

Reimagining LIFE TOGETHER

Addendum: Phase 2.1 - an option within Phase 2

November 10, 2020

While the original guidelines of “Reimagining Life Together” (RLT) remain in effect, this opportunity for ministries to enter a transition Phase 2.1 is a response to the widespread desire for regional contextualization.

The opportunity to enter Phase 2.1 is determined by county level data available at www.CovidActNow.org. Ministries, with consent of their pastor (executive director for other organizations) must apply to their District Superintendent (DS) or Director of Connectional Ministries (DCM) to enter this transitional phase even in cases where a reopening plan has already been approved. Local decisions about the use of church property for worship or other gatherings belong to the pastor without interference from the Board of Trustees (Book of Discipline, ¶ 2533). A local church shall not hold in-person worship in the church building or on church property without the approval of the pastor.

Ministries that are approved to enter Phase 2.1 may have in-person, indoor gatherings of up to 25 persons. This is a significant increase from Phase 2 (10 people maximum) and requires all the safety protocols that apply to Phase 2 (see RLT, p. 13-14). This expands opportunities to creatively engage in ministries that care for congregational and community members, especially in settings where virtual gatherings are not practical, without lowering our guard. Ministries must continue to follow the strictest guidelines that apply to their settings, whether those are from RLT or state/local government.

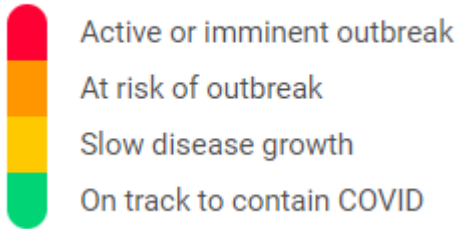
Determining Eligibility for Phase 2.1

The county level data from www.CovidActNow.org is the one data source the Greater Northwest Area of The United Methodist Church will use to determine if ministry settings may request to move to Phase 2.1. It is also the data source that will be used to determine if a ministry setting is required to move out of Phase 2.1 and back to Phase 2 with smaller gatherings and more restrictions. While there are other data sources, this assures we will all be using the same information.

After DS/DCM approval, decisions about whether a ministry remains in Phase 2.1 or reverts to Phase 2 will be made based on the same data every Monday morning. If Monday’s reported data causes a church in Phase 2.1 to revert to Phase 2, this change must take effect no later than Saturday morning. In other words, ministries approved for Phase 2.1 will know every Monday whether they may have up to 25 persons for indoor gatherings on Saturday and for the week ahead.

CovidActNow.org identifies 4 different Risk Levels to determine COVID risk in a geographic area:

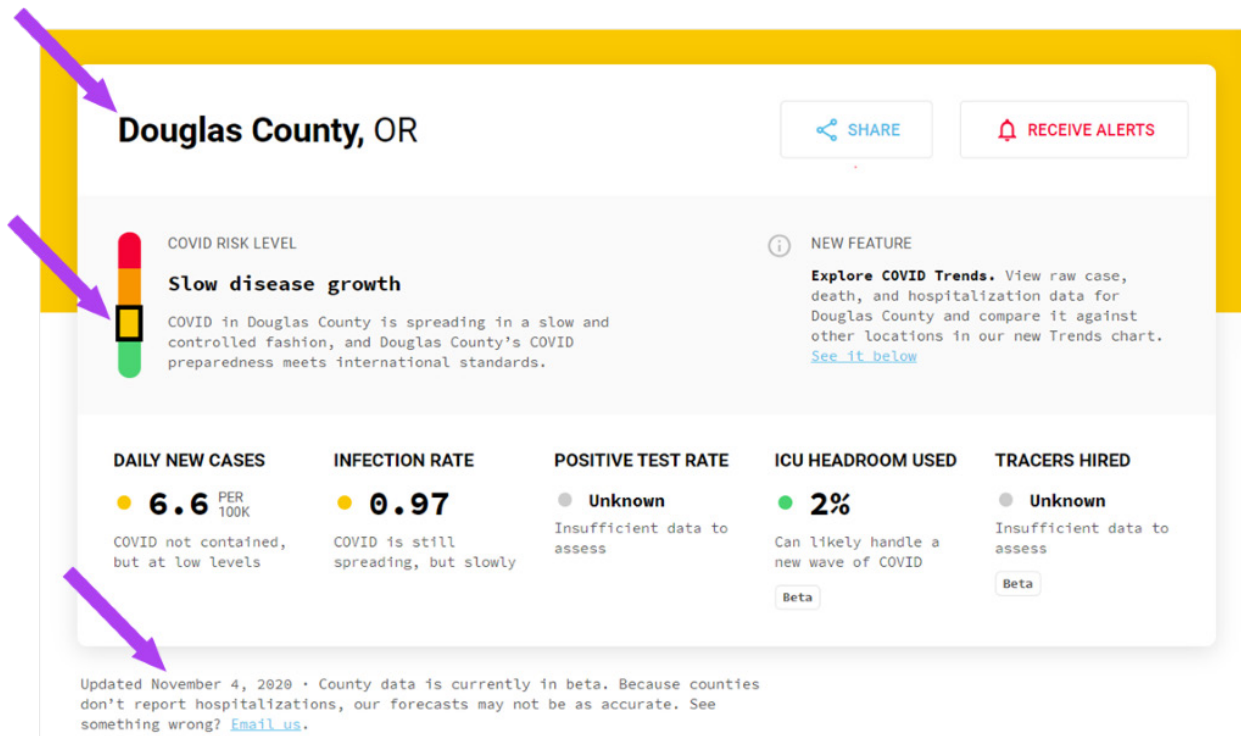
RISK LEVELS



CovidActNow.org uses 5 key indicators to determine risk levels:

1. Daily New Cases: How many new cases are confirmed daily?
2. Infection Rate: Is the number of infections going down?
3. Positive Test Rate: Is COVID testing widespread enough to identify new cases?
4. ICU Headroom Used: Do hospitals have capacity to treat a surge of COVID hospitalizations?
5. Tracers Hired: Are we hiring enough contact tracers given the number of new cases?

CovidActNow.org compiles the risk levels of the 5 key indicators (or as many key indicators as available in the county). This combined risk level is the determining factor for eligibility to request moving to Phase 2.1.



- ✦ A church or other ministry setting, with the consent of their pastor, and located within a county with a **YELLOW** (slow disease growth) or **GREEN** (on track to contain COVID) COVID risk level may request approval from their DS or DCM to move to RLT Phase 2.1. Phase 2.1 maintains all the guidelines of Phase 2 but allows for indoor gatherings for worship and other ministry activities up to a maximum of 25 people. As with Phase 2 guidelines, the wearing of face masks, strict physical distancing, hand washing and sanitizing remain requirements. Additionally, in-person communion, live singing or wind instruments, and coffee or other food service remain prohibited.
- Churches and other ministry settings located within a county with an **ORANGE** (at risk of outbreak) or **RED** (active or imminent outbreak) COVID risk level remain within RLT Phase 2
 - It is acknowledged that using data and standardizing the interpretation of it limits contextual understanding of individual and unique circumstances. In exceptional cases where a church or ministry setting with a combined risk level of **ORANGE** can provide overwhelming evidence and rationale for being considered for Phase 2.1, they may make a request for reconsideration.
 - Requests for churches or ministry settings with a combined risk level of **RED** will not be considered.

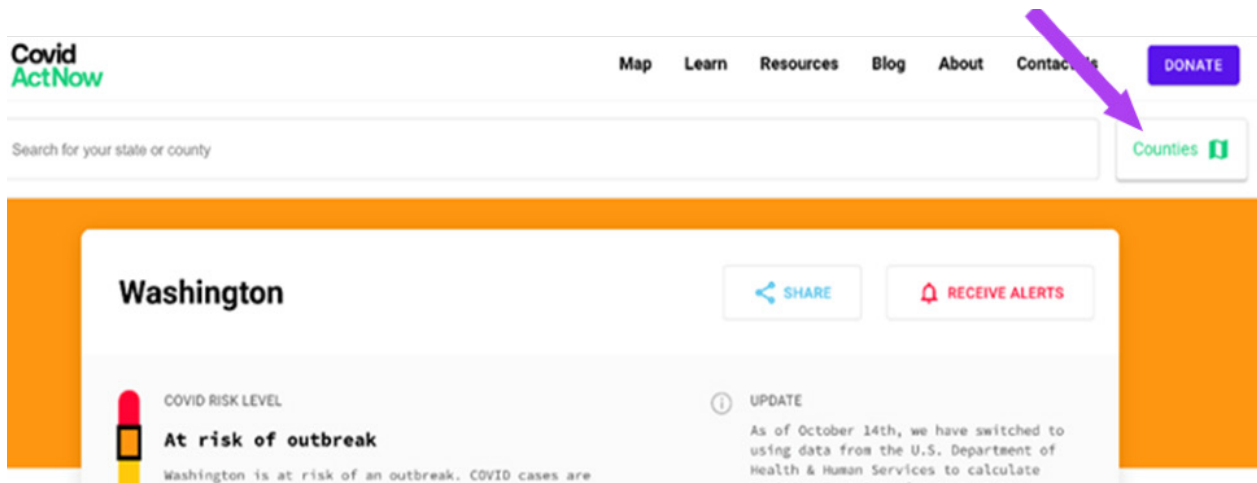
Additional Considerations Before Requesting to Move to Phase 2.1

As the reopening teams of churches and ministry settings think about requesting to move to Phase 2.1 consider the following:

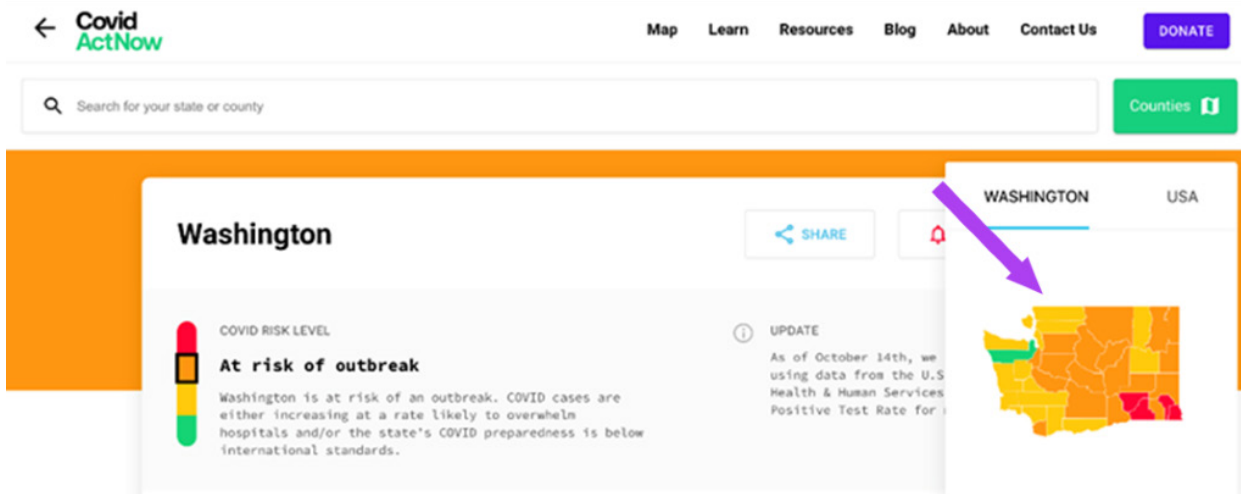
- The more gatherings held within a week the greater the risk to leaders and participants. Leaders (pastor, staff, volunteers) participating in 3 gatherings of 25 people interact with a total of 75 people. This is 75 opportunities to encounter someone who might unknowingly be asymptomatic for coronavirus. Additionally, if that leader is unknowingly asymptomatic they could infect those 75 people.
- Consider which of your leaders (pastor, staff, volunteers) have compromised immune systems and/or are in high-risk categories for coronavirus. Do you want to put these leaders at risk? Has someone had private conversations with all leaders, including the pastor, (regardless if they have compromised immune systems or are in high-risk categories) to discuss their level of comfort participating in in-person gatherings? What can your church do to protect your pastor or other church leaders if you move to in-person gatherings? What will you do if your pastor/leader has symptoms or has had COVID exposure and must avoid participating in a gathering?
- Consider how you might limit exposure within your facility even as use increases. Could you limit the length of time you gather at one event (perhaps moving from a 75-minute worship gathering to a 45-minute gathering)? Could groups meet in different spaces in your facilities or have gatherings on different days (to limit exposure by different gatherings sharing the same space)? Could you have “bubble or pod worship” with individuals/families who will attend the same service regularly as a consistent cohort?
- Larger groups mean greater attention to attendance for potential contact tracing if there is an exposure to COVID. How will you communicate a potential exposure?
- Contextualization likely means that your phase changes more frequently. If your county moves from **YELLOW** COVID risk level (slow disease growth) to **ORANGE** COVID risk level (at risk of outbreak) requiring moving from Phase 2.1 back to Phase 2, how will you immediately communicate with participants that the in-person gathering is no longer able to happen?
- Adaptable ways to participate in ministries remain important. How will you continue to support those who do not wish to participate in in-person gatherings?

Step by Step Instructions to Access Your Local Data for Phase 2.1 Eligibility

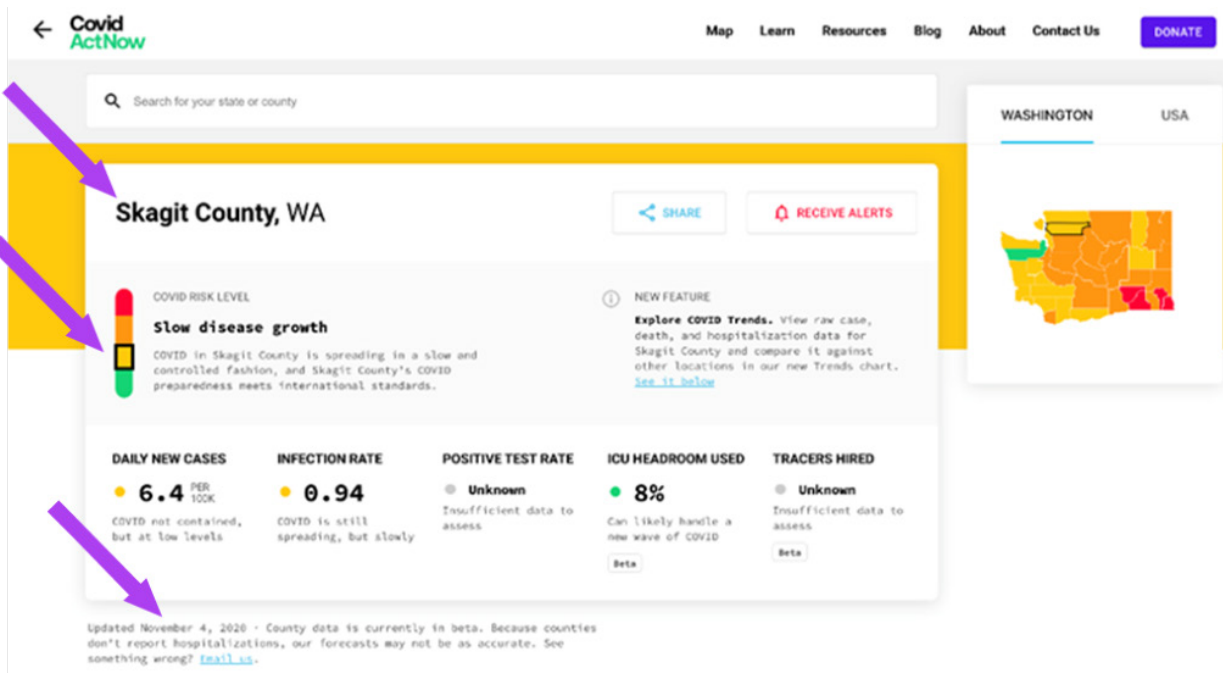
- Go to www.CovidActNow.org.
- Scroll to the US map and click your state.
- If you don't see a map of your state with counties, click on the "Counties" button (with green text and a green icon) on the right side of the screen. (It is just below the purple "Donate" button)



- A small map of the state will appear. Click the county where your ministry facility is located.



- The county color and date of that designation will be used to determine eligibility to enter or remain in Phase 2.1.



- The color of your county every Monday morning will determine if those ministries approved for Phase 2.1 may remain in Phase 2.1 or if they must return to Phase 2 (limited to gatherings with 10 persons maximum).