



**FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Beth Helmke

[LakeCountyPIO@gmail.com](mailto:LakeCountyPIO@gmail.com)

719.293.5737

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**LEADVILLE/LAKE COUNTY**

**(LEADVILLE, COLO, JUN 1, 2020) – Lake County Public Health Agency Submits Variance Request to CDPHE**

Lake County Public Health Agency (LCPHA) submitted a variance application to Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE) on May 31, 2020, requesting exceptions to Governor Polis’ current “Executive Order D 2020 044 Safer at Home” and CDPHE “Public Health Order 20-28 Safer at Home.” LCPHA’s variance request includes lifting some restrictions on operations of education organizations, places of worship, local attractions, outfitters, private clubs, and outdoor playground facilities in Lake County.

LCPHA continues to utilize the [Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officers \(CALPHO\) framework](#) and local health data to guide decision making on local restrictions and re-opening plans. Key criteria for moving into re-opening phases include no significant increase in new cases, adequate health care system capacity, widespread testing availability, active contact tracing, and well-established social distancing protocols. At this point, LCPHA believes these criteria could be maintained within the proposed exceptions included in the variance application.

By seeking a variance, LCPHA hopes to be better positioned to offer re-opening guidance to these institutions while they await Governor Polis’ forthcoming Public Health Order amendment. Additional guidelines from the Governor’s Office are anticipated by June 4, however specifics are unknown.

“Seeking a variance provides no guarantees it will be granted for Lake County,” said LCPHA Director Colleen Nielsen. “However, we hope that it can help our local businesses and groups, who are able to successfully implement safe operations, better prepare for their re-opening timeline.” Nielsen further notes, “CDPHE can also rescind a variance at any time if they determine criteria cannot be maintained or other circumstances change. We continue to closely monitor all these factors.”

Lake County has identified 32 positive COVID-19 cases to date, including 3 new active infection test results and 2 additional antibody test epi-linked cases within the past week. Though there has not been a sustained decrease in cases within the past 14 days, the current infection rate does not exceed LCPHA’s ability to perform complete case investigation and contact tracing, which are key considerations to meet CDPHE’s infection response criteria.

LCPHA emphasizes the importance of all residents and visitors following infection control precautions including maintaining at least 6 feet distance between self and others, wearing a face covering when in public, practicing good hand hygiene, and staying home when sick.

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