

Public Health Madison & Dane County announce preparation phase to open up businesses in Dane County

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Today, Janel Heinrich, the Director of Public Health Madison and Dane County issued a “Forward Dane County Plan,” a road map for how and when our county will open its economy based on the progress the community makes on a series of metrics including our testing rate, our positivity rate and the prevalence of COVID-19 in the community.

Heinrich announced that as of today the county was entering a Preparation Phase, of a four phase plan. The Preparation Phase is a period during which businesses of all types to prepare to get back to work following public health guidance for their specific business sector.

“Forward Dane lays out what requirements will be in place during each reopening phase. The first step is a preparation phase, followed by three reopening phases, each with gradually less restrictive criteria. It also includes action steps by sector to make sure businesses and organizations are ready for reopening as soon as it’s safe to move to the next phase,” said Heinrich as she released a report detailing a phased reopening plan for all Dane County businesses. You can read the full [Forward Dane Plan](#) here.

The preparation phase allows most businesses to open for minimum basic operations and to enact the changes that will be required for the next Phase. Phase 1 allows many businesses and institutions to open at 25% capacity. Public Health estimates spending at least two weeks in each phase to assess the data and ensure

the changes did not cause an increase in cases. The metrics identified in Forward Dane will guide any decision making to speed up or slow down that timetable.

Some might ask, why not open all businesses right away? The data from Dane County looks very promising, but widespread community testing for COVID began just a week ago at the Alliant Energy Center, and we don't have enough results to know how prevalent the disease is in the community. Once we get that information, and if all the other metrics that will be used to guide the reopening look good, the county can move to Phase 1. (Anyone in the community can get tested for any reason, free of charge from 8:00-4:00 p.m. Monday-Saturday. [Click here](#) for more information.)

Also as part of the package of materials released today is a new public health order. The new [Prepare for Reopen Order](#) makes slight changes to the previous order Dane County issued last Thursday in response to the Wisconsin Supreme Court decision to strike down Safer at Home. When the court issued its decision it undermined the authority of the state Department of Health Services, but as Attorney General Josh Kaul clarified on Friday, the ruling did not undercut the authority of local health officials to "prevent, suppress and control communicable diseases" under a separate statute.

Dane County's new health order:

- Removes all restrictions on travel.
- Opens tennis courts and disc golf courses with certain limitations.
- Allows all businesses to perform minimum basic operations to prepare for a safe reopening.
- Includes requirements about hygiene, cleaning, and other protective measures that must be followed by businesses that reopen.
- Removes criminal penalty for violating the order.

Like everyone else, I am eager to reopen businesses and work towards normalcy, but we don't want to rush the process and have a spike in cases. We thank everyone in our community for their continued diligence and patience as we forge this path forward together—a path based on a foundation of science and data.

As we move through these phases it is very important that everyone remember the

basics, wash your hands, wear a face covering and remember we're in this together.