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North Rhine-Westphalia extends Coronavirus Protection Ordinance: implementation of local coronavirus inhibitor and clear regulations for schools and events

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Ban on large events until 31 December 2020 / classroom mask obligation expires on 1 September 2020

The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs as well as the Ministry of Schooling and Education have issued the following statement:

Following the federal and state decrees to inhibit the spread of infection on 27 August 2020, North Rhine-Westphalia is now implementing the regulations and measures in the revised Coronavirus Protection Ordinance (CoronaSchVO). At the same time, the coronavirus ordinances will be extended until 15 September. New regulations for authorising events and regulations in schools will apply as of 1 September 2020, in addition to the implementation of a new coronavirus inhibitor that aims to facilitate faster, more tailored responses to increased local infection rates. The mask requirements on school grounds will be extended for this purpose. The initial precautionary measure of making a mask mandatory in the classroom in secondary and vocational schools expires on 1 September 2020 as announced, due to the developments in the infection rates.

The state has added regulations for a local coronavirus inhibitor to the revised Coronavirus Protection Ordinance, whereupon the following regulation shall apply: if the 7-day incidence rate in a district or independent city exceeds 35, the respective municipalities, the Landeszentrum Gesundheit Nordrhein-Westfalen (LZG.NRW) and the respective district government must immediately coordinate and implement tailored protective measures to inhibit the spread of infection. Local infections must be addressed early on. Another stage is reached with a 7-day incidence of 50, whereupon further measures must be

coordinated with the Ministry of Health as well.

With the extension of the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance, the state government is also revising the authorisation procedure for events. For events with 500 attendees and more, the organiser must ensure appropriate arrival and departure in addition to the hygiene and safety concept. Concepts for events with over 1,000 attendees must be submitted to the state following inspection and approval of the hygiene concept by the municipality. The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MAGS) can then grant its approval, or decline if holding such a large event cannot be allowed due to the need to inhibit state-wide infection rates. Large events will remain generally prohibited until 31 December 2020.

"The dynamic developments in the pandemic over the past weeks have shown that we must be alert," says Health Minister Karl-Josef Laumann. "That is why we have created a mechanism that allows us to react early on to increasing infection rates at the municipal level. The state is now also able to postpone events with more than 1,000 participants if the interregional infection rates simply do not allow for such events. Our explicit goal is to inhibit the virus in its early stage and thereby prevent the closure of day cares and schools, and a shutdown of private life. And so I once again appeal to all citizens: please continue responsibly following the existing rules and regulations."

Overall the revised ordinance does not earmark any considerable relaxations, due to the infection rates. The message remains clear: the current rules must be followed. That is why the minimum fine of 50 euros for violations against the obligation to wear a mask has been passed by the federal and other state governments. In North Rhine-Westphalia, failure to wear a mask in public transportation can result in a fine of 150 euros.

The Coronavirus Care Ordinance (CoronaBetrVO), which contains regulations pertaining to the operation of schools and day cares, will also be extended to 15 September. The regulations concerning the mask obligation in school buildings and on school premises will be extended, while the obligation to wear mouth and nose covering in the classroom can expire. The development in the infection rates in North Rhine-Westphalia and prior positive experiences in the schools have made this step possible. The safety concept for schools is made up of three pillars: hygiene concepts, qualified traceability, and mouth and nose protection. These three principles will remain in effect.

"The obligation to wear a mask in class at secondary schools was necessary during the uncertain period following the summer holidays, with a very much increased and growing rate of infections," says Schooling and Education Minister Yvonne Gebauer. "From the start it was limited to the time that could be reasonably estimated following the travel season, namely two weeks following the holidays. Three weeks after school resumed, the infection rates in North Rhine-Westphalia thankfully developed favourably and we can eliminate the obligation to wear a mask in class. A mask must only be worn when the students leave their assigned seats. This is a palpable relief. Yet we remain alert and are keeping in close contact with everyone involved in school policy and the schools themselves. At the same time we are consistently adhering to the strict hygiene and infection prevention measures at our schools so that we can preserve school life to the best of our ability. Our concept for school operation during the pandemic addresses and offers opportunities to react appropriately to developments in the infection rate.

In coordination with the school community, schools can agree to voluntary wear masks during class.

The regulations of the Coronavirus Incoming Travel Ordinance remain largely unchanged for the time being. The testing obligation and reporting procedure stem directly from the regulations decreed by the Federal Ministry of Health. Changes to these are expected for mid-September. Until then the state will harmonise its regulations solely

with regard to cross-border commuters and fulfilment of the reporting obligation by filling out passenger locator forms.

The changes in all ordinances are effective Tuesday, 1 September 2020.

Overview of the most important changes:

Legal establishment of infection rate monitoring (new § 15a)

- It is legally established that the health offices, with support from the Landeszentrum Gesundheit Nordrhein-Westfalen (LZG), will continuously monitor local, regional and national infection rates, whereby the 7-day incidence is a major indicator. Once the 7-day incidence in a district or independent city exceeds 35, the respective municipalities, the LZG and the respective district government must immediately coordinate and implement additional concrete safety measures to inhibit the spread of infection. If the infection rate cannot be exclusively attributed to certain facilities or similar locations, and limited, further safety measures beyond those specified in this ordinance may be decreed.
- As of a 7-day incidence of 50, additional safety measures must urgently be decreed. In such cases the Ministry of Health must also be included in the consultations.

Handling events (changes in §§ 2b)

- Beyond the prior regulations, the hygiene and infection prevention concept **at events with more than 500 participants** must also describe the arrival and departure of persons with adherence to the infection prevention requirements.
- As before, the concept must also describe how the minimum distance of 1.5 metres will be adhered to and how the special anti-infection hygiene measures (adjusted cleaning intervals, sufficient opportunities to disinfect hands, informational posters on how to act during the pandemic, etc.) are to be ensured.

- With regard to **events with more than 1,000 participants**, the municipalities must obtain authorisation from the Ministry of Health before receiving the permit to hold the event. This means that the local authorities report the events to the Ministry of Health for which they believe the hygiene and infection prevention concepts are in order, and which they would normally authorise. The Ministry of Health can decline to approve the event if holding such an event cannot be allowed due to the number of participants, despite a hygiene concept approved by the local authorities, and because of the interregional significance of the event for the infection rate with the goal of inhibiting that rate. The Ministry of Health can revoke its approval at any time if rising infection rates or other reasons make the holding of such an event impermissible.
- These regulations apply to all events taking place after 12 September 2020 in order to allow the authorities to implement the process.
- Large events will remain generally prohibited until 31 December 2020. The term "large event" does not refer to the number of attendees, but rather the relevance of the event to infection rates (shooting matches, street fairs, music festivals, etc.). The Ministry of Health is holding discussions about Christmas markets on the basis of submitted hygiene concepts.

Company excursions and company parties

- The regulations pertaining to company excursions and company parties, which have been prohibited up to now, will be compared with the regulations for private matters. Gatherings, get-togethers and events within companies, enterprises and official bodies being held for social and communicative occasions will be allowed and subject to the same requirements and restrictions that apply to private events.

Coronavirus Care Ordinance

- Mask obligations in school buildings and on the entire school premises remain in place. The obligation to wear a mask in class starting at class 5, provisionally effective until 31 August 2020, will be repealed when sitting at an assigned seat.
- Assigned seating in class is required in order to ensure traceability.

The corresponding regulations will be published throughout the day at www.land.nrw.

Please direct any civilian questions to the state government [Service Center](#), telephone 0211 837-1001.

Please send any questions to the press office of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs, telephone 0211 855-3118, or to the press office of the Ministry of Schooling and Education, telephone 0211 5867-3505.

This press text is also available on the state government website at www.land.nrw

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