

COVID-19 Daily Update

July 24, 2020

Summary

The United States has 4,070,480 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 144,734 reported related deaths. President Trump cancelled the portion of the Republican National Convention to be held in Jacksonville, Florida in August. Trump expressed that he “just felt it was wrong” to have attendees “going to what turned out to be a [virus] hot spot.” CDC released new guidance on school re-openings, including a decision-making tool for parents to choose between in-person and virtual learning, and recommendations on screening students for COVID-19 symptoms. CDC Director Redfield commented that “it is critically important for our public health [that schools] open this fall.” President Trump acknowledged that public schools in COVID-19 hotspots may have to delay in-person re-openings “for a few weeks” – a decision that will be “up to governors.” Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services will begin requiring, rather than recommending, that all nursing homes in states with a five percent positivity rate or greater test all nursing home staff each week.

At least 1,100 COVID-19 deaths were reported on Thursday, July 23, for the third consecutive day; more than 500 of the fatalities were recorded in Florida, California, and Texas. Major League Baseball began its pandemic-shortened season on Thursday night, devoid of fans and governed by a detailed list of safety protocols. Washington, D.C., announced that it will require travelers coming to the city to self-quarantine for 14 days if they are arriving from a high-risk area on non-essential travel, starting next week. Disney announced plans to push back or cancel the release of 17 Disney and Fox films, affecting movie release dates through 2028. Federal Aviation Administration ordered an emergency inspection of about 2,000 older Boeing 737 airplanes because of a possible engine valve problem. Boeing noted that “with airplanes being stored or used infrequently due to lower demand during the COVID-19 pandemic, the valve can be more susceptible to corrosion.”

Approximately 753, or 0.98%, of the 76,507 tests administered in New York on July 23 were positive for COVID-19. The New York State legislature passed a bill limiting immunity for nursing homes that fail to prevent their residents from contracting COVID-19. Mayor de Blasio announced that New York City is now able to process up to 50,000 COVID-19 tests per day. This achievement comes as health officials expressed concern about a growing backlog of test samples in the City. The City announced a new initiative calling on community, non-profit, and private organizations to share data with the City to aid COVID-19 response efforts. The data include real estate market metrics from StreetEasy, real-time measure of hiring activity from LinkedIn, and foot traffic data aggregated by neighborhood and business type from Foursquare.

Presidential updates

- [Remarks by President Trump in Press Briefing on COVID-19](#), July 23
 - President Trump canceled the portion of the Republican National Convention to be held in Jacksonville, Florida.
 - Trump stated that “there’s nothing more important in our country than keeping our people safe,” and expressed that he “just felt it was wrong” to have people “going to what turned out to be a [virus] hot spot.” Delegates will still convene in North Carolina to vote on the Party’s nomination.
 - Trump quoted guidance from American Academy of Pediatrics and National Education Association to promote the idea that schools should re-open for in-person instruction in the fall. Trump stated that “due to school closures last spring, the average student will begin the school year roughly 35% behind in reading compared to the typical year, and more than 50% behind in math.”
 - Trump did acknowledge, however, that public schools in COVID-19 hotspots may have to delay in-person re-openings “for a few weeks” – a decision that will be “up to governors.”
 - The White House [recommended](#) that the Senate include \$105 billion for schools in the coronavirus aid package currently being debated, to “support mitigation measures, such as smaller class sizes, more teachers and teacher aides, re-purposing spaces to practice social distancing, and crucially, mask-wearing.”
 - \$70 billion of the \$105 billion funding will be reserved for K-12 education; approximately \$35 billion of the \$70 billion will be reserved for schools that re-open for full in-person instruction.
 - If schools do not re-open for in-person instruction, Trump asserted that the money should go directly to parents to pay for private schools or homeschooling. The President expressed that “if the school is closed, the money should follow the student so the parents and families are in control of their own decisions.”
- [White House Fact Sheet on COVID-19 Protections for Seniors](#), July 22
 - The White House released a fact sheet on recent federal initiatives to protect seniors from COVID-19.
 - Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will [allocate](#) \$5 billion from the Provider Relief Fund authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to Medicare-certified long term care facilities to enhance nursing homes’ response to COVID-19.
 - Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will begin [requiring](#), rather than recommending, that all nursing homes in states with a five percent positivity rate or greater test all nursing home staff each week. More than 15,000 testing devices will be deployed over the next few months to help support this mandate, with over 600 devices shipping this week.
 - CMS, in partnership with CDC, is rolling out an online, self-paced, on-demand Nursing Home COVID-19 Training focused on infection control and best practices. The [training](#) will be available to all 15,400 nursing homes nationwide.
 - The White House and CMS will [release](#) a list of nursing homes with an increase in COVID-19 cases based on federal reporting data to states each week.

World Health Organization (WHO)

- [*COVID-19 Situation Report – 185*](#), July 23
 - WHO Director-General Tedros [urged](#) “everyone to treat the decisions about where they go, what they do and who they meet with as life-and-death decisions – because they are.”
 - Tedros noted that “as long as [the virus] is circulating, everyone is at risk.... just because cases might be at a low level where you live, that doesn’t make it safe to let down your guard.”
 - WHO and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) jointly [launched](#) the [COVID-19 Law Lab](#), an initiative which “gathers and shares legal documents from over 190 countries... to help states establish and implement strong legal frameworks to manage the pandemic.”
 - WHO [published](#) a brief for policymakers on preventing and managing COVID-19 in long-term care health care facilities.

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

- [*CDC Releases New Resources to Support School Re-Opening*](#), July 24
 - CDC released new guidance on school re-opening for school administrators, teachers, parents, and caregivers.
 - The guidance promotes behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19, alters how a school and school day is structured, and outlines how to keep the school environment healthy through cleaning, proper ventilation, and other practices.
 - CDC published a [statement](#) on the importance of re-opening schools this fall. CDC noted that “the best available evidence indicates if children become infected, they are far less likely to suffer severe symptoms.” CDC stated that “at the same time, the harms attributed to closed schools on the social, emotional, and behavioral health, economic well-being, and academic achievement of children, in both the short- and long-term, are well-known and significant.”
 - CDC posted [guidance](#) on the use of cloth face coverings in schools, such as when riding a bus, in the classroom, in learning circles with close contact, during recess, in choir, or during one-on-one instruction.
 - CDC issued a decision-making [tool](#) for parents to choose between in-person and virtual learning by weighing the risks and benefits of available options. CDC noted that “families will differ in their choice of instructional formats based on whether the student or members of the household are at increased risk of severe illness, the student’s academic needs, the level of COVID-19 spread in the community, available school transportation options, school ability to execute recommended guidelines, and the student’s social-emotional wellbeing.”
 - CDC provided a [checklist](#) for parents to prepare for the upcoming school year, including having children practice putting on a face mask, planning for school closures or periods of quarantine, and reinforcing the concept of physical distancing with children.
 - CDC posted [recommendations](#) on screening K-12 students for symptoms of COVID-19. CDC does not currently recommend that universal symptom screenings (screening all students grades K-12) be conducted by schools. Instead, “caregivers should be strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of infectious illness every day.”

- [CDC COVID-19 Updates](#), July 24
 - CDC posted [tips](#) for scheduling services or repairs inside the home, such as the installation and repair of plumbing, electrical, heating, or air conditioning systems; painting; or cleaning services.
 - CDC [consolidated](#) seven national hospitalization forecasts. Five forecasts suggest an increase in the number of new hospitalizations per day over the next four weeks, while two other forecasts predict stable numbers or slight declines. On August 17, the forecasts estimate 2,000 to 13,000 new COVID-19 hospitalizations per day.
 - CDC posted COVID-19 [considerations](#) for retirement communities and independent living facilities.

New York State

- [New York State COVID-19 Updates](#), July 24
 - New York announced 9 deaths, 650 hospitalizations, and 156 COVID-19 patients in intensive care on Thursday, July 23.
 - Approximately 753, or 0.98%, of the 76,507 tests administered in New York on July 23 were positive for COVID-19.
 - The State Liquor Authority conducted compliance checks at bars and restaurants and issued violations to thirty-seven establishments for social distancing violations.
- [Bill Limiting Nursing Home Legal Immunity Stirs Controversy in Albany](#), July 24
 - The State budget, passed in April, included a provision to protect nursing homes and hospitals operating during the pandemic.
 - The provision provides these facilities with immunity from lawsuits stemming from their failure to protect residents from death or sickness caused by COVID-19. The legal immunity does not cover gross negligence or intentional criminal misconduct.
 - On Thursday, July 23, the New York Legislature passed a [bill](#) that narrows the scope of available immunity. The new bill specifies that immunity will “only apply to COVID-19 related care and treatment.”
 - According to the New York Times, the bill allows legal action if a health care facility or health care professional failed to prevent a patient from contracting COVID-19, or had not tried to safeguard them from infection. The change will not be applied retroactively.

New York City

- [New York City COVID-19 Updates](#), July 23
 - Mayor de Blasio [announced](#) that New York City now has the capacity to test up to 50,000 people for COVID-19 per day. The City’s Test & Trace Corps successfully reached 89% of all positive cases during the week ending July 18; 71% of those reached completed intake forms.
 - The City [launched](#) the [NYC Recovery Data Partnership](#), calling on community, non-profit, and private organizations to share data with the City to aid in COVID-19 response efforts. The data include real estate market metrics from StreetEasy, real-time measure of hiring activity from LinkedIn, and foot traffic data aggregated by neighborhood and business type from Foursquare

- [*Testing Bottlenecks Threaten NYC's Ability to Contain Virus*](#), July 23
 - A recent New York Times article commented on the City's current capacity for COVID-19 testing.
 - A quarter of COVID-19 tests administered in New York City in early July took over six days to return results. The median wait time at some clinics in the City is currently nine days.
 - New York processes about 70% of its tests at a network of more than 200 private labs, which the state has enlisted to process specimens. The average wait time for results from those labs is 2.6 days.
 - Samples sent to busy national labs had wait times that averaged six to 10 days due to the outbreak's spike in states such as California, Florida, and Texas.
 - Some public officials and laboratory executives warned that New York's strategy of allowing anyone who wants a test to get one is unsustainable, given the current supply.
 - A City Hall adviser noted that "any lag in [the testing] process can make it more difficult to have case and contact tracing be effective."

Other Related Updates

- [*Open Letter Urges Government Leaders to Take Action Against COVID-19*](#), July 23
 - More than 150 health professionals signed an open [letter](#) urging government leaders to take action against COVID-19. The letter was published by U.S. Public Interest Research Group, a non-partisan, non-profit organization.
 - The letter highlights that the United States needs to increase its daily testing capacity to test everyone with flu-like symptoms plus anyone they have been in close contact with over the last two weeks.
 - This level of testing — which, according to researchers, is the minimum necessary to mitigate the disease — would require more than double the number of daily tests currently being performed. According to a New York Times [tracker](#), the United States performs only 40% of the required number of daily tests.
 - The letter states that "non-essential businesses should be closed." Restaurant service should be limited to take-out. People should stay home, going out only to get food and medicine or to exercise and get fresh air. Masks should be mandatory in all situations, indoors and outdoors, when interacting with others.
 - The letter asks leaders to bar non-essential interstate travel, noting that "when people travel freely between states, the good numbers in one state can go bad quickly."

- [*American Academy of Pediatrics Issues Interim Guidance on Return to Sports*](#), July 23
 - American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) released a set of recommendations for youth athletes.
 - To limit the spread of COVID-19, AAP recommends cloth face coverings for coaches, officials, spectators, and volunteers, as well as for athletes on the sidelines. Facial coverings are also recommended during non-vigorous exercise when physical distancing isn't feasible.
 - For athletes exposed to COVID-19, AAP recommends a minimum of two weeks without exercise or competition.

- Youths who are symptomatic should take a two-to-four-week break and should be cleared for participation by a clinician. Those with severe presentations should be treated as if they have myocarditis and should not exercise for three to six months.
- [*FDA COVID-19 Updated: Daily Roundup*](#), July 23
 - FDA [updated](#) information on testing supply substitution strategies to include validated supply alternatives that labs can use to continue performing testing when there is a supply issue with some components of a molecular test.
 - FDA and Federal Trade Commission (FTC) [issued](#) a joint warning letter to a company for offering unapproved products for the treatment of COVID-19.

Other recent events covered in detail elsewhere:

- [The Effect of COVID-19 on Global Private Equity Markets](#), July 23
- [COVID-19: Rethinking the “S” in ESG in Light of the Pandemic](#), July 23
- [Encouraging Internal Reporting to Mitigate COVID-19-Related Risk](#), July 22
- [COVID and Race: A Conversation with Leaders in Health Care](#), July 21
- [Non-Binding Guidance: FDA Regulation of COVID-19 Diagnostic Tests and Return to Work](#), July 21

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