

Arkansas continues to maintain a high COVID-19 hospitalization rate as the total number of cases in the state passes 45,000.

According to numbers from the Arkansas Department of Health, the state added 784 new cases, bringing the total to 45,381. Hospitalizations increased by 13, for a total of 526, the highest ever recorded number of COVID-19 hospitalizations in the state. The number of patients on a ventilator decreased by seven. The total is now 101.

The number of deaths increased by 15 for a total of 490.

Speaking during Gov. Asa Hutchinson's daily briefing on the pandemic, Acting Health Secretary Dr. José Romero spoke on the importance of leaving reliable contact information if being tested for COVID-19.

NEWS06**:18****"...the CDC"**

"One of the biggest problems we have is not having adequate contact information for these individuals. So I want to stress that it's very important that you give that telephone number to us. We understand that there is concern about giving that information out to be scammed, but we are only using it for ourselves and for the CDC," Romero said.

Despite the continued increases in hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19, Arkansas is moving forward with its plan to open school the week of August 24. When asked about that decision, Hutchinson said the argument for not opening schools could be applied to any place of activity.

NEWS07**:25****"we're doing"**

"You could make the argument that well, somebody shouldn't go work in the factory or they shouldn't work in a meat processing plant because they could get COVID, they could take it back home. Likewise you could get it at home and take it back into the factory. These are risks of anytime you have movement and you have movement in school so it's mitigating against those risks, and that's what we're doing.

The state's plan to have school in the fall is continuing despite a letter from the Arkansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics that did not recommend a state-wide reopening, and instead endorsed a more regional approach.