

# Some in-person classes, indoor dining halted here

## CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

**Steve Orr**

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Responding to the ever-increasing number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in the Rochester area, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Monday that parts of Rochester, Brighton, Gates, Greece, Irondequoit and Pittsford are now designated orange. The state’s orange designation generally means that schools must end inperson classes for now, indoor dining and bar service is banned, high-risk

businesses such as gyms and nail salons must close and worship services are limited to 33% capacity, with a maximum of 25 people.

Mass gatherings are limited to 10 people either indoors or outdoors.

Restaurants in the orange zone are not allowed indoor dining but can offer outdoor dining, with a four-person maximum per table.

The new restrictions go into effect Wednesday except for those on schools, which go into effect Thursday, a day when there are no classes scheduled

because of Thanksgiving, according to a tweet from Rochester Chamber of Commerce President Robert Duffy.

Duffy said schools may be able to reopen Monday but the restrictions on businesses and gatherings must remain in place at least two weeks.

“I think for those (business owners) who were closed earlier and are closed again, it’s going to be a big economic hit for them and their employees,” said Duffy, who has served as a point man for the state’s COVID-19 response in the Finger Lakes region.

### The impact on restaurants

Janine Caschette, owner of Avvino, in Brighton said the announcement did not come as a

and certain other businesses are affected, because for the most part, “they’ve done an outstanding job” and have not been identified as locations where large numbers of people are getting infected, Duffy said.

Rather, it’s been private parties and other gatherings where the worst super- spreader events have occurred, he said, and who are most responsible for the orange restrictions.

“These parties, gatherings, events where people are all together, kind of flouting the guidelines, when that happens don’t point a finger at the governor or anybody else,” he said.

### The impact on schools

Irondequoit Town Supervisor Dave Seeley said the ZIP codes 14609 and 14621, which include

approach to orange zone designation that considers the exceptionally low rate of infection in the school population.”

Bello and Mendoza also said they were “rapidly implementing a plan to provide increased COVID-19 testing in the affected ZIP codes.”

Increased testing won’t change the incidence of coronavirus infections in the orange zones, but could lower the percentage of tests that come back negative, satisfying the criteria set by Cuomo and his staff.

Under the state’s criteria, orangezone status can be ended if the affected area demonstrates a decline in the percentage of tests that come back positive over a 10-day period followed by

surprise.

“We’ve been preparing for at least a week to go to a takeout model,” she said. But the restaurant will need to lay off nine or 10 staff members, “which is really sad and hard to do.”

“It’s really frustrating that Pittsford and surrounding suburbs are staying open and we have to close,” she said. The restaurant, on Monroe Avenue, is two-thirds of a mile from the Pittsford town line.

(It developed later that a neighboring portion of Pittsford is in the orange zone as well.)

Caschette said that while the restaurant wants to be part of the solution, she is skeptical that a microcluster strategy will have an effect.

Last weekend Avvino had customers who drove from Buffalo, which was in the orange zone, and people wanted to go out for dinner.

“People’s behavior is not changing,” she said. “They are just moving to the places that are open.”

Outdoor restaurant dining with no more than four at a table will continue to be allowed, as will carry-out service.

### **Rochester areas in the orange designation**

Cuomo announced established of the orange restriction zone during a press briefing Monday but provided no details.

He briefly displayed a map showing the orange zone, and it appeared to include most or all of the city and parts of the three suburbs.

parts of his town and of northeast Rochester, were in the zone.

Portions of both East Irondequoit and West Irondequoit school districts fall within those ZIP codes, though Seeley said East Irondequoit would be impacted. He said the district would provide more information Monday afternoon.

Under the state’s rules, in-person education at public and private schools within an orange zone can only resume after a four-day hiatus for thorough cleaning of the building and sampling all students and staff for the novel coronavirus.

After reopening, schools must continue to test 25% of students and staff each week.

Duffy said in a media briefing that if the schools conduct the cleaning over the Thanksgiving weekend and set up a protocol to begin universal testing by Monday, they should be allowed to reopen to in-person classes then.

County officials pushed back Monday afternoon against the school-closure part of the orange designation.

“We want to be clear: we believe our schools should remain open as long as there is no evidence of spread in schools. The testing done in school buildings last week was proof that spread within the schools is not an issue, and that our schools are the safest place for our children during these uncertain times,” said a statement issued by County Executive Adam Bello and Public Health Commissioner Dr. Michael Mendoza.

three consecutive days with a positivity rate below 3%.

“Moving our community out of the yellow and orange cluster zones will take a community-wide effort. We know we can do this. Please continue to wear masks in public, wash your hands frequently, maintain a safe six-foot physical distance from others and limit your in-person gatherings. We all need to work together so we can safely reopen our economy and make sure our children are able to be in school,” they said.

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*Includes reporting by staff writers Tracy Schuhmacher and Victoria Freile and State Team reporter Jon Campbell.*



**Gov. Andrew Cuomo showed this slide showing new orange restriction zone. Text says “Irondequoit,” “Rochester 3.76%,” “Brighton” and “Gates/North Gates.”**  
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State officials later released a somewhere more clear map. It appears to show the orange zone includes:

- All of the city except for Charlotte.
- Central Brighton, centered on Monroe Avenue.
- Gates between Lyell and Ridgeway avenues west to Manitou Road.
- A sliver of Greece between Mt. Read Boulevard and Route 390.
- Irondequoit south of Route 104 to the east of Portland Avenue.
- A small piece of Pittsford along Monroe Avenue east of Clover Street.

It is possible that very small parts of Henrietta and Penfield are included as well. State officials promised a more detailed map.

Duffy also said that by Tuesday, the new zone should be reflected in an address- search tool on a state web page. To use it, visit <https://covidhotspotlookup.health.ny.gov>.

The zone, which may be based on ZIP codes, reflects areas when the rate of positive tests for coronavirus is deemed too high.

By its limited nature, the orange zone designation will create elements of unfairness, with a business on one side of a street ordered closed and the same type of business on the other side of the street allowed to remain open.

There is nothing to prohibit people who live in the orange zone from traveling outside it to go

“We will continue to advocate on behalf of our local school districts, and will work with them to continue to meet the needs of their students,” they said in the statement.

Only the school buildings that fall within the orange-designated area are affected. Other schools in that same district can continue to offer in-person classes, state officials said.

Rochester schools have been remote- learning only since the school year began, but suburban districts and private schools have had at least some in-person classes.

Brighton Central School District said Monday afternoon it would go to all-remote learning because it did not believe it was possible to satisfy the testing criteria set by the state.

The biggest problem, Superintendent Kevin McGowan said, was that one-third of student families have withheld permission for their student to be tested for the virus. Those students would not be allowed to attend classes under the orange-zone rules, but the district also lacks the ability to arbitrarily force those students to study remotely while others go to class.

“The bottom line is that we would love to be able to test 100% of people, but realize that 100% of people do not want to be tested. We don’t have capacity to support additional all-remote learners and the logistics of going in and out of remote instruction for significant numbers of students, but not entire classes, make this type of system ineffective and unsustainable,” McGowan said.



**Shaded area on map showing “orange” COVID restriction zone STATE OF NEW YORK**

*“We will continue to advocate on behalf of our local school districts, and will work with them to continue to meet the needs of their students.”*

*Statement issued by County Executive Adam Bello and Public Health Commissioner Dr. Michael Mendoza*

to a gym, restaurant or house of worship that is not covered by the new restrictions, Duffy noted.

It also is unfortunate that restaurants, gyms

“We need to be all remote until the state develops a different solution to this challenge and provides us guidelines that are feasible. To that end, we will be advocating with the state for an

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