

**PUBLIC HEALTH VARIANCE REQUEST  
SAFER AT HOME  
SAGUACHE COUNTY  
May 15, 2020**

**PURPOSE**

This Public Health Safer-at-Home Plan is being issued to continue to limit the health impacts of COVID-19. This Plan implements measures to allow limited re-opening of certain industries and businesses in Saguache County while maintaining sustainable levels of social distancing. This Plan continues social distancing requirements for all residents and Stay-at-Home requirements for vulnerable populations pursuant Executive Order D 2020 017. This plan is effective within the entirety of Saguache County, including all cities and towns within the County.

**DESCRIPTION OF SAGUACHE COUNTY**

Saguache County is a very rural County with the county being 3,169 square miles, with a wide range of uses, including a large agricultural community that provides Saguache County with a distance between our citizens and municipalities.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Saguache County which is 3,169 square miles is land on 1.7 square miles (0.05%) is water. Saguache County is the 7<sup>th</sup> largest of Colorado's 64 (65) counties. As of the census of 2000, there were 5,917 people, 2,300 households and 1,557 families living in our county.

The population density was 2 people per square mile. There were 3,087 housing units an average density of 1 per square mile. The racial makeup of the county was 71.29% White, 1.12% Black or African American, 2.06% Native American, 0.46% Asian, 23.0% from other races, and 3.08% from two or more races. 45.26% of the population were Hispanic or Latino of any race.

The median income for a household in the county was \$25,495, and the median income for a family was \$28,405. Males had a median income of \$25,158 versus \$18,862 for females. The per capita income for the county was \$13,121. About 18.70% of families and 22.60% of the population were below the poverty line, including 27.60% of those under age 18 and 12.50% of those age 65 or over.

Saguache County is an extremely vast frontier county. As a result, our communities and population have a great deal of geographic separation and are relatively independent of each other. This should be taken into consideration when looking at perhaps higher case numbers in a particular region that may have no bearing to the rest of the county. It is our opinion that the best way to address this issue is to allow Saguache county to address each application in relation to its geographic area and the infection statistics for that region.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Governor of Colorado issued several Executive Orders to address the current COVID-19 pandemic since March 11, 2020, including an Executive Order declaring a disaster emergency due to the presence of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 in Colorado.

On March 25, 2020, the Governor of Colorado Issued Executive Order D 2020 017, which ordered Coloradans to Stay at Home due to the presence of COVID-19 in the state. This order was issued in response to the existence of hundreds of confirmed and presumptive case of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and related deaths across the State of Colorado, Further, there is substantial evidence of community spread of COVID-19 throughout the State.

On March 25, 2020, the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment issued Public Health Order 20-14 based on the Governor's Executive Order D 2020 017. On April 1<sup>st</sup>, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment updated Public Health Order 20-14 adding clarification to the essential services and social distancing definitions of the Stay a Home requirements.

On April 27, 2020 the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment issued a Safer at Home Public Health Order 20-28 based on the Governor's Executive Order D 2020 044 allowing many Coloradans to return to work while maintaining a sustainable level of social distancing.

Saguache County demonstrated proof of two conditions, very low case counts of COVID 19 and 14 consecutive days of decline of infection of COVID 19 in the county. The Safer at Home Saguache County plan is approved by Saguache County Public Health, Saguache County Board of County Commissioners setting as the Saguache County Board of Health and is fully supported by Health of the Rockies Regional Medical Center, located in Chaffee County, Colorado.

## **LEGAL AUTHORITY**

This Order is adopted pursuant to the legal authority set forth in sections 25-1-506 and 25-1-508, 25-1-509, Colorado Revised Statutes as well as all other applicable laws, rules, regulations, order and declarations. Under this authority, the Saguache County Public Health Director has the duty to investigate and control the causes of the epidemic or communicable diseases and conditions affecting public health; to establish, maintain, and enforce isolation and quarantine; to exercise physical control over the property and over the persons of the people with the territorial limits of Saguache County; and to prohibit the gatherings of people to protect the public health; all as the Public Health Director may find necessary for the protection of the public health. Immediate issuance of the Order is deemed reasonable and necessary under the existing circumstances and necessary for the preservation of the public health, safety and welfare.

This variance request is complementary to CDPHE Order 20-18 and therefore, should not be relied upon solely. An easy-to-follow listing of the details for both the Colorado and Saguache County "Safer at Home" order can be found at [www.saguchecounty.net/publichealth](http://www.saguchecounty.net/publichealth).

## **SAGUACHE COUNTY SUPPRESSION PLAN AND GENERAL GUIDANCE**

Suppression Plan and Best Practices for Saguache County Residents: Each community within Saguache County will be assessed as requests are submitted for the opening of the types within the attachments – restaurants, places of worship, recreation, motels and Bed n Breakfasts/Airbnb's.

- Maintain physical distancing (6 feet)
- Adults 65 years and older and high-risk populations shall limit public interactions and stay at home as much as possible
- Use cloth face coverings for interactions where physical distancing is not possible or when entering public places
- Stay home and not go to work or out in the public if experiencing symptoms
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol
- Clean and disinfect all non-porous, high-touch surfaces frequently
- All persons who traveled for more than 24 hours away from Saguache County are asked to isolate and quarantine themselves from all other persons, without exception, for a period of at least seven (7) days

Guidance and Requirements for Saguache County Businesses:

Perform frequent environmental cleaning and disinfection (concentrate on high touch surfaces like tables, door knobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.)

Restaurants, Recreation Facilities, Places of Worship, Motels, Bed and Breakfasts, Airbnb's

- Arrange spaces so that everyone can maintain at least six (6) feet distance from each other
- Make reasonable work accommodations for vulnerable populations who are still under the Stay at Home advisement
- Monitor employees and volunteers for one of the following symptoms:
  - a) Cough shortness of breath/difficulty breathing or a least two of the following symptoms:
    - Fever
    - Chills
    - Repeated shaking with chills
    - Muscle pain
    - Headache
    - Sore Throat
    - New loss of taste or smell

Symptomatic employees and volunteers must be excluded from the workplace.

Employees and contracted workers whose duties include close contact with members of the public shall wear a non-medical cloth face covering over the nose and mouth at all times when dealing with the public.

All other employees are encouraged to wear a non-medical cloth face covering over the nose and mouth while working, except where doing so would compromise the individual's health. In some instances, cloth face masks are required for the public to enter a facility. All businesses have the option to require anyone entering their facility to wear a cloth face covering if they so choose.

Implement or maintain return to work policies.

The following business shall remain closed:

Bars, taverns, brewpubs, breweries, microbreweries, distillery pubs, wineries, wine tasting rooms (except for retail), cigar bars, special permit licensees, clubs, and other places offering alcoholic beverages for on-site consumption except restaurants.

Restaurants are allowed to partially open as outlined in the attached guidelines.

Places of worship are allowed to increase the number of people in their facilities, if they so choose, as outlined in the attached documents.

Saguache County does not differentiate between critical and non-critical businesses, employers are allowed to open their business under the attached guidelines but are encouraged to do so at their own pace.

Recommendations for specific industries are included in the following attachments:

- Attachment A: Restaurants
- Attachment B: Places of worship
- Attachment C: Recreation
- Attachment D: Motels
- Attachment E: Bed n Breakfasts and Airbnb's

Group Gatherings

- Group gatherings shall contain no more than ten (10) people
- Participants shall maintain at least six (6) feet distance from each other
- No festivals or other organized large gatherings will be allowed until at least July 1<sup>st</sup>, at which time the situation will be evaluated to determine when and if festivals and other types of large gatherings can resume
- Large venues shall remain closed
- Private events that involve more than ten (10) people shall not be allowed at this time

## DURATION

This Plan will be is effective upon approval of the Colorado Department of Public Health. This plan will be amended to include details for phase 2 and phase 3 when appropriate. This plan shall expire six (6) weeks from approval by the State, unless extended further.

Each of the Safer at Home phases assumes a two-week period. The decision to move into the next phase, stay at the current phase, or go back to Stay at Home will be made by Saguache County Public Health based on the rate of positive COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in Saguache County.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Upon approval by the Colorado Department of Health

Lynette Grant May 15, 2020

**Lynette Grant**  
Saguache County Public Health Director

Approved by the Saguache County Board of Health on May 15, 2020.



HEART OF THE ROCKIES  
REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

May 6, 2020

Saguache County Commissioner  
P.O. Box 100  
Saguache, CO 81149

Dear Commissioners Ken Anderson, Jason Anderson, and Timothy Lovato,

I am writing this letter in support of Saguache County's request for exemption from Governor Polis's Safer at Home Order. As a rural county with a population of approximately 6,800 residents, only three confirmed cases of COVID-19, and no COVID-19 related deaths, the strict measures imposed by the Safer at Home Order are not in proportion relative to the reality in Saguache County.

Referred to as the "Northern Gateway" to the San Luis Valley and covering a land area excess of 3,000 square miles, Saguache County has a rich history rooted in agriculture and ranching. With relatively few businesses, including many 'mom and pop' types of establishments that provide basic necessities including fuel, hardware and groceries, the locals depend on these businesses for their very sustenance. To lose even one of these (and many are on the brink of permanent closure) would be disastrous to a very fragile economy as well as a significant risk factor for residents that may not have a reliable means of transportation.

Following is the rational and expanded explanation that form the basis for Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical Center's (HRRMC's) support of Saguache County's request for exemption from the Safer at Home order.

1. Unlike other areas of Colorado, Saguache County never experienced a rise and fall of COVID-19 cases; therefore, there is no "curve to flatten" as it remains flat.
2. Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical Center (HRRMC) operates a Certified Hospital Based Rural Health Clinic (Saguache Health Center) located on Main Street in Saguache and provides family practice services to area residents. HRRMC also delivers retail pharmacy four days per week to the Saguache Health Center from Salida through HRRMC's retail pharmacy at no delivery cost to the residents. HRRMC, through the Saguache Health Center also provides home sleep study equipment to diagnose sleep apnea for patients in Saguache County. Finally, HRRMC provides physical therapy services two days per week in the same building where the Saguache Health Center operates. The clinic and therapy services have experienced significantly lower patient volumes since the COVID-19 crisis began (2-3 patients per day vs. 15-25 patients per day) and can easily accommodate additional patient volume.
3. While the Saguache Health Center currently refers Saguache County residents to HRRMC's main campus for COVID-19 testing, should CDPHE provide the Saguache Department of Public Health with testing kits and the necessary PPE, HRRMC is willing to collaborate with Public Health to offer COVID-19 testing at the Saguache Health Center.
4. Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical Center (HRRMC) is a Critical Access Hospital located in Salida, CO; with a standard capacity of twenty-five inpatient beds, the ability to increase to at least thirty-six beds (in an emergency), is averaging under 10 inpatients per day and has not admitted a COVID-19 patient since April 11, 2020. HRRMC averaged 12 inpatients per day prior to the COVID-19 Safer at Home Order. We have also experienced a significant decline in patients accessing our 24/7 emergency department since the Safer at Home Order was enacted.
5. The Saguache Health Center has encouraged patients to stay at home and receive services when needed via telehealth platform (Zoom).
6. Every patient undergoes screening for COVID-19 symptoms over the phone when making an appointment, during appointment reminder calls, during pre-registration prior to their appointment, and either via telehealth or in person at the clinic. Additionally, patients presenting to the clinic are required to have their temperature taken. Finally, patients presenting to the Saguache Health Center wear a surgical mask during their screening and treatment.
7. Patient education on COVID-19 symptoms, social distancing, hand washing, wearing a mask, safer at home, and self-quarantine are routine for all patients served by the Saguache Health Center.

HRRMC currently has the capacity to support Saguache County's healthcare needs. Please feel free to contact me with questions or for additional information.

Respectfully,

Robert Morasko  
Robert Morasko (May 7, 2020)

Robert Morasko, President/CEO  
Salida Hospital District

P.O. Box 429 • 1000 Rush Dr. • Salida, Colorado 81201 • 719-530-2200 • hrrmc.com

## ATTACHMENT A: RESTAURANTS

Restaurants are encouraged to continue to do business through take-out, deliver, and curbside pickup. If restaurants so choose, they can provide limited dine-in service. We understand there may be concerns about staff safety, and about whether certain facilities are under conducive to successful implementation of social distancing best practices. Therefore, this partial opening opportunity is completely voluntary. Restaurants that choose to open their dining spaces may do so under the following guidelines. A mitigation plan must be provided to approved by Saguache County Public Health prior to opening with the following addressed before opening to the public:

- Limit the number of customers in your dining space to 30% of your fire/building code capacity
- Do not allow customers to wait in the lobby area or in lines outside the door for a table
- Implement a reservation system
- Notify customers via text or phone call when their table is ready
- Post signs at entrances regarding face coverings, and post signs through the facility as needed to remind the customers of social distancing and proper hygiene guidelines
- Customers are required to wear cloth face coverings in order to enter the business, and to keep their face coverings in place until they've reached their table
- Make reasonable accommodations for vulnerable individuals who are still under the Stay at Home advisement. (e.g. seating assistance, special hours)
- Ask customers if they are experiencing any symptoms prior to seating them in the dining area. If they are, do not allow them to enter
- Group parties shall be limited to six (6) member of a single household
- Bars shall remain closed, including those that are part of restaurants
- Implement one-way entry/exit, and directional walkways as much as possible
- In-room dining shall follow strict physical distancing practices (6 feet)
- Spread people/tables out so there is a least six (6) feet distance between individuals/tables
- Self-serving stations shall remain closed (drinking stations, bulk dry, etc.)
- Don't allow public sharing of utensils or condiment containers
- Buffets shall have an employee serving the food, no self-serving allowed
- Perform frequent environmental cleaning and disinfection of bathrooms and high-touch surfaces

Monitor employees for one of the following symptoms:

Cough

Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing

or at least two (2) of the following symptoms:

Fever

Chills

Repeated shaking with chills

Muscle pains

Headache

Sore throat

New loss of taste or smell

Symptomatic employees must be excluded from the workplace.

Employees and contracted workers whose duties include close contact with members of the public shall wear a non-medical cloth face covering over the nose and mouth.

All other employees are encouraged to wear a non-medical cloth face covering over the nose and mouth while working, except where doing so would compromise the individual's health.

Implement or maintain physical barriers for high-contact settings (e.g. cashiers)

Implement touchless payment methods when possible.

Stagger shifts if feasible to decrease employee numbers at the business.



## ATTACHEMNT B: PLACES OF WORSHIP

Places of worship are encouraged to continue online or drive-up services as much as possible. For activities within a facility, places of worship are allowed to increase the number of participants, if they so choose, as outlined in the following guidelines:

- Limit the number of guests to no more than fifty (50), provided there's a least six (6) feet distance between individuals or between groups, which shall consist only of members of a single household
- Use drive-in type venues, when possible to broadcast audio and video to keep attendees in their vehicles to not socialize through vehicles windows
- Employees, crew, volunteers etc. shall follow all social/physical distancing requirements
- Funerals and other special events shall follow the CDC's funeral guidance
- Weddings and other small events may resume as long as the gatherings are of fifty (50) or fewer people and physical distancing of six (6) feet apart is observed.
- Event staff are required to wear a mask or cloth face covering and appropriate protective equipment as needed and required by OSHA standards. The fifty (50) person limit includes event staff, volunteers, family members etc.
- Do not allow guests to wait in the lobby area, or in lines outside the door
- Post signs at entrances and throughout the facility as needed to encourage face coverings and to remind guests of social distancing and proper hygiene guidelines
- Make reasonable accommodations for vulnerable individuals who are still under the Stay at Home advisement. (e.g. seating assistance, special hours)
- Do not allow anyone to attend any event/activity in person if they are experiencing symptoms of any illness
- Implement one-way entry/exit, and directional walkways as much as possible
- Place markings on floors to maintain at least six (6) feet distance where lines might form
- Spread people out so there is a least six (6) feet distance between individuals or between groups, which shall consist only of members of a single household
- Implement touchless offering and communion options as much as possible
- Perform frequent environmental cleaning and disinfection of bathrooms and high-touch surfaces

Monitor employees for one of the following symptoms:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing

Or at least two (2) of the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pains
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

Symptomatic employees must be excluded from the workplace.

Employees and volunteers' workers whose duties include close contact with members of the public shall wear a non-medical cloth face covering over the nose and mouth.

All other employees are encouraged to wear a non-medical cloth face covering over the nose and mouth while working, except where doing so would compromise the individual's health.

Implement or maintain physical barriers for high-contact settings (e.g. cashiers)

Implement touchless payment methods when possible.

Stagger shifts if feasible to decrease employee numbers at the business.

## ATTACHMENT C: RECREATION

Local recreation facilities can be open to the public under the following guidelines. Saguache County or any municipality can enact stricter orders as they see fit. A mitigation plan must be provided to and approved by Saguache County Public Health prior to opening with the following addressed before opening to the public:

- Group gatherings shall contain no more than 10 people
- Park facilities conducive to gathering including shelters, picnic areas and playgrounds shall remain closed
- Saguache County Public Health documentation must be handed out to each customer/family which contains information for Nurse Hot Line phone numbers and information
- League or pick-up sports are prohibited at this time
- Par facilities that enable social distancing such as trails, green spaces, tennis courts, and gold courses will remain open
- Golfers shall maintain physical distance of six (6) feet at all times
- Motorized golf cars shall contain no more than one golfer; members of a single household can ride together in the same cart
- Golfers should avoid sharing clubs and golf balls
- Maintain physical distancing in outdoor settings (6 feet while hiking, 15 feet while running or biking)
- Outdoor recreation facilities can remain open to the public whenever adequate controls can be implemented to ensure physical distancing (six feet)
- Dressing rooms shall remain closed, customers must enter and exit facility in their pool attire, no changing at the pool is allowed

Monitor employees and volunteers for one of the following symptoms:

Cough  
Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing

Or at least two (2) of the following symptoms:

Fever  
Chills  
Repeated shaking with chills  
Muscle pain  
Headache  
Sore throat  
New loss of taste or smell

Symptomatic employees and volunteers must be excluded from the premises.

Employees and volunteers' workers whose duties include close contact with members of the public shall wear a non-medical cloth face covering over the nose and mouth.

All other employees are encouraged to wear a non-medical cloth face covering over the nose and mouth while working, except where doing so would compromise the individual's health.

**Perform frequent cleaning and disinfection of bathrooms and high-touch surfaces.  
Implement or maintain physical barriers for high-contact settings (e.g. cashiers)**

**Implement touchless payment methods when possible.  
Stagger shifts if feasible to decrease employee numbers at the business.**

**Only essential travel allowed; avoid traveling outside of your county or local community for recreation.**

## ATTACHMENT D: MOTELS

Local motels can be open to the public under the following guidelines. Saguache County or any municipality can enact stricter orders as they see fit. A mitigation plan must be provided to and approved by Saguache County Public Health prior to opening and the facility must provide proof the motel is registered and/or licensed with the local jurisdiction along with the mitigation plan and must address the following before opening to the public:

- Group gatherings shall contain no more than ten (10) people
- Plan for cleaning facility and rooms before, during and after client stay
- Limit the number of guests to permit no more than half of the available stay capacity per unit
- Provided there is at least six (6) feet distance between individuals or between groups, which shall consist only of members of a single household
- Do not allow guests to wait in the lobby area or in lines outside the door
- Post signs at entrances and throughout the facility as needed to encourage face coverings and to remind guests of social distancing and proper hygiene guidelines
- Encourage vulnerable individuals who are still under the Stay at Home advisement. Discourage any such individual from traveling to and/or entering the facility.
- Do not allow anyone to stay at the facility if they are experiencing symptoms of any illness
- Implement one-way entry/exit, and directional walkways as much as possible
- Place markings on the floors to maintain at least six (6) feet distance where lines might form

Monitor employees and volunteers for one of the following symptoms:

Cough  
Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing

Or at least two (2) of the following symptoms:

Fever  
Chills  
Repeated shaking with chills  
Muscle pain  
Headache  
Sore throat  
New loss of taste or smell

Symptomatic employees and volunteers must be excluded from the premises.

Employees and volunteers' workers whose duties include close contact with members of the public shall wear a non-medical cloth face covering over the nose and mouth.

All other employees are encouraged to wear a non-medical cloth face covering over the nose and mouth while working, except where doing so would compromise the individual's health.

Perform frequent cleaning and disinfection of bathrooms and high-touch surfaces.

Implement or maintain physical barriers for high-contact settings (e.g. cashiers)

Implement touchless payment methods when possible.

Stagger shifts if feasible to decrease employee numbers at the business.

Only essential travel allowed; avoid traveling outside of your county or local community for recreation.

ATTACHMENT E: BED n BREAKFAST's and Airbnb's

Local Bed and Breakfast facilities and Airbnb's can be open to the public under the following guidelines. Saguache County or any municipality can enact stricter orders as they see fit. A mitigation plan must be provided to and approved by Saguache County Public Health prior to opening and the facility must provide proof they are registered and/or licensed with the local jurisdiction along with the mitigation plan and must address the following before opening to the public:

- Group gatherings shall contain no more than ten (10) people
- Plan for cleaning facility and rooms before, during and after client stay
- Limit the number of guests to no more than ten (10), and half of the available stay capacity
- Provided there is at least six (6) feet distance between individuals or between groups, which shall consist only of members of a single household
- Do not allow guests to wait in the lobby area or in lines outside the door
- Post signs at entrances and throughout the facility as needed to encourage face coverings and to remind guests of social distancing and proper hygiene guidelines
- Encourage vulnerable individuals who are still under the Stay at Home advisement. Discourage any such individual from traveling to and/or entering the facility.
- Do not allow anyone to stay at the facility if they are experiencing symptoms of any illness
- Implement one-way entry/exit, and directional walkways as much as possible
- Place markings on the floors to maintain at least six (6) feet distance where lines might form

Monitor employees and volunteers for one of the following symptoms:

Cough

Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing

Or at least two (2) of the following symptoms:

Fever

Chills

Repeated shaking with chills

Muscle pain

Headache

Sore throat

New loss of taste or smell

Symptomatic employees and volunteers must be excluded from the premises.

Employees and volunteers' workers whose duties include close contact with members of the public shall wear a non-medical cloth face covering over the nose and mouth.

All other employees are encouraged to wear a non-medical cloth face covering over the nose and mouth while working, except where doing so would compromise the individual's health.

Perform frequent cleaning and disinfection of bathrooms and high-touch surfaces.

Implement or maintain physical barriers for high-contact settings (e.g. cashiers)

Implement touchless payment methods when possible.

Stagger shifts if feasible to decrease employee numbers at the business.

Only essential travel allowed; avoid traveling outside of your county or local community for recreation.

**Signature:** Lynette Grant, RN Director  
Lynette Grant, RN Director (May 15, 2020)

**Email:** [lgrant@saguachecounty-co.gov](mailto:lgrant@saguachecounty-co.gov)