

As COVID-19 cases explode, Iowa remains “open for business”

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11 November 2020

Iowa’s COVID-19 testing sites were closed for Veteran’s Day Wednesday, as the state braces for the collapse of its health care system due to an exponential rise in infections. The pause in testing comes a day after Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds, a Republican, held a press conference to announce new restrictions that will facilitate the spread of the coronavirus in Iowa, which has been unmitigated in the state since cases began spiking this fall.

In a state that has seen a 200 percent increase in cases over the last two weeks, the governor’s new regulations fall far short of the most basic precautions established in much of the United States. Iowa is being used by the most craven elements of the ruling class as an experiment in herd immunity.

Iowa had the third-highest rate of COVID-19 cases in the United States in the last week according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), with 621 new infections per 100,000 people. On Tuesday and Wednesday, Iowa added 4,421 and 4,764 cases, respectively. Over the past two days, Iowa’s statewide positive case rates have remained near 50 percent, with a 14-day rolling positive rate at 20 percent, indicating uncontrolled spread aided by a criminal lack of testing. Since March, 1,898 Iowans have died from COVID-19, including over 50 in the last 48 hours.

On Tuesday, Governor Reynolds announced new toothless regulations after refusing to implement a statewide mask mandate. The new regulations only require masks for gatherings of more than 25 people indoors or 100 people outdoors, with the exception of schools and some workplaces, most notably restaurants and bars, which remain open without any limits on capacity.

The new limits tacitly endorse mask-free indoor

gatherings under 25, which, according to University of Iowa epidemiologist Eli Perencevich, indicate that the Iowa Department of Public Health “does not know how the virus spreads.” Perencevich tweeted, “This will have a negative impact since it delays implementation of proven effective intervention.”

The rapidly growing spread of coronavirus threatens to quickly overwhelming the state’s hospital system, which is nearing 100 percent capacity and actively seeking to hire new health care workers. Despite the overwhelming strain on the health care system and on the paltry Test Iowa program, Reynolds indicated that state-sponsored testing centers would close Wednesday and wind down operations over the holiday week.

Reynolds claimed the current daily capacity for processing tests on the state level is now just 2348, down from a high of over 6,000. She continued, “if a Test Iowa site is full, please seek out other options,” before listing options that included buying tests at Costco, which are currently only available online, for \$130.

The governor also stressed “personal responsibility,” blaming individuals for the state’s high infection rates in pursuit of herd immunity. When asked to implement a mask mandate, Reynolds responded: “A lot of individuals have people who have had it and recovered. Our president did that.”

Mandated masks and social distancing apply only to “social, community, recreational, or leisure” activities, such as salons, barbershops and tanning facilities. Establishments such as bowling alleys, pool halls, arcades and children’s play centers were told only to socially distance and limit groups to eight people if not from the same household. Bars and restaurants remain open without limits on capacity. Reynolds dismissed questions that pleaded for the state to use emergency

money to support restaurant and bar closures, and said, “Iowa is open for business, and we intend to keep it that way.”

Schools in Iowa remain open for in-person classes as well, despite widespread infections and dangerous rates of community spread. To move to online learning, schools are still required to apply for waivers that are reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Iowa Department of Education. Masks are not required in schools, but according to Reynolds are “incentivized” by requirements to quarantine after exposure to the virus: “If everybody is wearing a mask in the classroom then you don’t have to quarantine.” In other words, school districts are not quarantining students who have been exposed to the virus if they were wearing masks.

Spread among school districts is not centrally documented in Iowa, and many schools have still not established trackers on the district level. News reports from around the state show that a growing number of school districts are moving to online instruction due to increased absenteeism, particularly in the Des Moines metro area, but also throughout the state. Educators and citizen journalists have been attempting to document the spread of the virus among Iowa school districts at IowaCovid19Tracker.org.

According to the site, across Iowa, 1,238 students and 719 staff are currently COVID-19 positive. In the Iowa City Community School District, the same city in which the University of Iowa is seeing a spike in cases after reaching over 100 cases per day in September, 132 students and 30 staff are currently COVID-19 positive, with 474 students and 92 staff currently quarantining.

Prisons and long-term care facilities are also seeing rampant spread of COVID-19. As of Tuesday, there are 490 cases at Anamosa State Penitentiary, 254 at North Central Correctional Facility and 440 cases at Clarinda Correctional Facility. Over the last week, COVID-19 cases in Iowa’s prison systems have doubled. Cases are also surging at Iowa’s long-term care facilities, with the state reporting 102 outbreaks as of Tuesday.

The data for Iowa’s COVID-19 positivity rates have come under fire from local journalists. According to the *Gazette*, the state has reported lower 14-day positivity rates for certain counties than can be verified by independent biostatisticians.

“The state reported Monday that Linn County’s 14-day positivity rate was 22.8 percent,” the *Gazette*

reported. “When the *Gazette* used public data reported on the state’s COVID-19 dashboard and followed the state’s formula ... the positivity rate was higher: 37.2 percent.” Incomplete and secretive test reporting at the state level, as well as retroactive, disappearing positive cases, have plagued Iowa’s schools as they attempt to monitor community spread.

Deaths will increase as Iowa’s health care system collapses from the surge in cases. As of Tuesday, infectious disease specialists at Des Moines-area hospitals have reported that all four UnityPoint Des Moines hospitals are at capacity, experiencing longer ER wait times and have canceled elective surgeries. Hospital workers report a severe shortage of staff, and at Tuesday’s press conference a state spokesperson reported an active search to quickly hire and train new nurses.

Iowa is behind only South Dakota and North Dakota for new positive cases. In North Dakota, COVID-19-positive health care workers are now allowed to treat patients due to staffing shortages in hospitals. As in much of the Midwest, Iowa’s health care system is at its breaking point due to the murderous pursuit of herd immunity by the ruling elite. Without the intervention of workers and students to shut down schools and non-essential businesses, the state’s health care system will collapse and deaths will rise sharply.



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