



AD HOC COMMITTEE ON COVID-19 ECONOMIC IMPACT AND RECOVERY

THE RECORD OF ACTION FOR
NOVEMBER 19, 2020

Supervisor Candace Andersen, Chair
Supervisor Karen Mitchoff, Vice Chair

Present: Candace Andersen, Chair
Karen Mitchoff, Vice Chair

Staff Present: Thomas Warne, M.D., Deputy County Health Officer
Julie DiMaggio Enea, Senior Deputy County Administrator

Attendees: Lynn Mackey, County Superintendent of Schools
See Attendance Record, attached.

1. Introductions

Chair Andersen called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m., welcomed the attendees, and introduced the Committee members, County Superintendent of Schools Lynn Mackey and Deputy County Health Officer Dr. Tom Warne.

2. Public comment on any item under the jurisdiction of the Committee and not on this agenda (speakers may be limited to two minutes).

All public comment was taken under Item #3.

3. RECEIVE status report on the September 14th Updated Health Order on Social Distancing, the State's new Blueprint for a Safer Economy and the related new equity provision, and on school re-openings.

Lynn Mackey advised that even though the County has been returned to the purple COVID tier, schools that were in the process of reopening do not have to close. Some private schools are in session and some of our smaller school districts were having students on campus prior to moving to the purple tier, and they can continue to do so by demonstrating that they can meet and maintain all the safety requirements. If they decide to shut down, then they will have to reapply for a waiver, or they will have to wait until the County moves back into the red tier. She offered to field any school-related questions from the public.

Dr. Warne announced that we are experiencing a very sharp increase in coronavirus infections in the County right now, possibly even a surge. CA and Contra Costa had been seeing improving conditions and decreasing infections up until about a month ago. Surges were initially reported in other parts of the country and then we began seeing it first in southern CA and now in northern CA. It's clear we are entering a period of increased danger.

COVID cases overall have doubled in California over the last 10 days to two weeks. Contra Costa's

case rate started this week was 9.2 and is not at about 11 (that's the average new infections per day per 100,000 population), which is double the rate of the prior week. Case rate is one of the measurements that determines our tier placement.

Our positivity rate is 3.6% this week, up from 1.9% about a month ago. The number of people hospitalized in CCC has increased substantially from about 100 in July, down to 20 and now back up to 55, which is of concern.

We are concerned that people will gamble with their own safety and their family's safety during the holiday season with extensive gatherings. He implored people to consider safe ways to gather, as gatherings increase risk of transmission. He recommends not gathering outside your own household. If you do so, then he recommends following social gathering guidance: outdoors, short duration, wear face coverings, involve no more than three households and 25 people. He suggests Zoom and Skype gatherings in favor of in-person gatherings.

He also reminded everyone that the State is discouraging holiday travel and recommending that out of state travelers quarantine for two weeks upon return to CA.

He described the County's prior progress from the purple to orange tiers and subsequent regression to the purple tier. He said the County began pulling back on reopening plans even before the State reclassified the County's tier, because the negative trajectory had become obvious. The State put what they call the "emergency brake" on the Blueprint, meaning they are going to check the data and adjust restrictions more frequently. The health officers support this action.

The major changes of regressing to the purple tier include: Social gatherings of more than one household must be held outdoors. Worship services, movie theaters, museums, restaurant dining, etc., must again move to outdoors only. Bars must be closed. K-12 schools cannot reopen unless they had already done so or had approval to do so. While this news is harsh, we still have hope with the vaccine trials, which show promise for the near future. Both vaccine trials exceeded expectations.

He encouraged people to be considerate of friends and family members and suggested getting tested prior to any holiday gatherings or travel. While this won't guarantee safety, it can reduce risk of transmission and is a smart added protection for loved ones.

He provided information about where to get tested: 13 community testing sites that are operated either by Contra Costa Health Services or three operated by the State, with very short waits and very quick turnaround for results via text message. Test appointments can be scheduled on line at <https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/get-tested> or calling 844-421-0804. Testing is free; insurance is not required.

Vice Chair Mitchoff interjected that the Governor was expected to announce a curfew from 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. that will probably take effect over the weekend. She clarified that the Health Officer and Contra Costa Health Services are not responsible for enforcing the curfew, should it be implemented.

Chair Andersen said the expectation is that the curfew will apply to the operation of businesses rather than individuals.

Dr. Warne observed that other states and Los Angeles have implemented curfews in recognition that non-essential activities need to be limited in the interest of public health.

He then reviewed the County's statistics on the Overview Dashboard, <https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/overview>. Outbreaks in skilled nursing facilities, restaurant dining and social gatherings are driving the resurgence of COVID statewide. The recent policy changes have attempted to address these drivers.

Total County cases are about 22,000 with about 20,000 recovered, leaving about 2,000 active cases. He

highlighted case count hotspots throughout the county. He then addressed questions that had been received prior to the meeting.

- Regarding doubles tennis, the State has been clear that tennis is limited to singles not doubles.*
- Regarding worship services when weather is not conducive to outdoor services, he suggested favoring those times that the weather is milder and consider alternatives such as video streaming or drive-in services.*
- Regarding similarity between COVID and seasonal flu, he agreed that both have similar initial presenting symptoms so we rely on diagnostic tests which can distinguish between the two. The flu and coronavirus can happen together.*
- Regarding restaurants and gyms as virus drivers, we know that the virus is more easily transmitted indoors and in settings where people are singing, talking loudly, or breathing hard. Contact tracing data and studies also suggest that restaurants are among the top four COVID drivers. Next on the list of drivers are fitness centers, cafés and snack bars, hotels/motels and then grocery stores and doctor's offices.*
- Regarding kids' sports, the State guidance restricts contact sports and indoor group activities in the purple tier.*
- Regarding school openings, if a school had already started some degree of in-person instruction, they do not have to close again. Schools that had not begun in-person instruction will have to wait.*

Chair Andersen invited public comment and gave instructions:

- Mike McDermott asked if we moved back to the Red Tier, how long would it take before churches are once again to meet indoors? Since regular church services were not among the top drivers, what data supports the requirement to hold services outdoors? Dr. Warne responded that the County would have to meet the red tier criteria for at least two weeks before returning to the red tier. He cannot speak for the State, but he does not anticipate an accelerated change to a less restrictive tier. He wasn't aware of local data showing transmission during church services, but there is data from other areas.*
- Jared Thomsen observed that the place of worship guidance has not been updated by CalOSHA since July 29. He asked if there is current County advice on church services. He asked if there would be advice about caring for facial masks to keep them sanitary. Dr. Warne responded that the State typically updates guidance when significant changes can be made. He suggested following the State's Blueprint tier guidance which, for places of worship,*
- Tammie said that doubles tennis is being played everywhere and she wants to resume doubles tennis at Heather Farms. She contrasted doubles Ping-Pong, which is permitted, with doubles tennis which is prohibited. She said some older people cannot play singles tennis. Dr. Warne understood that some courts were not following the State guidance. An option is to report such violations. DA Hotline: 925-957-8608.*
- 925-348-0412 said that gyms and restaurants haven't been open long enough to be considered super-spreaders. The caller asked if the health officer thought the new COVID vaccine should be compulsory. The caller complained that Vice Chair Mitchoff made a comment to the effect "more stick than carrot" regarding the DA's task force to educate merchants about complying with COVID guidance. Dr.*

Warne responded that a couple of months of statewide data supports that restaurants and gyms are key drivers. An outbreak is three or more infections arising from a common setting. He said the guidance is evidence-based. To wit, some activities that were previously closed are now open. He does not anticipate that the COVID-19 will be compulsory.

- Chair Andersen asked callers to limit their comments to questions of the health officer.*
- Vice Chair Mitchoff responded that her comment was taken out of context and was in reference to creating a level playing field in which all business operated under the same restrictions, and not creating operating advantages for business that chose not to comply to the detriment of business that follow the rules. The caller may disagree with that position, but she wanted to provide the correct context for the comment. She understood the struggle of small businesses but if businesses do not comply and our case rates worsen, we'll be in danger of even stricter lockdown.*
- Tina Sherwin said that one of her school's programs has reopened and asked if the rest of the school's programs may reopen. Dr. Warne responded that her school could continue its reopening since it was already in the process of reopening.*
- Steve M asked for the rationale of permitting schools that reopened in the red tier to continue to operate and open in the purple tier. She asked if CCHS must approve before schools reopen. Dr. Warne cannot speak to the state guidance but suspects that stopping a school reopening that was already in progress would be too disruptive. CCHS is a strong partner to the schools and has collaborated around the reopening guidance over a long period of time. CCHS doesn't necessary review and approve each district's plan. It does review PreK or TK-6th grade waiver requests.*

Chair Andersen invited Lynn Mackey to comment. Lynn said that there is a lot of advocacy occurring at the State level because some of the guidance seems contradictory. Everyone wants to follow the rules. Now that we are back in the purple tier, the waiver process will resume. Schools that will continue reopening will be required to increase testing protocols.

During public comment, staff shared the Governor's news release ordering a curfew beginning on Saturday, November 21 at 10:00 p.m. PST.

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/limited-stay-at-home-order.aspx>

4. RECEIVE and APPROVE the Record of Action for the October 15, 2020 meeting.

The Committee approved the Record of Action for the October 15, 2020 meeting as presented.

AYE: Chair Candace Andersen, Vice Chair Karen Mitchoff
Passed

5. The next meeting is currently scheduled for December 17, 2020.

Chair Andersen confirmed the next meeting date as listed.

6. Adjourn

Chair Andersen made closing remarks and adjourned the meeting at 2:47 p.m.

For Additional Information Contact:

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