

## Update on Covid-19

Currently in the United States, we have 6.57 million cases of COVID-19, with 199,000 deaths. California has more cases than any other state in our nation with 766,000 cases and 14,385 deaths. As of September 7, 2020, Contra Costa County has 15,424 total positive cases and has lost 192 people to COVID-19. August was our deadliest month with 55 fatalities.

The number of people hospitalized with COVID is trending down in the month of September, last week recording the lowest number of COVID patients in the hospital since the first week of July with 62.

At the same time, the department is closely following a potential trend in the source of the mortalities. In the month of August, 58% of the deaths were actually community deaths, meaning they were not in long-term care facilities. In the last 30 days, we have now seen that shift to 77% of the deaths have actually been in the community, not in congregate living facilities. This shift highlights the risk for people who are working age and people who have to leave the home on a regular basis.

Ms. Roth wanted to recognize the efforts of many that have worked to enhance infection control inside of the congregate living facilities.

The community needs to do the same: please which is that please, wear a face covering when you go out and when you're in an office with other people. Maintain your distance. Wash your hands. Stay home. Those 4 things are key.

Ms. Roth urges everyone to get tested. Great focus continues to be on testing. She emphasizes that the county really needs more people to get tested, that the 309,468 completed so far, is not enough.

Testing is absolutely key to slow the spread and open our economy safely. If we want to slow the spread and we want to open our economy safely, we need to really get more testing.

Over the past weeks there have been improvements to our testing process. Residents can find information to get tested through the appointment portal, as well as phone number on Cchealth.org. Testing is available in the next 24-48 hours. Most days a same-day test is available.

Weather has substantially impacted the testing sites. Many of the outdoor sites had to close because of the extreme heat and smoke from the fires. And many of our sites are outdoors. The county is working to move most of our testing centers indoors to address that and to be prepared for the cold weather of fall. The Bay Point Health Center will open for testing next week.

Going forward, there will be focus on communication and outreach, as Covid is expected to be with us through the winter. The Cchealth.org website has published tools to help the community understand

social activities and their risks going forward, including a checklist to show activities that are more/less risky. Not everyone can stay home, especially essential workers, but there are still ways that people can keep themselves and family members safe from Covid-19.

The majority of transition mission is actually happening in households in communities in our county. The county is communicating with community-based organizations and partners to share information, including culturally appropriate messages in marginalized communities, multiple languages, and social media advertising. Efforts are ongoing with Spanish language radio ads and electronic billboards on Highway 4.

Efforts are in progress to expand the outreach from the Youth and Young Adult Ambassador Program into more cities. Ms. Roth thanked the cities for their support in this.

The first shipment of flu vaccines has arrived and all are encouraged to get one, especially because it can be very difficult in the beginning to tell the flu from Covid-19. The County will begin vaccination October 1<sup>st</sup>, but many pharmacies already have them and are ready to go.

Ms. Roth wanted to recognize and thank the medical reserve corps, the nurses and EMT's providing assistance at shelters, and all our first responders. They have been key to responding to our weather challenges and need for shelters during the fire events.

She further addressed the frustration of many in regard to changing information about Covid-19, noting it is a new disease. We are continuing to learn about how it spreads and how we can minimize its impact, so as we learn, we change our information.

We update, we refine the information. And we're learning more every day. Protocols and recommendations will be evolving. If anyone looked at CHealth.org four or five months ago, you are encouraged to come back again to avail yourself of the most recent information and tools created to help you be safe.

Ms. Roth expressed gratitude to all those who have been checking the website and calling into the call center to keep informed. She reiterated the county will test people once a month and they really want to see you!

Dr. Farnitano, Public Health Officer, said that on Tuesday, the state is updating its numbers on the status of each county as far as its tier designation. As of today, the state published numbers and Contra Costa is just slightly above the cutoff tier for qualifying to move from the purple to the red tier. The purple tier is the most restrictions. If the county meets the red tier criteria for two consecutive Tuesdays, we move to the red tier.

The State looks at two key issues: The cases per day, per 100,000 population, and testing positivity rate. The state uses a ten-day data lag and so, they're reporting us at 7.1%, which is just above the threshold

of 7%. We are looking at our own numbers internally and looking ahead from that ten-day data lag that we are running closer to about 6.8%. For positivity rate the state is reporting at 4.7% which is below the criteria. Internally, we could see we are running at about 4.1%. If these numbers hold Contra Costa should cross that threshold on next Tuesday's state numbers, so on September 21, The County will move down to the red tier.

Signage for businesses has been updated to match State criteria so that for most businesses, the county no longer has different opening rules for business activities.

This will help make it easier for businesses to understand what the requirements are and not having to cross reference as much local health orders against state health order.

This new order goes into effect 8:00 September 16th. It does allow for some businesses to reopen that we hadn't allowed locally to reopen but are allowed in purple tier counties, specifically personal care services that involve close contact with the face may begin operating outdoors, with the exception of tattooing, piercing and non-medical electrolysis are not allowed by state agencies to operate outdoors. Racetracks and card rooms may operate outdoors. Music, television and professional sports for live audiences may resume.

The County still maintains guidelines around extended family bubbles, limiting those to 12 people outdoors to try to limit the risk of COVID spread in social gatherings. We believe it is safe to make these changes now because, again, our COVID-19 indicators are showing we are making significant progress in reducing transmission.

There will be additional business openings allowed once we do fully move into the red tier and those will include allowing some personal care services indoors, allowing restaurants indoors at 25% capacity, indoor gyms at 10% capacity, indoor places of worship indoors at 25% capacity and indoor movie theaters at 25% capacity.

As far as schools, in that purple tier, elementary and secondary schools are not allowed to hope for in-person instruction. Elementary schools can apply for waiver and we have had many elementary schools applying for waivers and we have approved 16 private schools for waivers for in-person instruction. Approximately 30 applications have been received and Health Services is continuing to work with the remaining schools who have submitted applications to make sure they have a good solid risk reduction plan in place.

Once Contra Costa County has moved into the red tier and then additional two weeks has passed, elementary, middle and high schools will be able to open without a waiver just by following state and local guidance.

Dr. Farnitano spoke on the upcoming Halloween holiday. He encourages people to look for safe alternatives to trick-or-treating this year, noting the difficulty in maintaining proper social distancing on

porches and doorsteps and the exposure to high-contact surfaces such as doorbells. He emphasized alternative means of celebrating this holiday such as drive-by parades, costume contests or online contests.