

**Covid-19 Update**  
**D.2 March 23 2021**

Anna Roth, Health Services Director

Ms. Roth thanked everyone for joining the memorial held on March 22, 2021 to acknowledge the all the lives lost to the virus. Yesterday marked one year since the first coronavirus death in Contra Costa county, to which 734 have now passed. She said she wanted to recognize that profound loss and extend heart felt sincere sympathies to those who have lost a loved one and to all of those who have suffered from COVID-19. The memorial service can be viewed on the website at [cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org) and will soon be on the Facebook page.

The numbers of cases and hospitalizations is declining. The County has been working very hard to increase that vaccine distribution across the county. Eligibility has now been extended to all of those who are 50 years old and above, an additional 300,000 people. Confidence is high that the vaccine supply coming will meet that need.

Contra Costa has already vaccinated a large group of people who are really 50-64 because many people have qualified under different criteria. Nearly 100,000 of those people have been vaccinated as either healthcare workers, as other kinds of essential workers, or people with pre-existing medical conditions. So there remains a little bit over 235,000 more. Anyone 50 or older is encouraged to register for the vaccination.

Contra Costa has vaccinated nearly 40% of all residents over 75, 80% of those 65 and older, and nearly 40% of those aged 60 to 64., and about 30% of those 50-59. Therefore Health Services feels that the recent move to red tier is appropriate.

The vaccination distribution network is rapidly expanding. Next week, in partnership with Kaiser Permanente and the City of Concord, a mass vaccination site will open at Hurricane Harbor water park on March 30<sup>th</sup>. Kaiser and the County will both be administering vaccines in drive through venue. It will begin at the rate of a couple thousand vaccinations a day and it is hoped to increase to 11,000 to 15,000 per week. The actual number will depend upon the amount of vaccine received.

If you are in an eligibility group, particularly if you are 65 and over, contact Health Services either by phone or email for a response within a day or so, often the same day. For those 50 or over, it may take a couple of days before you get a response. In general terms, an appointment will be available within a week or less.

When Health Services we opened yesterday made the announcement that eligibility was opening to 50 and over, they were getting one request per second in that first hour, sending Appointment tickets last night for registration. Check you email, especially the spam folder. Anyone who has not received a response in a couple of days, you could call also our vaccine call center.

Contra Costa is now offering three vaccines, Pfizer and Moderna (two dose regimen) and Johnson & Johnson ( one dose) Those who get those vaccines, they are extremely protected.

Health Services believes vaccination is the number one priority. The first dose was administered in December. By January 22nd we were at 4,700 vaccinations a day. That was the day Health Services decided to set an ambitious goal of 1 million doses by July 4th. A month later, in February 22nd the County was administering almost 8,000

shots a day. We are now at over 10,000 a day, on some days achieving 14,000. Health Services remains committed to getting those million doses. Over half a million doses were given as of last Friday.

So, based on that current progress, and a better understanding of the supply of vaccine moving into our county, they feel confident to set that goal to a more ambitious date. They are now aiming to reach the 1 million dose mark by Memorial Day or May 31st.

Health Services is aware that people have transportation or mobility issues, that some are not comfortable using the computer to register or don't have a phone. They will continue to reach out to the community with information through multiples avenues. The community engagement and outreach team has been doing a fantastic job working with the community, reaching out to them. Last week, we completed the process to bring on 18 adult ambassadors,

Who are helping support community outreach and mobile vaccine efforts. More are coming. There will continue to be mobile clinics that coordinate with community-based organizations as well as other health providers.

The County held two events this past weekend at which close to 300 vaccines were administered to farm workers out in East County. On Saturday more mobile vaccinations sites are scheduled. There is one going to Soldier Presbyterian church in Richmond. The [cchealth.org](http://cchealth.org) website has Spanish translation across the entire website.

Health Services continues to provide statistical data for the community, including breakdown by age, city, race and ethnicity. Suggestions to strengthen that information output is encouraged.

The County has a contract with a Spanish speaking outreach organization, radio advertisements, digital and social media ads, and billboards in both English and Spanish. Television advertisements begin next week.

Ms. Roth emphasized that the County is not slowing down and expressed gratitude for how the community-based organizations, the volunteers, and the different leaders across the community that have really helped us achieve great success in vaccination efforts.

Dr .Chris Farnitano Public Health Officer

Dr. Farmitano said that as we remember the 734 Contra Costans who have lost their lives to Covid 19 in the last year, we also need to remember and recognize the many lives that we have saved through all of our collective efforts.

Based on simply the mortality rate comparison, if our response in Contra Costa had only been as good as the rest of California, we would have suffered an additional 900 deaths. If it was just as good as the U.S. on average, we would have suffered an additional thousand deaths.

And if our response had been similar to New York or New Jersey or Arizona, we would have suffered an additional 2,000 deaths. Those lives were saved thanks to the efforts of everyone in our community to take all the steps we did to slow the spread over this past year.

Contra Costa County moved into the red tier in the state's framework nine days ago.

The state framework says we have to stay in the red tier for at least three weeks before we could progress to the orange tier. That would mean April 7th at the earliest. Before moving to the orange tier, we have to cross one of three thresholds.

One is if our equity metric, which is the case positivity rate in our lowest healthy places index communities drops below 2% test positivity for two weeks. That would qualify us to move to orange. Contra Costa is currently at 4.2%.

Another threshold that would move us to the orange is if our adjusted case rate drops below four cases per 100,000 per day for two consecutive weeks. Currently we are at 5.8%.

The third potential threshold is if the state has administered 4 million vaccines in the next quartile for the state. Currently that measure is about 2.8 million, the state will raise its threshold for moving to the orange and apply that retrospectively. If that threshold is crossed, we would just have to have an adjusted case rate below 5.9 cases per 100,000 per day for two weeks. Currently we are at 5.8%.

There is increasing vaccination capacity being built in East County. Our firefighters are running a clinic there that is now administering a thousand doses a day, which will increase in capacity to 1,500 doses a day by April 10<sup>th</sup>. They will move from being a one-day week clinic to two day by the middle of April. That is in addition to the thousand appointments a day already scheduled in our East and Far East County health centers. In East County is building up rapidly to help address the disparity in vaccination rates in some of those communities.

Another important update from the state is that the CDC (Center for Disease Control) on Friday had updated its guidance for schools based on several recent published studies showing that schools can space student chairs or desks three feet apart rather than four or six feet apart, without seeing an increased rate of school outbreaks or transmission, spread of Covid between students. The CDC updated their guidance on Friday and the state, California Department of Public Health updated their guidance to match that on Saturday. That gives additional flexibility for school districts to try to bring students back either in a hybrid model or a full in-person learning model where they can bring more students into each classroom and do that safely. Ultimately each school district decides when and how to bring students back, but this gives them a lot more flexibility and gives them confidence that they can bring more students back safely.

Dr. Farnitano reminded that along with all the good news, there remains reason for caution.

As was reported last week, we have detected two of the U.K. variants in samples from Contra Costa residents. That is U.K. variant also known as B.1.1.7 more contagious and more likely to cause severe illness or death.

Over 50% of the samples being tested now with gene sequencing throughout California are now part of the California or west coast variant. That variant is felt to be at least 10% more easily spread than the previous strains of Covid, and is now the dominate strain in California.

Fortunately, there's not any evidence of this California strain seems to be more deadly or that the vaccines are any less effective at this time.

Other variants of concern we are tracking, are a South Africa variant and a Brazil variant.

There's been four cases of each of those detected in California but none in Contra Costa at this time. But they have been more prevalent in other parts of the United States.

There's been 194 cases total of the South Africa variant detected in the U.S. and 54 cases in other parts of the U.S. of the Brazil. The South Africa variant is concern of possible reduced effectiveness of some vaccines. Especially the AstraZeneca vaccines which is not currently in use in the U.S. The Brazil variant is of high concern because it seems to pose a much higher risk of reinfection. People who had Covid a few months ago are now getting it a

second time with the Brazil variant. Also concerned about watching the rising case rates in other parts of the world, in Europe, Canada and South America, and even in parts of the U.S. There's flat or rising cases in New York, New Jersey, New England, Michigan, Florida.

We are in a race to get the vaccine in arms to interrupt the spread and a race between these variants spreading and people letting their guard down too quickly. So, we are running faster with the vaccine. We are getting more vaccine to more people more quickly. But these variants are racing faster as well. So, we still need to continue masking, social distancing, doing our activities outside rather than inside. Avoiding large gatherings. Getting tested and most importantly, getting vaccinated when it is your turn.

Gilbert Salinas, Chief Equity Officer

As was mentioned the County has hired 15 ambassadors and three coordinators, with another four pending ambassadors coming on board. They have had an immediate impact in our communities, helping us with mobile vaccine efforts and also community outreach.

Last week we conducted a community immunity mobile vaccine clinic in East County with the Village Community Resource Center. We vaccinated over 168 community members. Some of them farm workers as well. We also conducted another mobile vaccine clinic through another partnership as well to vaccinate 100 farm workers.

The program continues to ramp up, in the spirit of not slowing down. Partnerships are in place in the community and vaccine supply has arrived, generating a lot of excitement. In addition to working with the Presbyterian church in Richmond, there is a collaboration with One Accord Project in West County to include another five churches.

Churches in East County as well have partnered with the County as well. There are some food banks on the schedule. Spanish community organizations have joined in. Additionally the program has reached out to Hello Fresh to vaccinate their workers. Because many of our farm workers come back to the season in May, we have already aligned our partnerships with them in East County.