



MIKE DEWINE
GOVERNOR OF OHIO

WEEK IN REVIEW

Saturday, February 13, 2021

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine Week in Review

For the week ending February 12, 2021

Throughout the week, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Lt. Governor Jon Husted provided updates on Ohio's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other state initiatives.

On **Monday**, Governor DeWine announced that he is reaffirming his commitment to improving the safety of Ohio's roads by including provisions in his Executive Budget proposal that strengthen Ohio's distracted driving laws.

With limited exceptions, the Hands-Free Ohio provisions in Governor DeWine's budget proposal will make driving while handling any electronic wireless device a primary offense for adult drivers and will increase fines for drivers who habitually use devices while driving. In cases where a driver using a device causes serious injury or death, the penalties will mirror those of drunken driving.



"Ohio's current laws don't go far enough to change the culture around distracted driving, and people are dying because of it," said Governor DeWine. "Distracted driving is a choice that must be as culturally unacceptable as drunk driving is today, and strengthening our current laws will lead to more responsible driving."

Currently, using a hand-held electronic wireless device for any purpose is a primary offense for drivers under 18, and using a device for text-based communications while driving is a secondary offense for adults. This secondary enforcement prohibits law enforcement from stopping an adult driver using a wireless device to write, send, or read text-based communications unless the driver also commits a primary traffic offense, such as running a red light. There are no laws in Ohio prohibiting adults from driving while using wireless devices for other non-texting activities, such as watching or recording videos, taking or viewing photos, using apps, entering information into GPS navigation programs, dialing a phone number, etc.

On **Tuesday**, Governor DeWine announced progress toward the goal of getting K-12 students back into the classroom by March 1. In December, 45 percent of Ohio students were attending school remotely full-time, but as of this week, less than 15 percent of Ohio students are still attending classes completely online. Despite this progress, the pandemic has taken a toll on academic progress, as demonstrated in the Ohio Department of Education's fall 2020 enrollment report.

"This once-in-a-lifetime pandemic has impacted all of us, so it should be no surprise that it has impacted our children. But we should not panic, nor should we be surprised by the results of assessments," said Governor DeWine. "Instead, we should do what Ohioans have always done when facing a challenge – stay calm, roll up our sleeves, and work to solve the problem."

Governor DeWine asked school districts to work with their communities to help students advance and make up for any learning that may have been lost or delayed because of the pandemic.

Governor DeWine also requested that school districts design plans to meet the needs of the students in their districts that include ending the school year later than scheduled, beginning the new year early, or even extending the school day. Summer programs, tutoring, or remote options could also be considered. School districts should provide their plans to the public and General Assembly no later than April 1.

Lt. Governor Husted also highlighted a provision in the proposed Executive Budget that guarantees student access to a computer science education.

The "right to access" computer science classes would be defined as the statutory right of a student to be able to take a class either offered directly by their school district or through another provider of the student's choice. However, the program must be approved through the Ohio Department of Education.

"Every budget cycle presents an opportunity to distinguish ourselves as a state," said Lt. Governor Husted. "Coming out of the pandemic, the stakes are higher and the impacts more

consequential. We must rise to the challenge and commit to the work that will lead to an educational recovery that will echo economically for a generation.”

RENT ASSISTANCE

The Ohio Development Services Agency is now distributing \$100 million in federal funding to help low-income Ohioans who do not own their own home pay their rent, water, sewer, wastewater, electric, gas, oil and/or trash removal bills.

Ohioans can apply for assistance with outstanding balances dating back to March 13, 2020, assistance for future rent/utility payments once back bills have been made current, and assistance for future rent and utility assistance for three months at a time.

Eligible Ohio households must:

- Be at or below 80% of their county’s Area Median Income (varies by county and size of household);
- Have experienced a financial hardship due to COVID-19; and
- Demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

The funding, which was approved by the Ohio Controlling Board for distribution, will be divided among Ohio’s 47 Community Action Agencies. Ohioans can apply for assistance by contacting their local Community Action Agency. A list of agencies can be found at businesshelp.ohio.gov under Home Relief Grants.

MAINTENANCE COVID-19 VACCINE PROGRAM

Governor DeWine announced that Ohio's maintenance COVID-19 vaccine program plan to ensure residents and staff within nursing homes and assisted living facilities have continuing access to the life-saving vaccine is nearly complete. The plan will outline how nursing homes and assisted living facilities will move forward to vaccinate new residents, new workers, and workers who initially declined the vaccine but are now willing to be vaccinated. The plan will leverage existing relationships between nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and the pharmacies that regularly provide them with prescription drugs.

In preparation for the release of this plan, Governor DeWine urged administrators for long-term and assisted-living facilities to find out if their facility already has a pharmacy provider that can administer the vaccine. If the provider is not a COVID vaccine provider, they should determine if they intend to become one.

Since the pandemic began, individuals in long-term care settings, such as nursing homes and assisted living facilities, have been at the greatest risk of death from COVID-19. Over 50 percent of Ohio’s deaths have been individuals from long-term care settings.

To protect family members and loved ones in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, Ohio immediately activated the federal long-term care vaccination program in mid-December. First

and second doses of the vaccine have been administered in nearly all of Ohio's nursing homes and most of Ohio's assisted living centers.

Also on **Tuesday**, Lt. Governor Husted joined Youngstown State University President Jim Tressel and other state and local officials to highlight the Mahoning Valley's numerous multi-million-dollar initiatives to develop a skilled workforce to meet the growing needs of the region's emerging high-tech markets, including electric vehicle, battery, and additive manufacturing.

The news conference was held at the Excellence Training Center, now under construction on the YSU campus, and comes three weeks after the DeWine-Husted Administration announced a \$12 million community investment in the Mahoning Valley as part of General Motors' repayment of tax credit incentives. The investment includes \$5 million to YSU for workforce development and the creation of the YSU Energy Storage Innovation and Training Center.

The Excellence Training Center will provide high-tech space for students to learn machining, metrology, CT scanning, advanced mold making, additive manufacturing, and automation/robotics.

On **Thursday**, Governor DeWine announced that Ohio received a total of 214,525 first doses of vaccine this week. A total of 223,025 first doses are scheduled to arrive in Ohio during the week of February 15.

The federal retail pharmacy program will soon begin allotting doses to Ohio's more than 160 Rite Aid pharmacies. Vaccine distribution will also expand into all 194 Kroger pharmacies.

Those with specific medical conditions that put them at a very high risk of dying from COVID-19 will be eligible for vaccinations next week.

Ohioans born with the medical conditions outlined below, or those who were diagnosed in early childhood whose conditions continued into adulthood, will qualify to be vaccinated beginning on February 15.

Dr. Bruce Vanderhoff, chief medical officer at Ohio Department of Health, explained these conditions in more detail. His remarks are available on the [Ohio Channel's YouTube page](#).

Approximately 12,000 individuals with these severe medical conditions and developmental disabilities have already been vaccinated, and vaccinations of those in this group will continue.

NURSING HOME CASES

Governor DeWine announced that the number of COVID-19 cases in Ohio's nursing homes has dropped more than 77 percent since late November. This dramatic drop in cases follows Ohio's aggressive efforts to vaccinate residents and staff in Ohio's long-term care facilities.

As outlined in the chart below, there were 2,697 COVID-19 cases in long-term care facilities in Ohio during the week of November 29, 2021. During the week of January 17, there were 612 positive cases.

SCHOOL MODEL UPDATE

Governor DeWine shared the latest information on the number of school districts that are physically in school versus those that are fully or partially remote. As a condition to receive priority access to the vaccine, schools were required to commit to full or partial in-person learning by March 1. All but one school district in Ohio have committed to this plan.

OHIO PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY SYSTEM

There was no change in this week's Ohio Public Health Advisory System map. A county-by-county breakdown outlining the presence of COVID-19 in all of Ohio's 88 counties can be found on the [Ohio Public Health Advisory System's website](#).

APPRENTICEOHIO MILESTONE

Lt. Governor Husted shared that the ApprenticeOhio program has reached an important milestone. More than 5,000 Ohioans have officially graduated from the ApprenticeOhio program since the start of the DeWine-Husted Administration.

Ohio is currently ranked number one among states who run registered apprenticeships at the state level, and number four among states who run registered apprenticeships at the federal level. Many ApprenticeOhio programs are completed within two to four years.

ApprenticeOhio programs provide full-time work during the training period as well as competitive wages – allowing Ohioans to earn while they learn.

On average, apprentices in Ohio earn \$60,000 a year without racking up student loan debt. Ohio offers apprenticeship opportunities in traditional fields like construction and manufacturing, and non-traditional apprenticeship fields like IT and healthcare. Through this program, ApprenticeOhio program sponsors can grow their workforce, improve productivity, reduce turnover costs and increase employee retention.

More information can be found at [Apprentice.Ohio.gov](#).

Also on **Thursday**, Governor DeWine announced that Ohio Department of Health Director Stephanie McCloud signed the [Addendum to Director's Third Amended Order that Reopens](#)

[Restaurants, Bars, Banquet and Catering Facilities and Services to Dine-In Service, with Exceptions.](#)

This amended order reopens self-service food stations in restaurants, bars, banquet and catering facilities, and services, as long as specified COVID-19 protocols are met.

On **Friday**, Governor DeWine reminded school district officials who partnered with the state to make COVID-19 vaccine available to their teachers and qualified school personnel that they committed to returning to in-person learning by March 1st.

“The priorities of our vaccination program have been to save lives and to get our students back in classrooms. We know quite simply there is not enough vaccine. But we have prioritized vaccinating teachers in order to get students back in school, because too many are suffering academically and emotionally,” said Governor DeWine. “School districts should honor the voluntary commitment they made to their students, their teachers, and their communities and open their classrooms if they chose to make vaccinations available to their staffs. By prioritizing school personnel, fewer doses are available to our older or more vulnerable Ohioans.”

In December, 45% of Ohio students were in fully remote schools. Today, that number is 5.1%. The number of districts that are fully remote has moved from 219 in the first week of January to only 31 this week.

Also on **Friday**, Governor DeWine announced the appointment of Amy H. Lewis to the Greene County Court of Common Pleas, Juvenile Division.

Lewis, of Xenia, will assume office on March 1, 2021, and will be replacing Judge Adolfo Tornichio, who was appointed to the Greene County Court of Common Pleas, General Division.

As of Friday, there have been 934,742 confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 in Ohio and 15,136* confirmed and probable COVID-19 deaths. A total of 48,411 people have been hospitalized, including 6,917 admissions to intensive care units.

*The Ohio Department of Health is currently reconciling COVID-19 deaths, including about 2,500 in Friday’s count. This primarily impacts deaths occurring from November to December 2020. Newly reported deaths will be higher during the next few days as ODH completes this reconciliation.

In-depth data can be accessed by visiting coronavirus.ohio.gov.