

LARAMIE COUNTY RECOVERY PLAN

Effective Date: February 15, 2021

This version supersedes all previous versions

Planning Subcommittee

Stan Hartman, MD, Laramie County Health Officer

Kathy Emmons, D. M., Director, Laramie County Health Department

Jeanine West, Director, Laramie County Emergency Management

Gunnar Malm, Chairman, Laramie County Board of Commissioners

Mark Rinne, DDS, Cheyenne City Council

IMPORTANT NOTICE #1

This version of the Recovery Plan is consistent with the Twenty-First Continuation of Statewide Orders effective February 15, 2021 and extending through February 28.

This version reflects the improving COVID-19 situation in the state and county, and presents, among other things, some relaxation in restrictions certain indoor and outdoor activities.

Events that fall outside current State orders also must be approved as “variances” by both the County and State Health Departments. This report contains a section on variances, and how to apply for one.

IMPORTANT NOTICE #2

Wearing a face covering or mask in public, when social distancing is not possible, protects members of society from infection as well as indicating a commitment to the safety of others.

The current statewide mask mandate in certain public places is still in effect and has not changed.

IMPORTANT NOTICE #3

Several new variants of SARS-CoV-2 have appeared and one of those (the UK variant) has been identified in Teton County. The Wyoming Department of Health is currently checking positive COVID-19 tests for the new variants by a process known as genome sequencing.

Viruses frequently mutate, so the appearance of new variants is not surprising. Currently, we know that these variants are more easily spread (i.e., more contagious). Whether they cause more severe disease is not yet clear.

We believe that the vaccines currently available in the U.S. elicit good immunity to the new variants that we are seeing in this country. Therefore, we are continuing with our current vaccination program and we will continue to make the vaccine widely available, as increasing supplies permit.

The appearance of these new variants does not change the public health response. Mask use (when in public areas), social distancing, hand washing, and vaccination are still the cornerstones of control.

More information on these variants is available on the CDC web site:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/index.html>.

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Section 1 – Background

The Cheyenne/Laramie County Health Department (C/LCHD) continues to follow the lead of the current statewide orders and guidance from Governor Gordon and the Wyoming Department of Health. The Twenty-First Continuation of these orders has been released and forms the basis for this plan in its current form.

The state-wide mask mandate, issued on November 7, 2020 by the Wyoming Department of Health, has also been continued. The state order supersedes the Laramie County mask mandate previously issued by the C/LCHD, and at this time only the state order is in effect.

Current Statewide Orders

Statewide Orders are periodically reissued and amended to reflect current COVID-19 activity in the state. The current orders are:

- Twenty-First Continuation and Modification of Statewide Public Health Order #1 Regarding Bars, Restaurants, Theaters, Gymnasiums, Childcare Facilities, K-12 Public Schools, Colleges, Universities and Trade Schools
- Twenty-First Continuation and Modification of Statewide Public Health Order #2 Regarding Gatherings of More Than Ten (10) People
- Twenty-First Continuation and Modification of Statewide Public Health Order #3 Regarding Nail Salons, Barber Shops, Massage Therapy Services, Tattoo, Body Art and Piercing Shops, and Cosmetology, Electrology and Esthetic Services
- Statewide Public Health Order #4: Requiring Face Coverings in Certain Places, With Exceptions

General Strategy

The strategy for relaxing restrictions in Laramie County (and Wyoming in general) continues to rely on four concepts:

- The need for life to return as close as possible to normal
- The need to do this as safely as possible
- Expanding vaccinations to as many people as possible, as quickly as possible
- Non-pharmacological mitigation methods, including social distancing, hand washing, and mask use – these still remain important

Pending vaccine availability, the state and county strategy has relied on these non-pharmacologic methods. Although unpopular, these methods are nonetheless effective when used together.

An October 2020 study from Vanderbilt University¹ looked at different counties in Tennessee that had varying degrees of compliance with virus mitigation, including mask use. Counties with better compliance had fewer hospitalizations and more economic activity (and consumer spending) than counties with less compliance. The study concluded that “the best way to manage the economic fallout is to definitively manage the virus using proven strategies that can break chains of transmission.” Better health outcomes also resulted.

¹ https://www.vumc.org/health-policy/sites/default/files/public_files/Vanderbilt%20COVID19%20Report-Oct%2027.pdf

Section 2 – What’s New This Time?

This section lists some highlights in the new orders. For further details or questions, we advise looking at the orders themselves, or contacting us at the health department. The orders are posted on the C/LCHD and WDH web sites.

Because control of the infection is improving, and hospitalizations are decreasing (although still higher than we like), the new orders contain certain relaxations of prior restrictions.

Order #1:

- **Further easing restrictions on restaurants and theaters.** Groups of up to 8 will now be permitted to sit together, up from 6.
- **Further easing of restrictions on gyms.** Remove the limit of 1 person per 120 square feet. Patrons must remain at least 6 feet during their workout.

Order #2:

- **Gatherings** (without required distancing between groups) are limited to 25 individuals (previously 10).
- Indoor events may allow up to 25% of venue capacity with a maximum of 500 people (up from 250). Groups of up to 8 will now be permitted to sit together, up from 6.
- Outdoor events may allow up to 50% of venue capacity with a maximum of 1,000 people (up from 500). Groups of up to 8 will now be permitted to sit together, up from 6.
- Participants in organized sporting events and artistic performances shall not congregate in groups larger than 25 individuals (up from 12).

Order #3: no changes

Statewide-wide mask mandate

- Still in effect, no changes. Much of the improvement in pandemic metrics in Laramie County can be attributed to the increased use of face coverings in public areas.
- **Therefore, the statewide mask mandate will remain in effect for the near future, as we roll out the vaccination effort.**

Section 3 – Current Status of COVID-19 in the US

Although COVID-19 continues to cause unprecedented economic and social disruption in the U.S., cases and hospitalizations are dropping considerably in most areas, including Wyoming.

This is a welcome development, but it is too early to declare the crisis over.

Here are some important national numbers as of February 14, 2021².

- Laboratory-confirmed U. S. cases: over 27.6 million.
- Confirmed U. S. deaths: over 485,000.
- While most people who contract COVID-19 recover, many require hospitalization, and many experience prolonged symptoms including shortness of breath, trouble concentrating (so-called “brain fog”) and other symptoms.

Mortality data for all causes, including COVID-19, come from death certificates completed by physicians who cared for the patients. Details are available at the National Center for Health Statistics: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/index.htm>.

For perspective, the table below shows the leading causes of death in the US in 2018³, with average monthly numbers calculated for 2018. Except for COVID-19, the 2018 numbers are expected to be representative of 2020 and 2021, except for COVID-19.

In December 2020, nearly 77,000 Americans died due to COVID-19⁴, which makes it ***the leading cause of death in the U.S.***, ahead of heart disease and cancer. This trend is expected to continue for the first part of 2021.

Ranking of leading causes of deaths, United States, 2018			
Cause	Yearly Deaths, 2018	Av. Monthly Deaths	Rank
Heart Disease	655,381	54,615	1
Cancer (malignant neoplasms)	599,274	49,940	2
Preventable injury	167,127	13,927	3
Chronic lower respiratory diseases	159,486	13,291	4
Stroke (cerebrovascular disease)	147,810	12,318	5
Alzheimer's Disease	122,019	10,168	6
Diabetes Mellitus	84,946	7,079	7
Influenza and pneumonia	59,120	4,927	8
Nephritis (kidney disease)	51,386	4,282	9
Suicide	48,344	4,029	10

Some other comparisons are:

- US deaths due to traffic accidents in 2018: 36,560⁵
- Combat casualties during the Vietnam War: 58,220⁶.
- Combat casualties in World War 2: 416,800⁷.

² Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

³ National Safety Council, <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/all-injuries/deaths-by-demographics/all-leading-causes-of-death/>

⁴ <https://covidtracking.com/data/charts/us-daily-deaths>

⁵ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, <https://www.nhtsa.gov/traffic-deaths-2018>

⁶ National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-statistics>

⁷ <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers/student-resources/research-starters/research-starters-worldwide-deaths-world-war>

Section 4 – Evolving Approach and Metric Overview

Wyoming’s Evolving Approach to COVID-19

Laramie County, and Wyoming in general, are currently relying on varying levels of restrictions while the vaccination program is being implemented. Vaccinations across Wyoming, and in Laramie County, have begun, but vaccine supplies are currently limited.

Two vaccines, made by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, are currently being administered in Wyoming. Other vaccines, including one developed by Oxford-AstraZeneca and another one developed by Johnson & Johnson, will probably become available in the next few months. See *Section 6 – Vaccinations* on page 9 for more information.

State-Wide Metrics

The Wyoming Department of Health (WDH) monitors a set of general state-wide COVID-19 metrics.⁸ There is no single metric that triggers a return to pre-pandemic activities. The metrics are continuously updated and provide a statewide snapshot of two broad areas:

- Overall disease and testing data
- Hospital capacity, including ICU bed availability

WDH also provides county-level data which will include:

- Percent of cases attributable to the risk factor referred to as “community spread”
- Daily lab testing volume
- Percent of positive test results
- Age group data
- Number of cases recovered
- Statewide hospital resources related to COVID-19. These are posted online at <https://sites.google.com/wyo.gov/exec-covid19/hospital-resources>.

Laramie County Metrics

The Cheyenne/Laramie County Health Department (C/LCHD) monitors various specific county-level metrics (goals) but in general will not move faster than current state public health orders allow.

There are five important county-level metrics that C/LCHD follows, and they are summarized here.

1. County-level epidemic curve – New Daily Cases

Figure 1 on the next page shows new daily lab-confirmed cases in Laramie County for the period from January 28 through February 10. A somewhat more revealing graphic is shown in Figure 2, which shows the longer-term trend over time. The large drop-off in cases since the surge in November coincides with improved compliance with the use of face coverings in public places – a key tool in controlling the spread of COVID-19. A mask mandate in Laramie County went into effect on October 30 and although not strictly enforced, mask compliance in public is good for the most part. This has contributed to a decrease in new cases of COVID-19.

⁸ Wyoming Department of Health, <https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/infectious-disease-epidemiology-unit/disease/novel-coronavirus/>

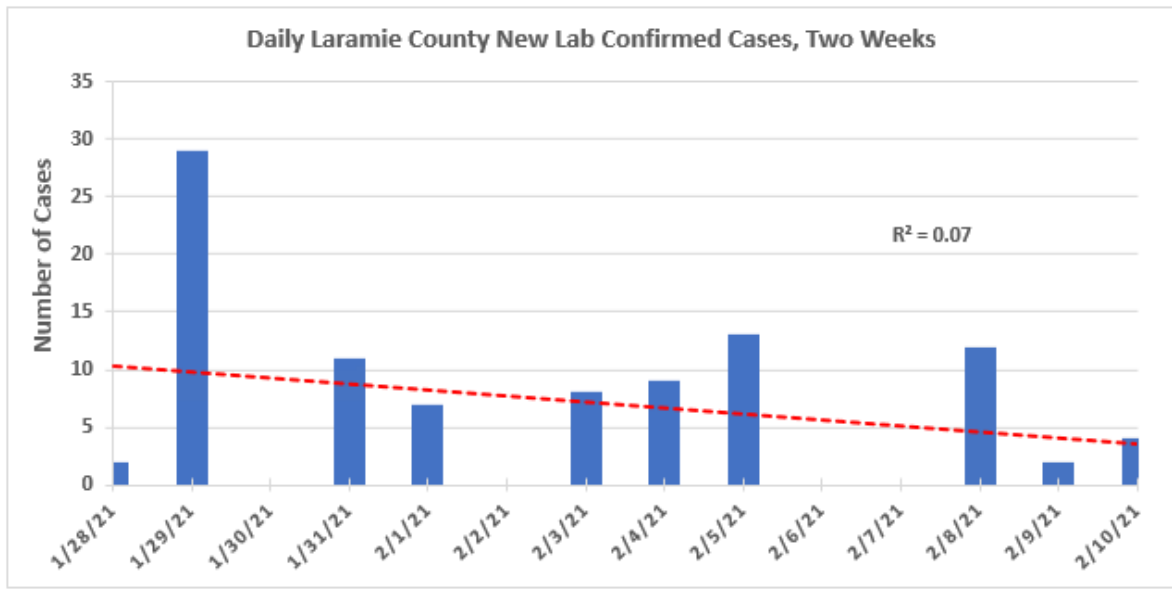


Figure 1 – Daily new lab confirmed cases in Laramie County from January 28 through February 10.

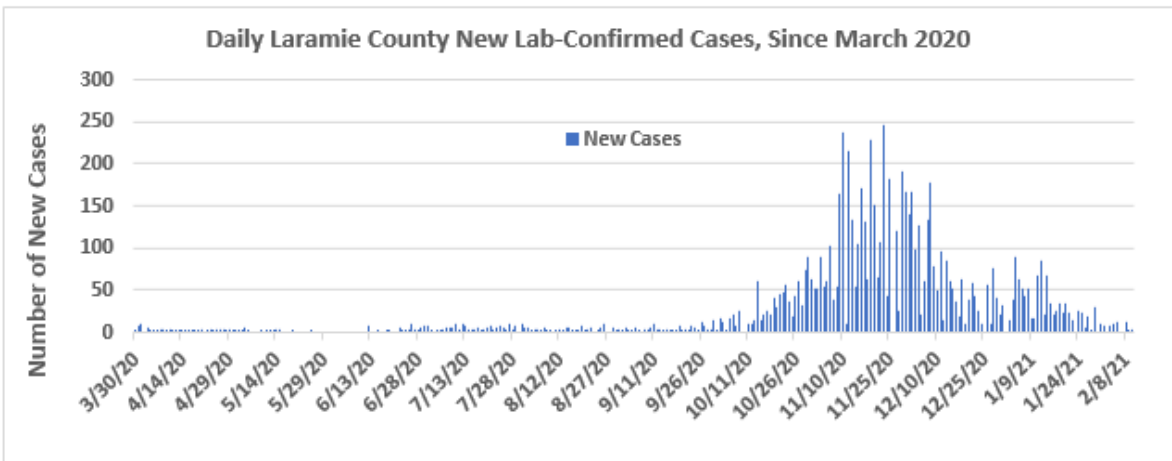


Figure 2 – Long-term epidemic curve of the COVID-19 pandemic in Laramie County, through February 10. Since October 30 a mask mandate resulted in greater compliance with mask use, which we believe has contributed to a dramatic fall in cases.

2. Percentage of cases due to community spread

“Community spread” is defined as cases who have no identified contact with another lab-confirmed case, and therefore are assumed to have contracted the disease due to a random contact. As of February 10, 29.7% of cases in Laramie County were due to community spread, with infected individuals not able to identify a known contact. This has been constant for several weeks.

3. Total hospital admissions due to COVID-19

As of February 14, 2020, there were only 7 patients hospitalized at CRMC due to COVID-19, with 2 patients in ICU and 1 on life support. This is the lowest number since early December,

and a significant improvement. By comparison, on December 1, 2020 there were 62 patients in the hospital with COVID-19, and 7 of these were on life support.

4. Percentage of ICU beds occupied by COVID-19 patients

CRMC has a 15-bed ICU and as of January 25, only two of these beds were occupied by COVID-19 patients, for an ICU occupancy rate of 13% by COVID-19 patients. On December 1, 2020 87% of the ICU beds at CRMC were occupied by COVID-19 patients.

5. Percentage of COVID-19 tests that are positive

With increased testing, we expect to find more positives. Therefore, the **percentage** of tests that are positive is a better indicator of overall disease activity than the total number of tests. As of December 5, 14.9% of all COVID-19 tests in Laramie County were coming back positive. As of February 12, the percentage of positive tests in the County was down to only 1.64%

Laramie County Stoplight Report

Figure 3 shows the current “stoplight report” for Laramie County. Metrics in the “red” column suggest the need for tightening of restrictions. Metrics in the “yellow” column suggest maintaining current precautions. Metrics in the “green” column suggest a more favorable outlook, with the possibility of relaxing some restrictions on activities, if appropriate.

Ongoing adherence to the use of face coverings, hand washing and social distancing are still important, and the use of face masks is still vital in Laramie County.

County Metrics	GREEN LIGHT Improving Metric	YELLOW LIGHT Cautionary Metric	RED LIGHT Danger Metric
County level epidemic curve	X		
Percentage of cases due to community spread		X	
Total hospital admissions due to COVID-19	X		
Percentage of ICU beds occupied by COVID-19	X		
Percentage of COVID-19 tests that are positive	X		

Figure 3 – Laramie County dashboard report as of February 14, showing improvement in several key pandemic conditions in the County.

We emphasize that numerous metrics in the “green” column do not necessarily mean that we can start dropping precautions and return quickly to pre-pandemic normalcy.

Metrics in the “green” column indicate effective pandemic response in those areas, and the need to stay on course while we roll out vaccinations widely. Prematurely dropping pandemic precautions could result in a resurgence of infections and hospitalizations and cause us to lose ground.

Section 5 – Statewide Orders

There are four (4) statewide orders in force (including the new state mask mandate) that are issued under the emergency proclamation signed by Governor Gordon in March 2020, and they apply to every county in Wyoming. The State modifies the orders as needed to adapt to the changing pandemic situation.

The Wyoming Attorney General (AG) reviews all state and county public health orders to assure compliance with legal and constitutional standards. All county orders undergo additional scrutiny by the County Attorney prior to the review by the State AG.

Below is a list of the statewide orders and the types of activities that they cover.

The orders are posted on the Wyoming Department of Health web site at <https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/infectious-disease-epidemiology-unit/disease/novel-coronavirus/covid-19-orders-and-guidance/>.

They are also posted on the C/LCHD web site at https://www.laramiecounty.com/departments/health/coronavirus_info.aspx.

The Laramie County Mask Mandate is posted on the C/LCHD web site at https://www.laramiecounty.com/departments/Health/coronavirus_info.aspx

In addition, many types of specific guidance documents are available on the WDH and C/LCHD web sites at the links shown above. Organizations should be aware of these, as they often provide practical details and clarifications that are not in the orders themselves.

Statewide Public Health Order #1 (Twenty-First Continuation)

This order covers the following organizations:

- Restaurants
- Bars
- Theaters
- Gymnasiums
- Childcare facilities
- K-12 schools
- Colleges and universities
- Trade schools

Paragraphs 10 and 11 on page 9 of State Order #1 provide details on exemptions and variances, and the relative roles of the county and state public health authorities.

Statewide Public Health Order #2 (Twenty-First Continuation)

This order provides guidance regarding the size of gatherings. The basic order prohibits gatherings of more than fifty (50) people, but there are numerous exceptions. Paragraph 4 on page 2 of State Order #2 lists specific activities exempted from the order. We will not list those here, but all businesses, organizations and event planners are encouraged to consult this list to see if their business or organization falls under an exemption.

Paragraph 5 on page 3 of State Order #2 allows indoor gatherings of 250 people or less, and outdoor gatherings to a maximum of 1,000 people, with some restrictions as spelled out in that paragraph.

Organizations and activities that are exempted in this order are still encouraged to follow safe practices for preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The virus behaves the same way whether it is in a church, a grocery store or at a livestock auction.

Paragraphs 6 and 7 on page 5 of State Order #2 provide details on exemptions and variances, and the relative roles of the county and state public health authorities.

Statewide Public Health Order #3 (Twenty-First Continuation)

This order covers the following types of businesses and activities:

- Nail and hair salons
- Barber shops
- Massage therapy
- Tattoo, body art and piercing shops
- Cosmetology, electrology and esthetic services

Paragraphs 4 and 5 on pages 3 – 4 of State Order #3 provide details on exemptions and variances, and the relative roles of the county and state public health authorities.

Statewide Public Health Order #4 (Second Continuation)

This is the state mask mandate, which currently covers Laramie County. Here are some frequently asked questions:

Question: Can I stop wearing a mask in public after I get vaccinated?

Answer: Unfortunately, no – at least not until a significant percentage of the population has been vaccinated. The vaccination offers 95% protection against getting sick with COVID-19 but does not necessarily prevent asymptomatic spread. This question is currently the subject of further research. Therefore, we are asking everyone to continue following all precautions (including mask use) even after receiving the vaccine.

Question: When can we quit wearing masks?

Answer: All of us are eager for the day when masks are no longer necessary. This could happen by late spring or early summer, depending on how soon widespread vaccination can be made available. We cannot give a specific date at this time.

Question: How much of the population needs to be vaccinated before all restrictions can be safely dropped?

Answer: As many as possible, as soon as possible. This question is currently being studied by the CDC⁹ and other scientific organizations, and recommendations will be made as soon as good data become available.

Question: Do public health staff like wearing masks?

Answer: No. They are inconvenient and mildly uncomfortable, but we still wear them when in public around others, because it is the right thing to do to slow the transmission of COVID-19 and keep the community safe. We will be very happy on the day when masks are no longer necessary.

⁹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html#accordion-6009c3b27c82e-card-4>

Section 6 – Vaccinations

Vaccination Sites in Laramie County

Figure 4 below is current as of February 12, 2021. More sites are currently being added. Updated information can be found at the C/LCHD web site: <https://www.laramiecounty.com/departments/Health/pdfs/2021/Vaccine%20Locations.pdf>

Laramie County Vaccine Distribution	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>North Star Pharmacy and Infusion</u> 7121 Commons Dr 82009 Available to 65+ Scheduling: Please call 307-637-4300 or visit HERE.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Albertsons on Yellowstone</u> 5800 Yellowstone Rd 82009 Available to 65+ Scheduling: Please register HERE.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Walmart Pharmacy</u> 2032 Dell Range Blvd/ 580 Livingston Ave Available to 65+ Scheduling: Please register HERE.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Sam’s Club Pharmacy</u> 1948 Dell Range Blvd 82009 Available to 65+ Scheduling: Please register HERE.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Stitches Acute Care</u> 1919 Central Ave 82001 Available to 65+ Scheduling: Please call 307-829-7850 or 307-829-7849 or email info@stitchescare.com</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Affinity Family Practice</u> 903 S Greeley Hwy Suite A 82007 Available to 65+ Scheduling: Please call 307-514-1523</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cheyenne Regional Medical Center</u> 2032 Dell Range Blvd/ 580 Livingston Ave Available to 65+ Scheduling: Please call 307-432-5037</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Babson and Associates</u> 1331 Prairie Ave Suite 1 82009 65+ Existing Patients Scheduling: Please call clinic at 307-632-0728</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cheyenne-Laramie County Health</u> 100 Central Ave 82007 Available to 65+ and subgroups 1-5 of Phase 1B Scheduling: Most appointments full. Many people will get in somewhere else sooner. Schedule HERE.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Pine Bluffs Health Clinic</u> 117 E 4th St Pine Bluffs 82082 65+ Existing Patients. Will start at oldest Scheduling: Reaching out to existing patients. For questions please call 307-245-3666</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cheyenne VA Hospital</u> 2360 E Pershing Blvd 82001 Eligible Veterans Scheduling: Please call 307-778-7550 option 8</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>HealthWorks</u> 2508 E Fox Farm Rd 82007 65+ Existing Patients Scheduling: Please call 307-635-3618</p>
<p style="background-color: yellow; display: inline-block; padding: 2px 10px;">ALL LOCATIONS BY APPOINTMENT ONLY NO WALK-INS</p> <p>Laramie County is currently working on Phase 1B of the WDH priority groups, primarily the 65+. The target population of each provider is bolded underneath their address.</p> <p>For the current Wyoming Department of Health phases please visit HERE.</p>	

Figure 4 – Approved vaccination sites in Laramie County as of January 22, 2021. All locations offer vaccinations by appointment only, as vaccine supplies permit.

Vaccination Overview

Vaccinations continue in Wyoming and Laramie County with two approved vaccines. As of February 12, approximately 12,000 doses of vaccine have been given in Laramie County, many of them second doses. C/LCHD has also vaccinated roughly 1,500 LCSD1 teachers and staff.

Numerous vaccination sites for the general population are currently approved in Laramie County, as shown in Figure 4, and more are being added. C/LCHD will keep a current list of vaccination sites on its web site at:

<https://www.laramiecounty.com/departments/Health/pdfs/2021/Vaccine%20Locations%201.22.pdf>.

C/LCHD also has an interactive web page at: <https://covid19-clcgisc.hub.arcgis.com/pages/vaccination-information>.

The Wyoming Department of Health has extensive information on the state vaccination program available at: <https://health.wyo.gov/publichealth/immunization/wyoming-covid-19-vaccine-information/>

Currently, the supplies of vaccines for Wyoming and Laramie County are limited. The Cheyenne/Laramie County Health Department and its community partners are committed to making vaccine available to the people of Cheyenne and Laramie County as soon as doses become available.

Section 7 – Variance Requests

None of the current public health orders require the complete closure of any businesses or organizations, although the worsening pandemic situation has caused the state to impose some new limits on gathering sizes in general, and certain hours of operation (for bars and restaurants). Some businesses and organizations may still find the current restrictions unduly onerous.

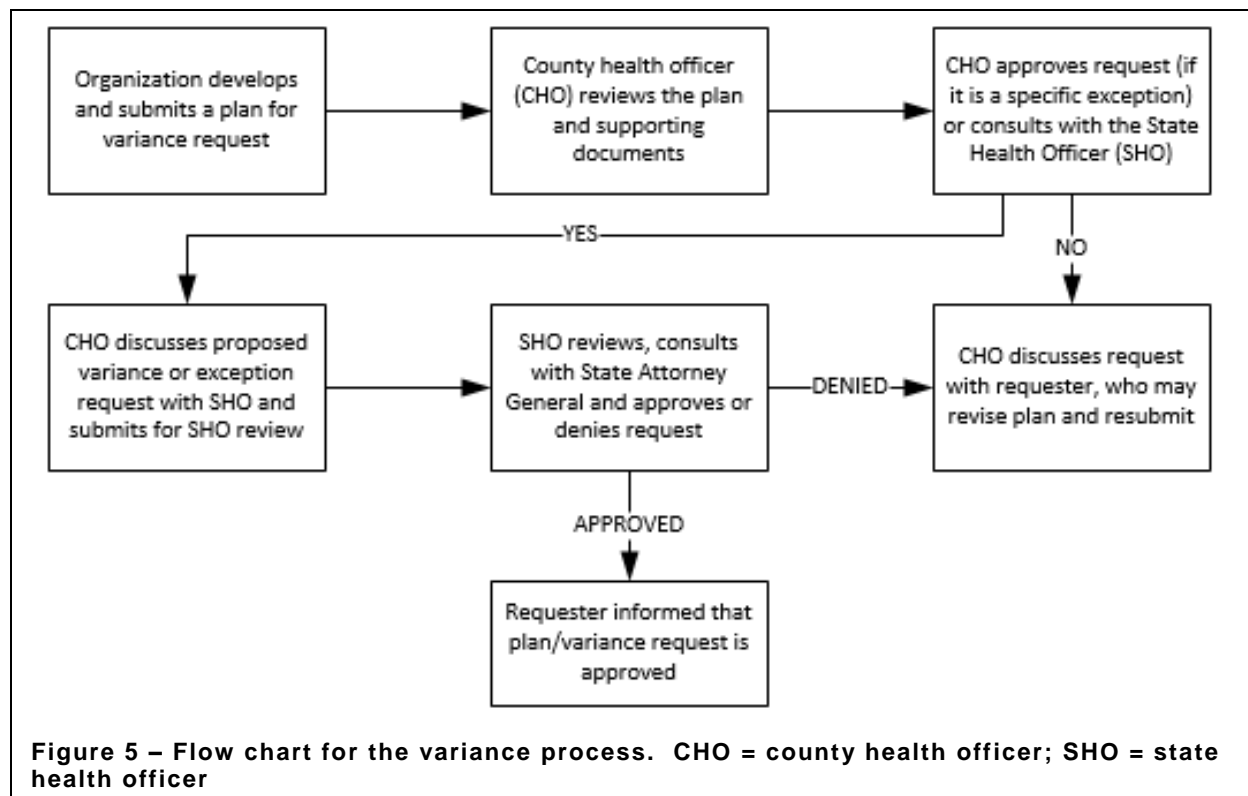
There is a procedure for requesting a county-wide variance or exception request. **However, before requesting a variance, businesses and organizations should contact C/LCHD to find out if current pandemic conditions make a variance feasible.**

The Health Department is currently calling a temporary moratorium on variance requests until the pandemic situation stabilizes, but hopes to resume considering variance requests soon.

In the meantime, organizations should develop a plan to operate effectively under the current orders. Some examples of possible approaches may include:

- Changes to the prior business model to make it more adaptable to the current reality
- Re-engineering key processes to minimize disease risk and maximize safety of staff and clientele, while allowing the business to operate efficiently
- Re-arranging or redesigning work areas to increase capacity and maintain safety

As soon as it is feasible to begin considering variance and exception requests, Figure 5 shows how the process will flow.



Section 8 – Definitions

- Community spread – cases appearing in patients who, after contact tracing, have no identifiable contact with someone with COVID-19.
- Contact tracing – a primary intervention by public health to mitigate the spread of disease. It consists of interviewing individuals with a contagious disease, eliciting that person's social contacts, and following up with those individuals for symptom monitoring, counseling, and referral for appropriate treatments and services. This activity is a cornerstone of public health practice.
- Masks and face coverings – These refer to any fabric covering of the lower face including the mouth and nose. Overwhelming evidence indicates effectiveness in reducing the spread of coronavirus. Masks are especially important when social distancing cannot be maintained.
- SARS-CoV-2 – a short form of “Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2”, the name of the virus that causes COVID-19. COVID-19 is the name of the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2. The term COVID-19 is an acronym for **C**orona **V**irus **D**isease 2019, for the year it first emerged.
- Social distancing – the practice of staying at least six feet away from other people while in public, except for others who share the same household. Because the virus that causes COVID-19 is transmitted through the air and on contaminated surfaces, social distancing (along with frequent cleaning and hand hygiene) is a primary method for preventing spread of the disease.
- High-risk populations at risk for severe COVID-19 disease:
 - Persons 65 years or older, regardless of baseline state of health.
 - Individuals with underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune system is compromised (such as by cancer therapy, or certain medical conditions).