

## March 2 2021

### D.5 Covid Update Report

Anna Roth, Health Services Director

On March 1, 2020 Health Services opened what it termed the operation center, to address the Coronavirus emergency. Since then:

- the department has completed over 10,000 resource requests for PPE to hospitals, congregate living settings and agencies around the county.
- A call center was opened with a hotline number, which has fielded 36,605 calls to date.
- There are currently 960 disaster workers deployed, including 606 of our permanent employees, responding to the pandemic response.
- 125 volunteers have cleared the background check process and are now working alongside of Health Services staff.

The county is now on the other side of the winter wave and now really focused on vaccination. As of March 1st, 323,000 vaccine doses have been administered in Contra Costa County.

The case rate in Contra Costa is steadily dropping, currently it is just over 10. The test positivity rate is now 3.4% and dropping. Vaccines are arriving in the region. The county will continue to move within the Blueprint for a Safer Economy guidelines.

The key message is that it is still important to utilize all the personal protective tools available to control the spread and continue moving forward.

The county still struggles with a limited supply of vaccine. 80% of the vaccine moving into the county is being used for second doses. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine was approved over the weekend – a single dose vaccine. It is beginning to ship. The State of California is expected to receive about 380,000 of those doses, with no details yet of how much or when it will be coming to Contra Costa. The county often receives less than a week's notice of the when a vaccine will be arriving. The expectation at this time is that based on population levels, somewhere between 7,000 and 10,000 doses will be sent.

Health Services will update the Board and the community with more details as soon as they are known, and post the information to the website, [cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org).

There has been a lot of discussion about the effectiveness of all the vaccines. There are three vaccines: Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson. Moderna and Pfizer are two-dose vaccines, Johnson & Johnson is a single dose vaccine. All three of these vaccines are over 85% effective in preventing severe illness and 100% effective in preventing hospitalization and death. The best vaccine is the one being offered at your appointment.

The website has a great deal of information on the vaccines for anyone with questions and your healthcare provider can also assist with information.

In Phase 1a of the vaccination rollout, focus was placed the people working in hospital settings and in healthcare and residents of nursing homes. The county has since moved to those 75 and older and caregivers, then to those 65 and older and essential workers.

Now 86% of people who are 75 and older in the county have gotten their vaccine and 60% of people between 65-74 are also vaccinated. Vaccination of essential workers has begun, including educators, child care providers, agricultural and food workers as well as people working in emergency services.

Ms. Roth noted that changes are coming. In the coming weeks, all of California is expected to transition to the new structure for managing the vaccine distribution. This is known as "My Turn". (myturn.gov). The state is going to have some access to some additional vaccine supply and residents of Contra Costa County will be able to access that when it is their turn through what is called "My Turn" which you could find the link on cchealth.org.

Contra Costa will have new additional supplies coming through our federally qualified health center pathways and those are a separate federal stream of federal vaccines going straight to the community health centers.

Contra Costa County has 11 of these facilities that we own and operate but we also have other community clinics as well. They are signed up for the FAQFC program.

In our community we have asked 6,500 of those additional federally qualified health centers. It is not yet known have not heard how much of that we will get. Those vaccines will start to move some time in mid-March, as early as March 10<sup>th</sup>.

With the coming changes in new additional pathways to get vaccinated there will be confusion. As we prepare for this change, we are still encouraging everyone to sign up for vaccines wherever they can. As of March 1, the wait list in the county system was over 30,000. Health Services encourages people to register wherever they can, they can go to cchealth.org and myturn.ca.gov both. Pharmacies such as Walgreens and Rite Aid are also doing vaccinations. The County is anticipating opening a site at Los Medanos college in San Ramon around March 15<sup>th</sup>. Every effort is being made to offer vaccination sites within a short travel distance.

On the County website, click on the button at the top that says vaccine appointments. This will take the viewer to a comprehensive list of all the resources and all the agencies currently providing appointments. Health services wants everyone to know it is okay if you sign up at all the places. Go to which ever can vaccinate you soonest, they have procedures in place to see if you were able to get vaccinated somewhere else. The goal is to not slow down, to get the vaccinations done as swiftly as possible. Contra Costa is actually speeding up looking to open mass vaccination sites as soon as vaccine supply is available, which is expected to be by the end of March into April.

The county continues to have a sharp focus on equity, making sure those communities who have been hardest hit by COVID have access to vaccine and doing active outreach into those communities. Health Services wants no one left behind during the vaccination process.

#### Gilbert Salinas, Chief Equity officer

Equity is a top priority for our organization, The approach is multi-faceted. One of those is mobile teams. Teams deployed outside of our brick and mortar locations. A project has been piloted with John Muir health to reach some of the community based organizations and approximately seven events are already scheduled. The unit is also identifying low-income and senior housing, residential care facilities for the elderly and those with mobility restrictions, including individuals experiencing homelessness.

Work has already begun to identify target employer programs. So, those working with pre-identified businesses and organizations that are dedicated to reaching employers with especially workforce and HPI (Healthy Places Index) communities.

Some of these examples are west County small retailers, teachers who work with kids who can't wear a mask, transportation workers that are already working around some of our COVID-19 efforts, our essential workforce.

The Contra Costa waiting list is filtered to identify essential workers in some of the hardest hit communities in the county. For inpatient population, including providing vaccine at discharge. Targets include Contra Costa Health Plan members, detention health, behavioral health and hospital discharges. There is an opportunity to apply for state mobile vaccine clinics, but are restricted to 15-mile radius from the federal vaccine site at the Oakland coliseum. In a recent call with Supervisor Gioia's office, they indicated a willingness to allow for submission for locations that were, 17 to 20 miles away from the coliseum. An effort is underway to try to open up slots at the coliseum as we move towards a more targeted outreach for our HPI community, which will be ongoing.

Dr. Chris Farnitano, Public Health Officer

The county is working very closely with the County Office of Education and school districts to offer every opportunity for teachers and other school staff to get vaccinated. This includes school bus drivers, school cafeteria workers, people who clean the classrooms. So all education staff, including teachers. The state has dedicated 10% of the vaccine supply towards education workers and asked local agencies to provide that as well. That is 75% specifically dedicated to education. The state is providing to schools one-time use codes they could use to schedule appointments through any of the state sites that uses myturn.Ca.gov. We received 1,000 codes yesterday (March 1) and distributed them and expect to get more codes tomorrow and on Friday.

Health Services has worked with individual school districts and are distributing to them and is using a priority scheme that is based on the size of the districts as well as staff working in low HPI or healthy places index community. Each district is prioritizing the staff currently working in person or is planning to work in person within the next 21 days. For now, some districts are getting a very small allotment but much more supply is expected to come. Additional good news for teachers is that Kaiser is now actively reaching out to their members who are teachers and school staff and actively vaccinating them. For example, the school staff at the districts at Knightsen and Byron have been called by Kaiser and have been scheduled to receive their vaccine. There's been a couple of dozen staff in the Walnut Creek district that have been reached out by Kaiser and are waiting for appointments. A great many of Contra Costa teachers are Kaiser members. It has been said that a lot of appointments have already been provided to teachers at the vaccination site at the Oakland coliseum as well as other sites that use MyTurn registration in neighboring counties as well as some of the local pharmacies that are using MyTurn.

There are now so many pathways to get an appointment for a vaccine, that it is not possible to fully track and count what percentage of education staff have appointments.

It is anticipated that Contra Costa will move into the red tier in the next few weeks. Case numbers and positivity rates are continuing to fall as they have since mid-January.

We are required to meet the red tier criteria for two consecutive Tuesdays. The state publishes their numbers on Tuesday. Then the next day, the Wednesday we will officially move into the red tier. The other way we may meet the criteria for red tier is what is called the health equity ladder accelerated. If the HPI community meets under 5%, we could move into the red tier even if our case rate is still above seven. That equity case rate is currently 5.7.

Under the red tier, restaurants can open indoors 25% capacity or 100 people maximum; Retail stores can open indoors at 50% capacity (they are currently at 25%); places of worship remain the same at 25% indoor capacity. Gyms and fitness centers can open at 10% capacity.

Contra Costa Health Services has purchased equipment for the public health lab in Martinez to do gene sequencing so that we could do our own tracking of variants. The equipment will be set up and running some time in April. In the meantime the county is finalizing a temporary bridging contract with an outside lab to do sequencing for us until our lab is ready. Some samples are also being sent to the state lab

So far there have not been any variants of concern identified in Contra Costa County. That includes what is known as the U.K. or United Kingdom variant and the South Africa variant. We have seen the California variant (aka west coast variant) This one is considered a variant of interest at this time, not one of concern because there is not any compelling data yet that this California variant is more transmissible or that it affects vaccine efficacy, although it is still being studied. And it is a variant of interest because we still don't know a lot about it.

Of the U.K. variant (actually named B.1.1.7.) most cases have been in southern California. That is considered a variant of concern because it is felt to be more transmissible compared to the more common strains.

Dr. Farnitano noted that even though we are seeing a lot of good news with cases declining and test positivity rates declining and our vaccine getting more distributed to our community, we are not out of woods yet. There is still concern about the possibility of a fourth wave before we have gotten widespread community immunity.

We are still in a real race. It is a race to vaccinate the community before we open up too quickly and allow the virus to rebound. Progress is good so far, but the race is not yet over and the virus can still catch up if we let down our guards too fast.