all dates are subject to change.

Stage 2 starting on May 4 will allow:

- Social gatherings of up to **25 people**, still observing social distancing guidelines.
- Restaurants may allow 50% capacity starting Monday, May 11
- Retail and Commercial and businesses may also allow 50% capacity starting May 4
- Salons, tattoo parlors, spas and the like may open by appointment only starting May 11
- Employees are encouraged to work continue to work remotely if at all possible.
- Places of worship may open starting May 8

****PLEASE NOTE:** During Stage 2, Hoosiers are expected to follow all social distancing guidelines. At-risk populations are still encouraged to self-quarantine for their safety.

Thursday, 4/30: City of Wabash, Town of North Manchester to distribute OCRA business grants

The Indiana [Office of Community and Rural Affairs](#) announced that BOTH the City of Wabash and the Town of North Manchester will each be receiving \$250,000 in grant funds to award to local businesses that have a majority of low to middle income (LMI) jobs. The funds may be used by the receiving businesses for working capital, expenses incurred by continuing operations and/or expenses incurred by transitioning the workforce to working remotely.

Applications are due Friday, May 15. Grants will be awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis

City of Wabash businesses [apply here](#).

Application details for the Town of North Manchester to follow.

[Read the full press release here.](#)

Monday, 4/27: FSSA announces additions to SNAP benefits program

During Gov. Eric Holcomb's daily press conference on Monday, April 27, the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) announced the launch of two new food assistance programs to respond to the growing need for food assistance due to COVID-19.

The two new programs that will be offered through the FSSA are:

SNAP-Pandemic

This will allow for the FSSA to extend benefits to families with children that receive free or reduced lunches during school, even if they previously did not qualify for those benefits. Families that have not used SNAP benefits prior will receive a new EBT card in the mail with the benefit pre-loaded onto it.

[Apply for SNAP benefits here.](#)

SNAP Delivery

Starting in mid-May, high-risk populations, such as the elderly, will have the option of receiving their SNAP groceries via delivery to their home. More information to follow.

Friday, 4/17: Holcomb extends "Stay At Home" executive order to May 1

During his daily public address on Friday, April 17, Gov. Eric Holcomb stated that he will extend the "Stay At Home" Executive Order to Friday, May 1. Holcomb also stated that there will be some additional revisions to the executive order when he signs it on Monday, April 20.

In the meantime, according to Holcomb, the state is consulting with various departments and sectors around the state to start developing plans for a "safe re-open," to ensure Indiana can open back up for business as soon as it is healthy and safe to do so.

Monday, 4/13: IRS to begin dispersion of Economic Impact Payments

Following the passage of the CARES Act, the IRS has stated that it intends to start rolling out the first round of Economic Impact Payments (commonly referenced as federal stimulus checks) soon. Details regarding the amount taxpayers will receive as well as how and when they will receive it can be found in our [Federal Stimulus Package section](#).

Answers to FAQs regarding the payments can also be directed to the IRS' [Economic Impact Payments Information Center](#).

Friday, 4/3: Holcomb set to extend "Stay At Home" executive order

On Friday, April 3, Gov. Eric Holcomb announced that he intends to extend Executive Order 20-08, better known as the "Stay At Home" Executive Order. The original order was set to expire on Monday, April 6, allowing Hoosiers to start their return to normalcy. In light of the growing number of cases of COVID-19 in Indiana as well as nationwide, Holcomb advised that the executive order would be extended to April 20.

Holcomb has stated that he has opted to address the quarantine order on a bi-weekly basis to allow him and other state officials to re-evaluate often and change course if need be.

[Read Executive Order 20-08 here.](#)

Thursday, 4/2: Holcomb signs order closing schools for remainder of the school year

During a press conference on Thursday, April 2, Gov. Eric Holcomb announced that all schools K-12 in Indiana would continue to do remote or "e-learning" days for the rest of the school year. As noted in [Executive Order 20-16](#), schools will only be required to complete 160 total school days as opposed to the traditional 180. The executive order also discusses teacher licensing processes and other educational matters.

Wednesday, 4/1: SBA Offers Disaster Assistance to Indiana Small Businesses Economically Impacted by the Coronavirus

The U.S. Small Business Administration is offering low-interest federal disaster loans for working capital to Indiana small businesses suffering substantial economic injury as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), SBA Administrator Jovita Carranza announced. SBA acted under its own authority, as provided by the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations (CARES) Act that was recently signed by the President, to declare a disaster following a request received from Gov. Eric J. Holcomb on March 17, 2020.

SBA Customer Service Representatives will be available to answer questions about SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan program and explain the application process.

For more information about the programs available to local businesses under the CARES Act, see our [CARES Act](#) section.

Download the full press release from the SBA [here](#).

Monday, 3/23: Gov. Eric Holcomb Signs "Stay At Home" Executive Order

On Monday, March 23, Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb addressed the state and outlined the next steps the State of Indiana must take regarding COVID-19.

Per Executive Order 20-08, as of Tuesday, March 24, people are asked to stay at home unless they are going to work or doing an "essential activity" such as caring for someone else, buying necessary food and supplies and/or seeking medical attention. Holcomb asks for people to stay home and work remotely if possible until Tuesday, April 7.

Operations at the state level will continue, but there will be restricted access to state and government buildings until April 7.

[Read the entire Executive Order 20-08 here.](#)

Also, as a reminder to our local restaurants and bars, the carry-out only policy is still in effect. Any business violating this policy are at risk of losing their food and beverage license. In light of these changing times, laws regarding carry-out alcohol sales have also been relaxed.

[Read more about the current carry-out policies here.](#)

For more information and updates from Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb regarding state mandates and recommendations pertaining to COVID-19 visit www.in.gov/coronavirus/

Questions regarding COVID-19, how to protect yourself and your loved ones, and how the Stay At Home executive order impacts you can be directed to the state's comprehensive [FAQ page](#).