

## OSU Extension Programming Clarifications

*(as of November 20, 2020)* Please refer to Dean Kress' Nov. 19 message below:

This afternoon, it was announced that Franklin County has now gone purple (in the Public Health Advisory System) (<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/public-health-advisory-system>). The Ohio Department of Health's guidance for those in purple counties is "stay at home/necessary travel only." Also, 68 of our counties are now red.

We anticipate the university will continue to update the Safe and Healthy Buckeyes website (<https://safeandhealthy.osu.edu/>); and I recommend regularly checking there for updates. On the home page, if you scroll down, all updates are added with the date they were posted. Please watch for email updates from President Johnson, which will also be posted on the site.

We will also share within CFAES, any information specific to our work. We are currently working to identify and share guidance regarding essential activities. All faculty and staff (regardless of the campus or county in which they reside) who can work from home are encouraged to coordinate with their supervisors and work remotely to enhance the safety of our campuses and facilities for those who must come in. If you have any signs of illness, please do not report to work, but contact your supervisor.

CFAES Dean Kress and OSU Extension Director Wilkins have compared notes since the governor's 2pm update on Nov. 19. All OSU Extension professionals will follow the dean's guidance as expressed in this message.

### **(per Jackie) ... I have the following additional clarifications and updates regarding Ohio State University Extension county offices:**

Please continue to monitor the Ohio Public Health Advisory System regularly, as it is updated weekly, reflecting the changing status of our counties.

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/public-health-advisory-system>

### **Purple Counties**

When a county turns **PURPLE** indicating it is in a level 4 Public Emergency, this includes a stay-at-home order. **Offices are to be closed and employees will work virtually. Meetings and events need to be canceled, postponed, or held virtually.**

**Franklin County is now Purple** – In accordance with and in support of the "COVID-19 Health Advisory for the City of Columbus and Franklin County" issued jointly by Franklin County Public Health and Columbus Public Health on Nov. 20, all 4-H activities and programs, including club meetings, must be held virtually, or postponed until after the advisory expires on Dec. 18. All employees will be transitioning back to teleworking only until the status changes. Some counties are approaching purple: Montgomery, Lake, and Lorain.



### Red Counties

When a county turns **RED**, indicating it is in a level 3 Public Emergency, county offices will remain open (unless the offices have been closed by county commissioners or there is a specific set of circumstances that require a temporary closure (e.g., inability to cover due to illness or HR- or area leader-approved accommodations). Each office can make the necessary adjustments weekly and even daily (if needed and discussed with supervisors) to meet minimal coverage needs.

Meetings and educational programs in **RED counties** need to be evaluated; do meetings or programs need to be held in person or can it be moved to a virtual format or postponed? We encourage moving to virtual when possible and feasible right now. These counties will also need to check with the local Health Department as they may have restrictions on events when a county turns **red**. If these programs and meetings make the most sense to host in-person and you have an exemption, use your best practices and safety guidance to continue to keep everyone healthy. We have up to this point, through extreme diligence and adherence to safety measures, avoided contributing to the spread and have been able to keep our programming and offices open and available to serve the public.

Some county commissioners have issued instructions for reducing numbers in office or closing offices. So far, I am only aware of the following non-purple county being closed: Clark, Lawrence, and Cuyahoga.

However, if your local community leaders (e.g., commissioners, mayors, health departments) are limiting building access, moving to full telework, or making other adjustments, work in tandem with your supervisor to parallel.

### Orange and Red Counties

- Be realistic about what programs need to happen in the next four to six weeks and determine if they make the most sense and are feasible to be offered in-person or if they should be offered virtually.
- Be thoughtful about how many people need to be covering the office over the next few weeks to meet the needs of the community and stakeholders. Talk within your county office frequently and respectfully about what your community and office needs are each week as COVID-19 numbers fluctuate. It is completely appropriate to reduce the number of days open to the public right now if you haven't already considered this as the COVID numbers increase in various counties. Simply talk to your supervisor and submit your revised plan. It generally takes very little time to make modifications, and we are turning these modified plans around in 24-48 hours.
- Communicate regularly with stakeholders (i.e., commissioners, volunteers, participants, community partners) to have a feel for how they are handling the increasing numbers in COVID-19 cases and ask what adjustments they are currently making or anticipating.
- Assess the actual versus perceived pressure (by constituents or yourself) to offer in-person programming right now. Ask yourself, has this changed over the last few weeks? Is an adjustment warranted? If you have an exemption and you feel the need to cancel or postpone it, you are supported in doing so. Conversely, if you feel it is warranted and can hold it safely, you are also supported in doing so.



Some things are changing daily, and the Public Health Advisory System is only updated weekly. If you are struggling to meet the needs around program planning or office coverage, or if you are experiencing difficulty coming to a collaborative consensus about local needs and office coverage in your county, feel free to reach out to your supervisor for assistance.

Let's stay vigilant and flexible; but remember, your safety and that of our clientele comes first. Keep the lines of communication open locally and with your supervisors, stakeholders, commissioners, and OSU Extension administration.

Remember, the community spread of COVID-19 remains fluid and ever-changing. We may need to modify this guidance at any time. Be prepared to accomplish things via telework; and have signage and communications prepared if your county is approaching purple or as a proactive planning measure in all counties.

Stay well, Jackie

For more information, visit [go.osu.edu/extension-covid-19](https://go.osu.edu/extension-covid-19).

