

The United States experienced a severe coronavirus pandemic in 2020. Because of the outbreak of this pandemic, there are several important features of the 2020 Kentucky Health Facilities and Services Data (HFSD) that researchers must consider when doing their analyses. These include historical reference points, pandemic-related policy decisions that uniquely impacted hospitals, and societal dynamics. While there were surges of hospital admissions for COVID-19, there were other important things that influenced the HFSD data. Specifically, researchers would be wise to consider four factors that notably influenced the operation of Kentucky hospitals and clinics during 2020: (1) Citizens began to avoid healthcare settings as a result of fear of contracting COVID-19; (2) Governor Andy Beshear issued executive orders requiring hospitals to cease performing elective procedures; (3) Kentuckians began to utilize telehealth at dramatically higher rates than they had in the past, and; (4) the economic fallout of the pandemic led to a severe rise of job losses and unemployment – which resulted in a dramatic shift in terms of the source of health insurance coverage (e.g., people who lost their employer-based coverage enrolled in Medicaid). In terms of notable historical points in time, this list includes:

Date	Executive Order from Governor's Office
3-6-2020	Governor Andy Beshear declared a state of Emergency and activated the Emergency Management Operations Center.
3-9-2020	Governor Beshear makes changes to Medicaid, including eliminating prior authorization and any type of fees associated with testing or treatment for the coronavirus.
3-14-2020	Governor Beshear asked Kentucky hospitals to cease elective procedures by close of business Wednesday, March 18.
3-18-2020	Made changes so that any of those who became unemployed, who have lost benefits, could immediately apply for Medicaid.
3-23-2020	Governor Beshear signed an executive order to cease all elective medical procedures.
3-25-2020	Governor's Office issued new orders to allow for more telehealth options in Kentucky than ever before.
3-30-2020	Issued an order that restricts out-of-state travel, with four exceptions: 1) travel to other states for work or groceries, 2) travel to care for loved ones, 3) travel to obtain health care and 4) travel when required by a court order.
5-6-2020	Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH) Commissioner Dr. Steven Stack said Health Care Phase would begin with outpatient and ambulatory surgery and invasive procedures.
5-13-2020	The Cabinet for Health and Family Services issued directives governing the opening of hospitals and other health care facilities. Beginning May 13, hospitals and care facilities can begin doing non-emergency surgeries and procedures at 50% of their pre-COVID-19-era patient volume. Facilities will determine their own patient capacities starting May 27, as long as progress continues.

Researchers may also want to consider the effects of major holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.) on the progression of the pandemic in Kentucky, and how this may have affected the provision of healthcare in the state.