

D.2 Covid 19 Update February 2, 2021

Anna Roth, Health Services Director

I am joined today by our Deputy Health Officer, Dr. Tzvieli, our chief executive officer as well as our County Health Officer, Dr. Chris Farnitano.

At this time more than 25 million people have tested positive for COVID-19 in the United States, and the virus has killed more than 440,000 people. The daily case rate is starting to fall, across the nation and in Contra Costa County. We are on the backside of the winter wave. The number of cases per day, per 100,000 residents in mid-January was about 62. It is now around 30. Hospitalizations are following the same trend. At the high point there were 296 people in the hospital in Contra Costa. Today the number is approximately 172 people. Sadly, Contra Costa has also lost more than 529 to this virus, which has taken a very heavy toll on our community and our thoughts remain with those who we have lost and those who love them.

Contra Costa continues to have scarce amount of vaccine moving into our community as well as into the state of California. It is not a Contra Costa specific issue. We know that the federal production targets were not keeping up early on. We also know there's demand across the world for the vaccine. We are working hard. This our top priority in Contra Costa to get the vaccine out. We have made a commitment to deliver 1 million doses by July 4th and we are well on our way. We have now delivered 127,576 doses here in our county. Those were mostly to healthcare workers as well as seniors, specifically 75 and older. That has required a coalition of county employees, community members, and a variety of ambassadors working seven days a week.

I am truly humbled by the dedication of our team as well as the members of our community. And they're doing all of this while maintaining their personal protection with safety, masking, staying home when they are sick. There's a lot our team members and community is juggling and I want to personally thank everyone for working so hard to keep our community safe and supporting the work to get the vaccine to those who need it, which is all of us in our county who are eligible.

As of this past weekend, we actually issued appointments to everyone who was currently in our data base who is 75 and older. We think that is about half of the people who are 75 and older were in our database. That means if you are 75 and older and you registered on our website for an appointment, you could have gotten invited for an appointment. Now is the time to check. Check your email. Check your spam or junk folders or call us if you didn't. We want to hear from you. Everyone who is 75 and older who has registered, you should have gotten an email. If you haven't registered yet, please register with us. We want to hear from you. We have appointments available for you. It is a priority to us to get to that group.

There's two ways to get an appointment. One is to go to CHealth.org and register on the website. If you aren't able to do that or you are not comfortable doing that, you could call our vaccination help center. That is 833-829-2626. You can leave a number and someone will call you back or you can wait to talk to one of the call center staff at that time. All seniors over 75 years of age are highly encouraged to contact Health Services to schedule a vaccine.

The County is now scheduling appointments for 65-74 years old. That group had that been opened for a while, was paused and is now reopened. So, if you were on that list already, you should have been getting emails that say we didn't forget about you. And if you are not on that list, you can go ahead and now go on to CHealth.org or our call center and register for an appointment.

Health Services launched a vaccine dashboard in the last two weeks and is using the trends indicated by that dashboard to help with planning. Particularly with our mobile outreach and our mobile clinics.

CCHS remains the only Bay Area county that is providing the equity measures and the HPI on our vaccine dashboard. Later this afternoon another view will be available, that of race and ethnicity vaccine data.

That will be limited to the data we have on race and ethnicity information. As with all data, there's some limitations but the department feel it is important to provide this information and continue to be as transparent as possible about how we are really supporting vaccination distribution as well as vaccination equity.

Note on our dashboard on the maps, the top parts of the county that are yellow. Those are what is called the healthy place index high risk communities or communities that have been identified as high risk.

One other to note is in Contra Costa Health Services most of our clinics are located already in those communities. Some of the clinics, West County Center, the Pittsburg Health Center and the Martinez Health Center are already delivering vaccines. More will come on board in the coming weeks.

All of the clinics that you are familiar with, that have been operating in your neighborhoods for a long time. But we also know that the clinics that are already located there as well as those high volume fixed sites at the community colleges and the Richmond auditorium and the Rodriguez Center in far East County are not enough.

We are tracking this and we are making investments to make sure we have that precision outreach that is really targeting the regions where we see high need and lower access. In terms of access, we continue to try to simplify the access points on our website. But we also, again, have the call center. The call center is taking thousands of calls daily. The wait is longer on the calls than is desired and efforts continue to bring in more staff to reduce the wait time.

Deputy Health Officer, Dr. Tzvieli

As can be seen on the County's Coronavirus dashboard, we have given almost 130,000 doses of vaccine. It takes about a day to record on the dashboard. The website also will list over 45 fixed sites where people can get the vaccine, including many of the Rite Aid pharmacies and John Muir Hospital. The sites will open to capacity as the vaccine arrives from the State. We are still limited by how much vaccine we are getting from the state.

We do anticipate that clinics in Bay Point and Concord will begin offering vaccines early next week. In addition, we have done over 110 temporary clinics at 17 different locations to offer vaccine. These include residential care facilities, dialysis centers, schools, churches. Health Services continues to plan more of these temporary clinics as our capacity grows and as we get more vaccine. At this time residents of Richmond, Oakley, Bay Point, Pittsburg are more likely to receive an appointment than say residents of Walnut Creek, Danville or Orinda. So, we are increasing our outreach to those hard hit communities.

Outreach to the patients who are over 65 to schedule appointments continues. The state has a partnership with an organization called OptumServe that has a great deal of experience in Covid 19 testing to begin administering vaccine. They opened up a site in Walnut Creek that experienced some difficulty as they opened up with their website and call center. They do have a call center that is now live.

They shut down their website for a couple of days while they made some fixes and a lot of people that had confirmed appointments logged in and it looked like their appointments were canceled. They were not actually canceled. That website is back up and people should be able to see their appointments again.

Anyone who had a confirmed appointment is encouraged to show up at their appointment time. Health Services will continue to work closely with them to upgrade their website and appointment scheduling.

And I do want to share the community that we do have a system in place to give every dose of vaccine to someone in our eligible categories.

If there are extra doses of the vaccine at the end of the day, a list of people to call is prepared in advance of people in the tier being currently vaccinated. We discourage people from coming to our vaccine sites to line up at the end of the day.

Just like the testing dashboard, we will be comparing race and ethnicity composition of those receiving the vaccine to be fully transparent and try to ensure equitable distribution of the vaccine.

Gilbert Salinas, Chief Equity Officer.

Thank you to Board of Supervisors for the love and support that you give to all of your residents and for holding us accountable as well. I would also like to thank all of our CCHS staff for the amazing work they do. The fact that they work seven days a week. They take no holidays off. They are just a wonderful group of folks. I just wanted to acknowledge all of you.

A new program that will be launching today on our website. It is called Help Your Neighbor. It was an idea brought forth by our chair Diane Burgis. Many are aware that a lot of our older population needs help to navigate the online forms and get appointments. This is one way the community can get involved. All of you are encouraged to reach out to people in your neighborhood to help. We will also have an ask for our city partners to support this effort through our senior centers.

About half of the 75 and older community in Contra Costa County has not yet registered for an appointment and we think a network like this can be helpful. More details will be shared on this on our website later today and via social media. We are working on a precision outreach effort strategy through mobile clinics, case management outreach and community engagement presentations to various coalitions of groups throughout the county. We are in the process of hiring 24 adult ambassadors to help with community outreach vaccination COVID-19 and really getting deep into the community. We need to go deep into our communities and utilize non-traditional ways to reach our public for vaccination efforts. The ambassadors will be conducting testing and vaccination outreach and engagement in several communities. These are people with lived experience who can leverage their cultural expertise and language skills. We are looking at every aspect of this vaccine rollout from an equity perspective. We are working now to create the partnerships we need to address vaccine education efforts in our historically marginalized communities to ensure equitable access.

A list is being vetted by community members right now that represents our hardest areas prioritized by low income housing, substance abuse homes, community sites and we will be including churches and farm worker sites as part of this rollout. We have established a partnership with the One Accord Project to reach our African American churches in West County, to meet monthly. Another partnership has helped us connect with our farm worker community. An expanded partnership with John Muir will help us take services to East County and reach other community sites in that area.

Our African American work group through our community engagement and outreach team is planning a series of community messenger virtual conversations with community leaders and trusted voices to address concerns about the vaccine.

We have also presented information in Spanish to about 120 community members in partnership with Preparados y Unidos through UC Berkeley's occupational health and labor program. Other presentations we have done include the West County Coalition, our DD council, older and aging population, East Community Council as well. Next week I will be meeting with United Latino Voices in ways we could partner to mobilize vaccination efforts across the county.

Dr. Chris Farnitano, Public Health Officer

Chair Burgis made a point last week we have to remember the people who died from COVID but also the deaths we have actually prevented through our countywide response. Contra Costa County has been much more successful than most of the counties in terms of preventing COVID-19 deaths. That is a testament not only to the hard work of all the staff in our Health Department, as well as all our healthcare workers across our county, all branches of our county government. It is also a testament to our elected leaders and our community leaders speaking up with the

united voice to communicate sound, science-based Public Health advice. Most importantly, it is really the community bears the credit for really stepping up with a high level of participation and cooperation with wearing masks, following social distancing, avoiding gatherings, following business restrictions. All of those things have contributed to better outcomes in our county compared to other places.

We have had 506 deaths from Covid 19 since this pandemic began in our county. But if viewing California as a whole, for a county of our size, if the pandemic had been as bad in our county as California as a whole, there would have been over 1,000 deaths. There would have been about 690 additional deaths in our county if our response and the pandemic had been similar to California as a whole. Comparing to the United States as a whole there would have had an additional 1,012 deaths if our response to the pandemic in our county had been as bad as the country on average.

That is a credit to our entire community's response. Even though the Bay Area was one of the first places where Covid arrived in the United States, we have been able to respond to it in a fashion that has kept deaths down. Unfortunately, there have been deaths and the deaths are still expected to continue. Many of the 170 or so people who are in hospitals now from COVID, unfortunately, are not -- we do not expect all of them will make it home alive. And so, we know the deaths will continue before we have this pandemic fully under control. We really have to remember each of these deaths is not just a number. But it is a mother, a father, a sister, a brother.

I want to talk just briefly about our long-term care facility outbreak. Now that we have really been able to vaccinate a lot of long-term care facility staff and residents, we are finally starting to see the number of confirmed outbreaks in long-term care facilities begin to drop. It had been steadily increasing since November. So, we are starting to see the benefit of vaccinating this population and we did this by not just waiting for the CVS, Walgreens partnership to do it alone. We knew that would take too long. We supplemented that with volunteers, our reserve core and partnering with mobile teams from John Muir.

At this point, we are happy to report that all of the nursing homes in our county have been provided at least one dose of the vaccine through the CVS-Walgreens partnership and many have started with the second dose of the vaccine which will continue through mid-February. Of our large residential care facilities for the elderly that have 30 or more residents in them, 95% of them have been given at least one dose of the vaccine. Mostly that is through our Health Department teams and CVS. We expect to be at hundred percent by this weekend. Many have started dose two. And for the smaller facilities, already 62% of those have completed their first dose and another 31% have already been scheduled for their first dose in the next week or two. And our goal is to have all of those facilities have gotten their first dose by mid-February. And we have actually been able to accelerate that timeline by several weeks because of the efforts of our mobile teams. We are also focusing on low income senior housing. We know there's a lot of vulnerable individuals there and we have already got 16% of low income senior housing visited by our mobile teams to get their first doses and many or scheduled. And our mobile teams, once they wrap up the residential care facilities for the elderly will more fully focus on targeting senior housing units.

I want to mention our school status.

The state issued guidance about reopening schools in early January. It allows for elementary schools, K-6, to open once the case rate drops below 25 for five consecutive days in our county. Our case rates have been dropping significantly since the peak in early January. If these trends continue, we may be below that threshold and schools be allowed to open as soon as some time next week. S schools have already been working on their safety plans, which they need to submit to the state and to the County Health Department at least seven days in advance of opening their K-6 schools.

The state guidelines also say that middle schools and high schools, grades 7-12, can open once we are in the red tier for at least five days. Based on trends of our case rates continue to drop at the quick rate they are doing, that could be as soon as some time in March.

About the state's vaccination tiers. We started out with the tier 1a, healthcare workers and long-term care facility staff and residents, then we have been focusing on the next tier which is tier 1b. The first group there is age 75 and older.

As Director Roth and Dr. Tzvieli mentioned, we have been through more than half of that group and we are now reopening up to more appointments in the 65-74-year-old age group. The next group in line according to the state framework is key public-facing essential workers. Folks who work in food production and delivery, like farm workers and grocery store workers, educational workers including teachers and other folks who work at schools and emergency responders.

The state is expected to announce an update to their tier framework to add in people under 65 who have certain high risk medical conditions and high risk disabled conditions. The exact details of that we are still waiting for and exactly where they fall in the tiers and framework is still to be determined, but we expect something from the state sometime soon.

About the spacing of doses, the recommended spacing for the Pfizer vaccine is 21 days, three weeks after the first. The Moderna vaccine is four weeks after for the second dose. The U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) has stated it is acceptable to go up to six weeks or 42 days after the first dose for either vaccine if the second dose can't be scheduled exactly on time. The CDC states that the data from these clinical trials supports going up to six weeks and that modest delays in administration of the second dose would not be expected to decrease the protection conferred by the second dose.

For most vaccines for kids and vaccines for adults, most recommend booster doses two months or longer spaced after an initial dose because the longer timeframes result in a stronger vaccine response. We don't know for sure that will be the case with COVID vaccines going beyond six weeks. But the evidence certainly shows waiting up to six weeks between doses seems to give at least as good a response to getting fully protected as getting it exactly on time. As a Health Department our goal is to get them second dose as close to the time frame but we are committed to getting it at least in six weeks.

There's a lot of studies being done on the variants. Some from the U.K. and South Africa. Some have appeared across the country, including in California. We don't have any direct confirmation that any of these variants exist in Contra Costa County, but up until this point, the testing for these variants has been fairly limited. The state is ramping up its ability to screen for variants and the CDC is also ramping up its ability. Contra Costa has been participating for several months in a surveillance study. The Contra Costa health lab will be purchasing a sequencing machine. Modeling indicates that the variants are unlikely to become common in Contra Costa before March. The greater importance is getting as many people vaccinated as possible and getting the case rates down. The more we could drive the case rates down, then the less likely these variants will take hold and less likely they will continue to evolve.

Of the new vaccines down the pipeline the closest one to approval is a Johnson & Johnson vaccine. The company announced some results a few days ago. They are expected to be sending their full data to the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) this week. The FDA then will be reviewing that data and after reviewing it, presenting that data to their FDA panel to consider for emergency use approval. The filing of the application and then FDA review process may take up to 5 weeks. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine will most likely be approved for use some time in March. When this is approved, this should add anywhere between 3,000 to 15,000 extra vaccine doses to Contra Costa's supply every week. That will be a significant boost in the 15 to 20,000 vaccine doses we are getting currently from Pfizer and Moderna. So, we have been building to capacity to prepare to handle that when it comes.

Some details about what the limited amount of information we have about this vaccine from the press releases from the company. The full data for the Johnson & Johnson vaccine hasn't been revealed yet, but the company claims it was about 72% effective in the U.S, and 85% effective in preventing severe disease. Essentially it is one hundred percent effective in preventing hospitalization and death from Covid-19.

That protection against severe disease seen in all the places they tested it, including Europe, South Africa and United States, also seemed to be true against all different ages and different virus variants.

Supervisor Gioia noted an equity disparity in vaccinations performed to date. There appears to be a slight widening in the gap from the previous week. While the average in Contra Costa of population that has received its first dose is 11.4%, the bottom five are Byron at four, Bay Point at 5.2, Bethel Island 5.7, Richmond 6.3, Oakley 6.5. The top five are Walnut Creek, 19, Diablo, 18.9, Danville 15.8, Lafayette 15.8, Orinda 15.3. In Latinx population, last week was close to 15%, this week it is down to 13.9%. The LatinX population is 25% in Contra Costa. last week it was in the upper 14s.

So, yesterday, the state Department of Finance announced an additional \$1.9 million -- \$1.7 billion in federal funds to help the Coronavirus virus and vaccination efforts, of which California is expected to receive about \$40 million.

Each county's share is determined by a state formula. 50% of the formula is based on our percentage of the state's population, the other 50% is based on equity factors. 25% is based on poverty rate and 25% is based on Black, Latino, Native American, Pacific island population. So the intention in the language from the state is that this money also will be used to address equity issues.

Supervisor Gioia requested the County Administrator and Health Department prepare a proposal of how this new \$40 million is going to be spent, with accountability and transparency, for the Board.

Supervisor Andersen reminded us of the reason for the apparent disparity is partly one of demographics. We have a very large senior population in Rossmore, Lafayette, and surrounding areas of District II. Additionally, a greater percentage of healthcare providers reside there. Healthcare providers and those over 65 years of age are in the first tier to receive the vaccine. It is not the wealthier communities receiving vaccination, it is those with the oldest members of the communities.

Supervisor Burgis noted that a great deal of the problem is not being ready and waiting to vaccinate; the sites, the staff and recipients are ready- the problem is insufficient supply of vaccine.

Anna Roth said that the Board support to bringing on a chief equity officer will assist a great deal in outreach to the various communities.

Gilber Salinas, Equity Officer, said the group is outlining a strategic plan that calls for very precisioned outreach efforts. The first phase of that was getting out into the community. The second phase is different from testing. With vaccination, education on the safety and efficacy of the vaccine needs to be provided as well as answering questions surrounding the virus.

The first round of data that was represented mostly indicated the number of health workers that live in that area. As the program is reaching out into communities and the availability through the eligibility tiers increases, the work will be more reflected in our data. The team is working to create nonhistorical partnerships like churches, farmworker groups, the Monument Corridor. That the dashboard shows race and ethnicity data was really by design, to show swiftly where improvement is needed. Working in the marginalized communities presents challenges. Traditionally, there is a lack of trust in communities of color. The team is reaching out to establish relationships and trust. It takes longer for us to build these relationships and trust.

All the Supervisors acknowledged also that access and proficiency with technology is an important factor in outreach and scheduling of vaccination.