



TULARE COUNTY’S MULTI-STAGE APPROACH TOWARDS A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY

Epidemiologists and infectious disease experts agree that in the absence of strict social distancing, Tulare County numbers would once again surge. COVID-19 will continue to be a serious threat until there is an effective vaccine or more effective therapeutic treatments. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) experts estimate that we will not have a vaccine for COVID-19 until 2021, at the earliest. For the foreseeable future, living with COVID-19 is our new “normal”.

Living with this disease means finding ways for our community to return to work with COVID-19 still circulating. There is an emerging consensus that America’s economy should open in stages with different parts of the economy and different aspects of public life reopening at different times will present a framework for a three-stage approach that reflects the state of the COVID-19 pandemic in Tulare County.

Over the last couple of weeks, California counties in coordination with the California Department of Public Health have worked extensively to create meaningful criteria that provides a solid framework to use when deciding to reopen local economies. Specifically, Tulare County has adopted four criteria to use as the means of determining the readiness of reopening our local economy. It is important to note that these criteria are aligned with other California Counties and the recommendations from the State, however, our readiness may be earlier or later than other counties due to our local situation.

The following four (4) criteria will need to be met simultaneously before moving to Stage 2, and then again before moving to Stage 3, and then once again before moving to Stage 4. Each of the following criteria has assessments and respective metrics that will be used to determine forward movement to the next Stage. However, if it is determined that there is a potential rebound or local outbreak, returning to an earlier Stage is probable.

- **(CASES) SUSTAINED REDUCTION OR STABILITY IN NEW CASES FOR 14 DAYS.** Tulare County agrees that movement towards reopening for Stage2 should begin after 14 days of a sustained downward trend in COVID-19 positive cases.

Certain increases, such as an increase in active cases over the course of five days, would clearly be a cause for concern. However, exact judgements should reflect a precise understanding of local trends. If, for instance, public health departments identify a specific outbreak and are able to isolate COVID-positive cases and quarantine people who were in close contact quickly, movement towards greater reopening could continue, even with an increase in positive cases.

- **ADEQUATE DIAGNOSTIC TESTING CAPACITY AND RAPID TEST RESULTS. THE ABILITY TO TEST ALL INDIVIDUALS WITH COVID-19 SYMPTOMS (WITHIN A CERTAIN TIMEFRAME). SAME-DAY TESTING WIDELY AVAILABLE FOR HOSPITALIZED PATIENTS, HEALTH CARE WORKERS AND WORKERS IN ESSENTIAL ROLES, CLOSE CONTACTS OF CONFIRMED CASES, AND OUTPATIENTS WITH SYMPTOMS).** Expanding testing capacity and making testing broadly available is necessary to treat and control infection, and for detecting increases COVID-19 cases early.
- **PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT’S CAPACITY TO RAPIDLY INTERVIEW NEW CASES, IDENTIFY CLOSE CONTACTS, AND ENSURE THAT ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE ARE EFFECTIVE.** Public health surveillance must be strengthened to understand the spread of COVID-19 and rapidly detect outbreaks. Experts call for evidence of declining transmission for at least 14 days before there could be a move to a staged approach of reopening the economies. Tulare County must closely monitor the signs of COVID-19 spread. It must notice problems to avoid overcrowding of emergency departments or outbreaks among the higher risk.
- **HEALTH CARE SYSTEM CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO POTENTIAL SURGES.** Tulare County must ensure that the local healthcare system is out of crisis mode and able to handle potential new surges in patients, along with non-COVID-19 related services, prior to reopening the economy. Tulare County will continue to track and share information about the availability of hospital beds, ICU beds, ventilators, and personal protective equipment (PPE) in order to ensure that they are adequately available if cases surge, as modeled under a variety of assumptions. Data on available capacity should be assessed at a designated frequency. State stockpiles should be used to fill any deficiencies and there should be continuous monitoring of cases statewide to assure that capacity will not be exceeded.

GOALS AND LINKED METRICS TO CONSIDER WHEN MOVING BETWEEN STAGES

Goals	Metric
1. Containment Capacity	<p>GOAL: Stable or decreasing COVID-19 infection rate METRIC: Low prevalence of disease - no more than 1 case per 10,000 people in last 14 days METRIC: No more than 1 death in last 14 days</p> <p>GOAL: Ability to test everyone who needs to be tested METRIC: Minimum daily testing volume of 1.5 per 1,000 residents METRIC: Testing availability for at least 75% of residents as measured by specimen collection sites within a 60-minute drive in rural areas</p>
2. Case investigation and contact tracing	<p>GOAL: The public health system has adequate infrastructure, processes, and workforce to reliably detect and safely isolate new cases, as well as follow up with individuals who have been in contact with positive cases</p> <p>METRIC: Sufficient staff allocated to contact tracing, at least 15 staff per 100,000 population</p>

	METRIC: Availability of temporary housing units to shelter at least 15% of county residents experiencing homelessness
3. Health Care System Capacity	<p>GOAL: Hospitals can quickly and independently supply sufficient PPE and critical medical equipment and can surge intensive care unit (ICU) capacity.</p> <p>METRIC: Ability to accommodate a minimum surge of 35% (combined for county) due to COVID-19 patients as well as providing usual care for non-COVID-19 patients.</p>
4. Vulnerable Populations	<p>GOAL: Ability to protect our vulnerable populations</p> <p>METRIC: Skilled nursing & other congregate living facilities have > 14-day supply of PPE and access to non-state sources for replenishing the supplies.</p>

Potential Increased Community Transmission when Re-opening Public Spaces.

Opening public spaces will entail an increased risk of community transmission. Certain populations will be more at risk for serious consequences and mortality from contracting the disease. Those most at risk include:

- Healthcare workers, first responders and other essential workers in contact with the public;
- Older adults living in nursing homes, assisted living, and senior housing;
- Racial and ethnic minorities;
- Justice-involved populations;
- People experiencing homelessness; and,
- People with disabilities and living in state institutions, group homes, and other congregate settings.
- Pregnant individuals

Given the setting and circumstances of where these populations reside, targeted monitoring and interventions will be critical to protecting these communities. Tulare County must develop effective systems and policies that protect these populations so that it is less likely to experience outbreaks that can interrupt the gradual reopening of society.

Strong and Clear Communication and Public Engagement Plan.

Communication is an integral part during a crisis, and is even more important as Tulare County moves toward reopening. It is critical that public engagement is incorporated into the response plan to minimize the risk of misunderstanding, confusion, or protest by individuals who believe reopening should be either faster or slower. It is important that Tulare County evaluates the different needs, risk factors, and resources.

Rationale for a Multi-Stage Approach to Reopening

Developing a framework that thoughtfully guides decision making on key factors to reopen the economy is important. The framework must include an array of public health factors, including consistent communication related to COVID-19, data collection, defining measures to reassess readiness for opening, and anticipating the need to revert to tighter control measures. Additionally, criteria for moving between stages and defining the stages for reopening must be established. Equally important is building partnerships between public and private sectors to implement the plan.

This is the time to identify and share critical metrics and explain “the rules for reopening.” The most important message to convey in this period is that **the rate of transmission must decline or remain low to make it safe to proceed with plans to reopen local economies**. During this process, local governments should engage health care systems, schools and businesses to fine tune plans for a staged reopening and to clearly convey the steps that will be necessary.

Testing capacity should continue to expand; vulnerable populations should be identified and monitored. Businesses, schools, and healthcare facilities should develop written plans for how they will help prevent COVID-19 spread in their facilities. Policymakers should also examine disincentives to testing and isolation or quarantining, such as the fear that people who test positive or are quarantined could lose their jobs. Travel to and from areas that are experiencing significant disease should be discouraged or prohibited.

This stage should continue for the next two weeks. During this time, monitoring should indicate case numbers are declining. Based on COVID-19 case rate statistics by city and region, healthcare providers and health systems should demonstrate they can manage (with ICU beds, ventilators, PPE, nurse and physician staffing, and other metrics of capacity) no less than 1 week of new cases at the prior week case rate prior to progression between stages or to moving on to the first stage of reopening.

During this planning period, all non-essential businesses should remain closed and the Stay At Home Order remains in place. Except when performing essential services, citizens over age 65 and those with high risk factors need to remain vigilant and to shelter at home.

- Work from home should continue whenever possible, and cloth face coverings should be worn in public locations.
- Tulare County will work to accomplish all specific requirements listed above, including testing, tracking and quarantine strategies to identify cases and prevent transmission.
- All essential and non-essential businesses should begin preparations for later stages, and should be prepared to certify to the Health Department that they have written protocols, completed the social distancing and safety plan checklist and can reliably perform the following functions before advancing to later stages:

- Screen daily all employees for respiratory symptoms. Workers in close contact with each other should be screened daily with temperature checks as well. Business safety plans should clearly specify protocols for different categories.
- Advise employees with symptoms to remove themselves from the workplace and call healthcare provider for guidance. Establish policies and procedures to help employees who are required to by the healthcare provider to isolate or quarantine.
- Set expectations for frequent hand hygiene and wearing of cloth face coverings by employees where appropriate or able.
- Hand sanitizer should be placed throughout the business.

GUIDELINES FOR ALL STAGES

Individuals:

- **Continue to adhere to state and local guidance, in particularly with respect to face coverings.**
- **Continue to practice good hygiene**
 - Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer, especially after touching frequently used items or surfaces.
 - Avoid touching your face
 - Sneeze or cough into a tissue, or the inside of your elbow.
 - Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces as much as possible
 - Using face coverings while in public, and particularly when using mass transit or carpools.
 - People who feel sick should stay home. Do not go to work or school.
 - Contact and follow the advice of your medical provider.
 - Practice social distancing

Employers: See guidance document for employers

- **Develop and implement appropriate policies, in accordance with Federal, State, and local regulations and guidance, and informed by industry best practices, regarding employee and customer protection**
- **Keeping the Workplace Safe**
- **Communicating with your team**
- **Preparing Your Space**
- **Cleaning and Disinfecting after opening**
- **Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)**
- **How Long COVID19 Lives on Surfaces**
- **5 Essential Actions for Individuals**

If positive improvement/stability of metrics for 14 days, move to STAGE 2

CURRENT STAGE/STAGE 1

Retail Stores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-essential closed • Essential businesses must implement social distancing measures for all staff and customers • Face coverings required for customers • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering and maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public if possible
Commercial Businesses/Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-essential closed • Essential businesses must implement social distancing measures for all staff and customers • Face coverings required for customers • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering and maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public if possible
Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering and maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public if possible •
Restaurants & Bars Serving Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online order and curbside pickup only • Face coverings required for customers • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering and maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public if possible
Nail Salons, Hair Salons, Barber Shops, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed
Health Care, Dental, Optometry, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential and/or emergency services only • Implement social distancing measures for all customers • Face coverings required for customers • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering and maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public if possible
Massage, Tattoo & Body Art, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed
Gyms, Fitness Centers, Public Pools, Community Pools, Interactive Water Features, Close Contact Sports, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed
Bars, Entertainment Venues, Community Events, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed
Faith Based Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed
Educational Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed
Public Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
All Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 65+ and individuals with underlying conditions, stay home. All, work from home, if possible. Wear face covering and maintain 6 ft. social distancing when in public.

If positive improvement/stability of metrics for 14 days, move to STAGE 3/ If significant decrease in metrics return to Stage 1

STAGE 2: Lower Risk Workplaces

Retail Stores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online order and curbside pickup for non-essential businesses. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering and maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public if possible
Commercial Businesses/Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement social distancing measures for all customers. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering and maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public if possible
Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering and maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public if possible.
Restaurants & Bars Serving Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue online order and curbside pickup only. No dine-in • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering and maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public if possible
Nail Salons, Hair Salons, Barber Shops, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed
Health Care, Dental, Optometry, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urgent or Emergent procedures only • Implement social distancing measures for all customers and between coworkers • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering
Massage, Tattoo & Body Art, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed
Gyms, Fitness Centers, Public Pools, Community Pools, Interactive Water Features (e.g. splash pads), Close Contact Sports, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed
Close Contact Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed
Bars, Entertainment Venues, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed
Community Events (health fairs, cook-offs, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed
Faith Based Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed
Educational Institutions, schools and organized youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow established guidelines for schools and child care facilities •

activities (day camp, summer camp)	
Senior Facilities (Skilled Nursing, Assisted Living, Long-term Living, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow all established guidelines for all types of senior facilities • Implement social distancing measures. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering and maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public if possible
Public Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All activities adhere to distancing and infection control protocols •
All Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to encourage work from home, if possible. Return to work in stages. Close common areas where personnel are likely to congregate or enforce strict social distancing protocols. Minimize non-essential travel. Consider special accommodations for personnel who are members of a vulnerable population.
All Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 65+ and individuals with underlying conditions, stay home. All, if essential employee, work from home, if possible. Wear face covering when unable to continuously maintain 6 ft. social distancing when in public. Social gatherings should be in accordance with State guidance and be limited to immediate family. Minimize non-essential travel.

If positive improvement/stability of metrics for 14 days, move to STAGE 4 /if significant decrease in metrics, return to STAGE 2

STAGE 3: Higher Risk Workplaces

Retail Stores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open at 50% capacity. • Implement social distancing measures for all customers. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.
Commercial Businesses/Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open at 50% capacity. • Implement social distancing measures for all customers. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.
Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering and maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public if possible.
Restaurants & Bars Serving Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With State Executive Order lifted, open at 50% seating capacity. • Implement social distancing measures for all customers. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.
Nail Salons, Hair Salons, Barber Shops, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricted to appointment only services. No walk-in customers. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.

Health Care, Dental, Optometry, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine and elective procedures for patients for all age groups. • Implement social distancing measures for all customers. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.
Massage, Tattoo & Body Art, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricted to appointment only services. No walk-in customers. • Implement social distancing measures for all customers. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.
Gyms, Fitness Centers, Public Pools, Community Pools, Interactive Water Features (e.g., splash pad), etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open at limited capacity while adhering to 6ft social distancing criteria. • Implement social distancing measures for all customers. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.
Close Contact Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed
Bars, Entertainment Venues, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed
Community Events (health fairs, cook-offs, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed
Faith Based Institutions (Churches & Weddings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open at 50% capacity. • Implement social distancing measures. • Wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft. social distancing when in public.
Educational Institutions, school and organized youth activities (day camp, summer camp)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow established CDPH and CDC guidelines for schools and child care
Senior Facilities (Skilled Nursing, Assisted Living, Long-term Living, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow all established CDPH guidelines for all types of senior facilities • Implement social distancing measures. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.
Public Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All activities adhere to distancing and infection control protocols
All Employers	Close common areas where personnel are likely to congregate or enforce moderate social distancing protocols. Consider special accommodations for personnel who are members of the vulnerable populations.
All Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 65+ and individuals with underlying conditions, stay home. Work from home, if possible. Wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft. social distancing when in public. Social gatherings should be in accordance with State guidance. Some non-essential travel may resume.

If significant decrease in metrics, return to STAGE 3

Stage 4: End of Stay at Home Order

Retail Stores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open at full capacity. • Implement social distancing measures for all customers. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.
Commercial Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open at full capacity. • Implement social distancing measures for all customers. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.
Restaurants & Bars Serving Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited to State restrictive capacity. If no limitations, open at full capacity. • Implement social distancing measures for all customers. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.
Nail Salons, Hair Salons, Barber Shops, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open at full capacity. • Implement social distancing measures for all customers. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.
Health Care, Dental, Optometry, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine and elective procedures for patients for all age groups. • Implement social distancing measures for all customers. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.
Massage, Tattoo & Body Art, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open at full capacity. • Implement social distancing measures for all customers. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.
Gyms, Fitness Centers, Pubic Pools, Community Pools, Interactive Water Features (e.g., splash pad), etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open at full capacity. • Implement social distancing measures for all customers. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.
Close Contact Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open at full capacity
Bars, Entertainment Venues, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open at full capacity. • Implement social distancing measures for all customers. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.
Community Events (health fairs, cook-offs, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open at full capacity • Implement social distancing measures. •

Faith Based Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open at full capacity. • Implement social distancing measures. • Wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.
Senior Facilities (Skilled Nursing, Assisted Living, Long-term Living, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow all established CDPH guidelines for all types of senior facilities • Implement social distancing measures. • Employees screened daily and must wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing from co-workers and the public.
Educational Institutions, schools and organized youth activities (day camp, summer camp)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open • Implement social distancing measures. • Wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing when in public.
All Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resume unrestricted staffing of worksites
All Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age 65+ and individuals with underlying conditions can resume public interactions, but should practice social distancing, minimize social settings where distancing may not be practiced. Wear face covering if unable to continuously maintain 6 ft social distancing when in public. Social gatherings should be in accordance with State guidance.

Conclusion

The threat of COVID-19 will be with us for the foreseeable future. There is a high probability that Tulare County will experience continued outbreaks that will force us to revert to earlier stages at some point during the reopening process. Now is the time to build capacity and create partnerships, across our county with employers, nonprofits, and community groups, to respond effectively to this challenge. This is also the time to provide clear guidance and an evidence-based framework for reopening our local economy.

Discussions with the state and federal government will continue with the purpose of redefining essential v. nonessential sectors. Instead of classifying businesses and industries as essential vs. non-essential, moving towards the terminology of “lower risk” vs “higher risk” operations may be more viable. This will allow all businesses to begin working on plans that focus on safety and are designed to lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission to their workers and customers. Examples of “low-risk” activities that are currently deemed non-essential: 1) Bookstores: could be lower risk if they limited the number of people that enter the store and took precautions to protect the clerks; Examples of “higher-risk” activities could include hair salons and tattoo shops where there is longer close personal contact.