

# COVID-19 Daily Update

April 19, 2020

## Summary

The United States has 755,553 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 40,461 reported related deaths. Treasury Secretary Mnuchin announced that Congress could reach an agreement as early as today on additional funding for the Paycheck Protection Program. The new bill would include \$300 billion in loans for small businesses, \$75 billion to help overwhelmed hospitals, and another \$25 billion to increase COVID-19 testing capacity. Many state officials assert that increased testing capabilities are needed before the economy can safely reopen. States continue to face shortages of testing kits and supplies. The Governor of Michigan noted that the State could handle “double or triple” the current number of tests “if we had the swabs or reagents.” Virginia stated that it does not have the swabs needed for the tests. The governors of Ohio and New York report shortages of the required testing reagents.

Several states have eased some social distancing restrictions. On Monday April 20, Vermont will permit contracting companies, garden-supply stores, small construction crews and small offices to operate with certain restrictions. Texas will permit retail stores to offer “retail to go,” a curbside pickup service of online and phoned-in orders beginning Friday, April 24. Florida reopened several beaches with restricted hours for fishing, swimming, walking, and biking, consistent with social distancing guidelines. New York, Connecticut and New Jersey opened up marinas, boatyards, and boat launches for recreational use.

Governor Cuomo announced that New York is “past the high point” of COVID-19 cases. The total number of hospitalizations state-wide continued to decline – from 16,967 on Saturday to 16,213 on Sunday. On Sunday, New York reported 507 COVID-19 related deaths, down almost 10% from the previous day and the lowest total in more than two weeks. Cuomo warned that the infection rate needs to slow even more in order to safely reopen the economy. The New York State Department of Health will begin antibody testing this week as part of “the largest survey of any state population that has been done.” The State plans to randomly sample 3,000 people to determine how many people in the State have been infected with COVID-19. New York City Mayor de Blasio continued to call for increased federal funding and criticized President Trump for failing to aid municipalities that are struggling to cope with the pandemic. The City plans to bolster its social distancing enforcement and pledged that violators would receive \$1,000 fines.

## **General/Employer Guidance**

### **Presidential updates**

- [\*Remarks by President Trump and the Coronavirus Task Force in Press Briefing\*](#), April 18
  - President Trump announced a plan to investigate the National Institute of Health (NIH) for its \$32 billion per year spending, to ensure that the money is “spent wisely.”
  - The President acknowledged his earlier decision to cut the country’s \$500 million funding to the World Health Organization (WHO). The President stated that there are “others ways to spend [the money] where people are going to be helped in a much greater way.”
  - White House data report that the United States has 11.24 COVID-19 related deaths per 100,000 people. This reported death rate is lower than that of Belgium, Spain, Italy, France, the UK, and the Netherlands. Dr. Birx credited social distancing measures with keeping the rate low.
  - President Trump blamed governors for not making full use of COVID-19 testing capacity in their states. The President urged governors to use private lab testing capacity, asserting that “they’re waiting for business from these governors.”
- [\*President Trump Approves American Samoa Disaster Declaration\*](#), April 17
  - President Trump declared that a major disaster exists in American Samoa. He ordered Federal assistance to supplement efforts in the areas affected by COVID-19. The action makes Federal funding available to the Territory and certain private nonprofit organizations for emergency protective measures.
  - President Trump issued similar declarations for all states, as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

### **World Health Organization (WHO)**

- [\*COVID-19 Situation Report – 89 and Situation Report – 90\*](#), April 19
  - WHO published [guidance](#) for the prevention and control of COVID-19 in refugees and migrants.
  - WHO Director General Tedros [warned](#) of a 51% increase in the number of reported cases in Africa, and a 60% increase in the number of reported deaths.
  - WHO [asserted](#) that live animal markets should only be allowed to reopen on the condition that they contain stringent food safety and hygiene standards. WHO stressed that 70% of new viruses come from animals, and that we need to try to better understand and prevent pathogens from crossing from animals to humans.

### **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

- [\*Get & Keep America Open: CDC Support for States and Localities\*](#), April 17
  - CDC created a new [resource page](#) for states and localities to help identify new cases, break chains of transmission, and protect first responders and health care workers from infection. CDC highlights methods for contact tracing, collecting data, and taking advantage of federal fiscal resources.

- [COVIDView Weekly Surveillance Summary of U.S. COVID-19 Activity](#), April 17
  - CDC summarized key COVID-19 disease indicators for the week ending April 11.
  - The national percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for COVID-19 increased from 17.3% to 17.8% in public health labs and from 20.6% to 22.6% in commercial labs. The overall cumulative hospitalization rate is 20 per 100,000, with the highest rates in people 65 years and older (63.8 per 100,000) and 50-64 years (32.8 per 100,000).
  - Based on death certificate data, the percentage of deaths attributed to COVID-19, pneumonia, or influenza increased from 17.8% to 18.8% from the prior week.
- [CDC Response Corps to Support State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Health Departments](#), April 17
  - CDC created the COVID Response Corps, a nationwide community-focused initiative to provide surge staffing and resources to support state and local health departments.
  - Corps members will augment health department teams and will engage in core public health functions by conducting contact tracing, providing infection prevention and control guidance, staffing calling centers, and providing COVID-19 education.

## **New York State**

- [Data indicates that New York has passed the high point of coronavirus infection](#), April 19
  - New York reports 507 virus-related deaths, bringing the total death-toll to 13,869. The number of intubations and new hospitalizations are both down significantly.
  - Governor Cuomo stressed that antibody testing is key to reopening the State's economy. The New York State Department of Health will begin antibody testing this week as part of "the largest survey of any state population that has been done." The State plans to randomly sample 3,000 people to determine how many people in the State have been infected with COVID-19.
- [Governors Announce Uniform State Policies for Marinas and Boatyards](#), April 18
  - Marinas, boatyards, and marine manufacturers in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut will be allowed to open for personal use. Patrons still need to follow strict social distancing and sanitization protocols. Chartered watercraft services or rentals will not be allowed, and restaurant activity at these sites must be limited to take-out or delivery only.
  - New York's economic development agency recently [opened](#) golf courses in the State for use by individuals, so long as social distancing restrictions are observed.
- [Governor Cuomo Calls for Federal Coordination of Supply Chain to Scale Testing](#), April 18
  - Governor Cuomo issued an executive order allowing New Yorkers to obtain a marriage license remotely and allowing clerks to perform ceremonies via video conference.
  - Governor Cuomo called for federal coordination of the supply chain to scale testing capacity. Cuomo reports difficulties due to the wide variety of available tests. There are 30 private companies manufacturing testing equipment and individual tests. 300 local labs in New York have purchased these 30 different tests that each require their own equipment, reagents, and swabs.

- [\*NY Attorney General Issued Guidance to Protect Stimulus Payments from Debt Collection\*](#), April 18
  - New York Attorney General issued [guidance](#) exempting emergency stimulus payments from garnishment by creditors under New York law. The stimulus payments were authorized under the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. New York State will prosecute the garnishment or attachment of stimulus payments.
- [\*New York State Labs to Coordinate with State DOH to Prioritize Diagnostic Testing\*](#), April 17
  - Governor Cuomo plans to issue an executive order directing all 301 public and private labs in New York to coordinate with the State Department of Health to prioritize COVID-19 diagnostic testing.
  - The Governor launched an awareness campaign encouraging low-income New Yorkers to claim their economic impact payments under the CARES Act. Taxpayers will receive payments automatically if they filed 2018 or 2019 federal tax returns. Because the federal filing threshold is roughly \$12,000 for individuals and \$24,000 for married couples, thousands of low income New Yorkers who are not required to file returns will not receive economic impact payments unless they provide their information to the IRS.

#### **New York City**

- [\*1,400 health care volunteers have been deployed at city hospitals and nursing homes\*](#), April 19
  - More than 1,400 volunteer medical staff have been dispatched to the City's hospitals and nursing homes. The City added staff to the 311 public assistance line following reports that individuals who called to receive food had not been helped.
  - The City plans to bolster its social distancing enforcement and pledged that violators would receive \$1,000 fines.
  - The New York City Department of Health warned that it is too early to declare whether cases in the City have plateaued or whether there is a sustained reduction. The number of people hospitalized for the virus has increased in New York City; admissions to the ICU and the percentage of people testing positive have both decreased.
- [\*Mayor De Blasio Announcements on Testing and Victim Identification System\*](#), April 18
  - Mayor de Blasio [announced](#) the opening of three COVID-19 testing sites for communities hardest hit by the pandemic. Testing will prioritize those over the age of 65 with pre-existing conditions.
  - The City [activated](#) the United Victim Identification System (UVIS) in response to the pandemic. UVIS allows New Yorkers to file a report about someone who may be missing due to COVID-19. The report will then be sent to NYPD for further investigation. UVIS has been used in New York City in response to other emergencies, such as the East Harlem building explosion and Hurricane Sandy.

- [\*NYCDOH Guidance on Grief and Loss in the Workplace During COVID-19\*](#), April 17
  - The New York City Department of Health (NYCDOH) issued guidance on grief and loss in the workplace during COVID-19. NYCDOH provides advice for individuals and employers on the loss of coworkers to COVID-19. Teams are encouraged to create the space and time for coworkers to talk about what has happened and to set aside time at virtual staff meetings to discuss.

### **Other Related Updates**

- [\*Pressed to reopen, governors say their states need more time and more testing\*](#), April 19
  - In a press [interview](#), Vice President Pence stated that “there is a sufficient capacity of testing across the country today for any state in America” to begin easing restrictions. President Trump recently blamed governors for not making full use of COVID-19 testing capacity in their states.
  - Several governors [warned](#) that they are facing shortages of crucial testing supplies. The governors of Ohio, Virginia, and New York report shortages of the chemical reagent needed to conduct more tests. Virginia reports lacking the swabs needed for tests. The Governor of Maryland stated that it was “absolutely false” to claim that governors were not acting aggressively enough to pursue as much testing as possible.
- [\*Department of Homeland Security Offers Flexibility to Visa Waiver Program Travelers\*](#), April 17
  - U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) announced that Visa Waiver Program travelers who are currently in the United States, may apply for an additional 30-day extension of their admission period if they are unable to depart the United States because of COVID-19 travel restrictions, flight cancellations, or illness.
  - The Visa Waiver Program enables eligible nationals of 39 countries to travel to the United States for business or tourism for stays of up to 90 days without a visa. Visa Waiver Program travelers generally are not eligible to extend their stay or change their status after arriving in the United States.
- [\*Antiviral remdesivir prevents disease progression in monkeys with COVID-19\*](#), April 17
  - A National Institute of Health (NIH) clinical trial studied the use of the antiviral drug remdesivir to treat COVID-19 in monkeys.
  - The study found that early treatment significantly reduced clinical disease and damage to the lungs of rhesus macaques infected with SARS-CoV-2. Twelve hours after the initial treatment, the scientists examined all animals and found the six treated animals in significantly better health than the untreated group, a trend that continued during the seven-day study. The investigators note that the data supports initiating remdesivir treatment in COVID-19 patients as early as possible to achieve maximum treatment effect.
- [\*US Concerned by Threat of Cyber Attack Against the Czech Republic’s Health Care Sector\*](#), April 17
  - Two hospitals in the Czech Republic reported attempted attacks on their computer systems on Friday, April 17, a day after the country’s cybersecurity watchdog said it expected a wave of cyberattacks on the country’s critical infrastructure.

- Secretary of State Pompeo issued a statement, expressing concern about the threat of a cyberattack against the Czech Republic’s health care sector adding that anybody engaged in such activity should “expect consequences.”
- Many [believe](#) hackers have been targeting businesses, governments, and health care organizations with attempts to steal sensitive information related to the new coronavirus outbreak.
- [HHS Guidance on When to Seek Emergency Care](#), April 17
  - The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued guidance on the signs and symptoms of a medical emergency requiring immediate treatment. HHS acknowledges that individuals may be concerned about going to a hospital or urgent care site during the COVID-19 outbreak, but urges individuals to consider seeking emergency treatment for certain symptoms including, difficulty breathing, chest or upper abdominal pressure or pain, and uncontrolled bleeding.
- [FDA COVID-19 Update: Daily Roundup](#), April 17
  - A federal court entered a [temporary injunction](#) against the Genesis II Church of Health and Healing and four individuals associated with the entity, requiring them to immediately stop distributing its “Miracle Mineral Solution,” an unproven and potentially harmful treatment offered for sale to treat COVID-19.
  - FDA provided an [update](#) on its serological test validation and education efforts. Serological tests can help identify whether someone has developed antibodies to COVID-19, which may protect against future infection.
  - FDA issued a new emergency use authorization (EUA) to ExThera Medical Corporation for use of the Seraph 100 Microbind Affinity Blood Filter device to treat patients with confirmed COVID-19 admitted to the intensive care unit with confirmed or imminent respiratory failure to reduce pathogens and inflammatory mediators from the bloodstream.
- [The Untold Toll — The Pandemic’s Effects on Patients without Covid-19](#), April 17
  - An article in the New England Journal of Medicine discussed the impact of the pandemic on patients without COVID-19. Cancer care, which often involves immunosuppressive therapy, tumor resection, and inpatient treatment, has been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [COVID-19 – European Tracker of Financial Matters](#), April 17
- [How a Corporation Can Request a Federal Income Tax Refund](#), April 17
- [France’s Anti-Corruption Agency Publishes Guidance on Its Enforcement Activity During COVID-19 Crisis](#), April 17

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