

Covid Update Report

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The Concord shelter had been closed during the pandemic because of concerns for increased risk of transmission in congregate settings. Hundreds of homeless people have been housed in local hotels through the state's Project Roomkey program. Health Services is closing two Project Roomkey hotel sites and working to find a permanent housing for the residents. People who are unable to obtain other housing will be moved to the Concord shelter. Instead of bring people into shelter with dorm settings where they live close together, the shelter has been reconfigured so residents will have their own private spaces, which will improve infection control and client experience.

With the decreased number of people requesting vaccinations, Health Services is closing Diablo Valley vaccination clinics. The remaining three, the Richmond auditorium, Oak Grove site in Concord and Rick Rodriguez Community Center will be staffed appropriately based on demand.

The mobile Covid-19 vaccination van began service on Monday, June 14th. At no cost, any business or organization with five or more members can request mobile vaccination clinic using an online form. If they are in Contra Costa County, Health Services will send a mobile health van to provide free vaccinations on site within one week after claiming the request. The service operates weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and will only travel to locations within the county. Anyone can get vaccinated, there is no residency requirement and there is no cap on the number of people who can get vaccinated. So far, there have been more than 20 requests for this service.

Vaccination of homebound individuals in Contra Costa continues with a similar mobile service that can be requested for anyone who is homebound and cannot access a vaccination site.

As of today, June 22, 2021, 77.6% of Contra Costa's population age 12 and older is at least partially vaccinated and over 70% are fully vaccinated. However, the vaccination rates are not even across the county. The lowest vaccine rates are in the Pittsburg, Antioch and Oakley area of East County. About a thousand previously unvaccinated residents receive their first vaccine dose in Contra Costa county every day. The test positivity rate in our county is about 1.5% and we are still seeing about 45 new cases a day throughout our county and about 3-5 deaths a week from covid-19 in our county. That level has held steady for about the past month.

Health Services has updated our public dashboard to include data comparing the COVID-19 rates for the unvaccinated population in our county against the rate for the vaccinated population in Contra Costa County. What the data shows is the tale of two counties. For those who are fully vaccinated, the rates of new infections are extremely low, about 0.5 cases per 100,000 per day, which is well into what would have been considered the yellow range on the color scale of the Blueprint for a Safer Economy. This case rate is continuing to drop by about two-thirds since the beginning of April. But for those who are not yet fully vaccinated, the case rates are 13 times as high. That rate would have been considered the red, almost the purple tier of case rates like we were late this past winter. And the case rate in the unvaccinated population is dropping more slowly. It has only dropped by about a third since the beginning of April.

In addition to that, there's some things that have changed which have made things more dangerous for those who are not vaccinated. As opposed to late winter, now restaurants, bars, gyms and movie theaters are all able to open at full capacity with many people not wearing masks. That may be quite safe for people who have been fully vaccinated. But these are not safe environments if you haven't yet received the vaccine.

Also, the virus itself is changing, which helped contribute to the terrible winter surge we experienced in California. Then came the even more contagious UK or alpha strain which contributed to a surge in other parts of the country including places like Michigan but doesn't reach California until we vaccinated a large part of the population which saved us from a spring surge. Now we are seeing the Delta variant which originated out of India. This is more contagious than the alpha strain and the California strain and out also causes more severe illness than previous variants. It currently makes up about 14% of sequences and expected to become the most common strain in the U.S. within three or four weeks. We have already seen cases of the Delta variant in California. The good news is that the vaccines still work against these variants. The vaccine that doesn't work is the one that you don't take. So, it is more important than ever to get vaccinated.

Last week, California reopened and returned to many pre-pandemic norms. And Contra Costa county has aligned with all those state guidelines. So, with the reopening on June 15th, California retired its color-coded tier system for counties. Businesses no longer have capacity limits, fully vaccinated individuals are no longer required to wear masks in most indoor public spaces beginning June 15th.

The Public Relation Society of America announced that Contra Costa County Health Services was a double winner at the Silver Anvil Awards event receiving the National Award of Excellence for covid and a surprise win of the audience award for the same category. There were thousands of entries from leading brands, nonprofits, government agencies. Congratulations Kim McCarl and her team.