

To: Jill Hunsaker Ryan, MPH, Executive Director, CDPHE
Mara Brosy-Wiwchar, Chief of Staff, CDPHE
From: Douglas County, Colorado
Re: Douglas County COVID-19 Mitigation Plan
Date: October 12, 2020

DOUGLAS COUNTY VARIANCE & MITIGATION FRAMEWORK

Pursuant to the October 8, 2020 meeting between Tri-County Health Department (TCHD), the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), and Douglas County, the County has implemented the following variance mitigation measures consistent with our approved variances from the Department of Public Health and Environment:

- a) Pilot Program for Severity Metrics
- b) Testing Capacity
- c) Contact Tracing of Positive COVID-19 Cases
- d) Public Education and Citizen Engagement

PILOT PROGRAM FOR SEVERITY METRICS

Douglas County respectfully proposes the State engage in a pilot program with Douglas County regarding the following metrics for Safer at Home Level 1 and Protect Our Neighbors.

PROPOSAL

Pilot the following severity-adjusted incidence rate in Douglas County to determine if the expanded economic and community capacity this allows is compatible with continued low levels of severity.

PROPOSED INCIDENT AND SEVERITY METRIC FOR SAFER AT HOME LEVEL 1 AND PROTECT OUR Neighbors

1. To get to PON, as a variation on Metric 4, allow:
 - a. incidence up to 100/100,000 if 2-week hospitalization incidence/100,000 is ≤ 6
 - b. incidence up to 125/100,000 if 2-week hospitalization incidence/100,000 is ≤ 3
2. To Stay in Level 1, using the same logic, ratchet up the thresholds (since Level 1 has lower capacity) and allow:
 - a. incidence up to 125/100,000 if 2-week hospitalization incidence/100,000 is ≤ 6
 - b. incidence up to 150/100,000 if 2-week hospitalization incidence/100,000 is ≤ 3

EXPLANATION FOR USING INCIDENT AND SEVERITY METRIC

1. Provides a much clearer rationale to key stakeholders and the general public for potential reductions in capacity of business and community entities as incidence rates increase by linking incidence rates to rates of severity (e.g., hospitalization rates).
2. Better incorporates into the Dial thresholds the variable (hospitalization) least susceptible to factors not directly related to measurement of transmission, such as increased testing (which influences incidence rates) and improved hospital care (which can reduce death rates).

3. Provides an ongoing incentive for testing since incidence rates are adjusted upward to account for the additional testing volume.
4. Other parameters relevant to the Dial and Protect Our Neighbor do not change which maintains incentives to respond to increasing test positivity and hospitalization increases if the hospitalization rate threshold is surpassed.

TESTING CAPACITY

Tri-County Health Department is using a study by Harvard¹ which established recommendations for each state and the appropriate level of testing. The current recommendation from Tri-County Health Department is 515 tests per day for Douglas County. In order to ensure the County has the capacity to test the Tri-County Health Department's identified goal of 515 tests per day the County has entered into an agreement with STRIDE Community Health Center (STRIDE) to provide testing within the County. STRIDE Community Health Center is also assisting in the development of a strategic testing plan intended to identify and target key populations and effectively deliver convenient testing opportunities to them to contain viral transmission.

STRIDE continues to provide diagnostic and antibody COVID-19 testing as directed in Douglas County and will continue through December 30, 2020. A strategic plan will be developed collaboratively between STRIDE and the County to identify locations conducive to accommodating community testing that will reach a wide variety of populations. A mobile testing unit may be deployed and/or an existing site may be used to administer testing services.

STRIDE will work closely with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Tri-County Health Department to operate using best practices and cooperate with contact tracing, investigations, etc. as appropriate when requested. STRIDE will leverage existing technology and applications to facilitate efficient pre-registration for testing and the delivery of test results

Douglas County is also partnering to support employees of the Douglas County School District, participants in the Winter Shelter Network, those experiencing homelessness, rural and mountain residents, etc. with testing opportunities.

Expected Outcome – access to testing will enable rapid identification of potential positive cases, allow for tracing to minimize additional spread of the virus and identification of additional individuals who should take necessary steps to eliminate additional spread.

It should be noted that as the County continues to exceed testing targets and remains below the 5.0 percent positivity rate, keeping the incidence rate below the State standards will become increasingly difficult. As of October 1st, at the current rate of testing in Douglas County a maximum average positivity rate of no more than 1.7% would be necessary to remain below the 50 cases/100,000 population/14 days threshold. Thus, TCHD and the County included the pilot program proposal.

¹ “Analysis: More than half of U.S. States aren’t doing Enough COVID-19 testing”
<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/analysis-more-than-half-of-u-s-states-arent-doing-enough-covid-19-testing/>

CONTRACT TRACING OF POSITIVE COVID-19 CASES

Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) is working on a major priority of deploying an expanded workforce for disease investigation and contact tracing. This includes executing rapid response programs that enable quick isolation and contact tracing of individuals who test positive, whether they are symptomatic or asymptomatic. Anyone who has come into contact with an individual who has tested positive will be screened for symptoms, and those who are symptomatic will be directed to testing sites. TCHD is working to identify and provide public health interventions with high priority locations, such as long-term care facilities (LTCF) through our LTCF Outbreak Task Force, as well as rapid response to other community outbreaks through our Community Outbreak Task Force.

TCHD has contracted with a Senior Recruiter to solely focus on response recruiting, screening and the placement of contract staff/volunteers. TCHD deployed a statewide technology solution to support contact tracing data collection and analysis, and the estimated date for the selection and deployment of this statewide solution was June 2020. TCHD is hiring upwards of 400 contact tracers to meet the needs of their jurisdictional counties. The estimated workforce needs based on moving from abridged case investigations and contact tracing efforts to full case investigation and contact tracing efforts is illustrated on the following page. On July 28, 2020 Douglas County entered into an IGA with Tri-County Health Department to pay for contact tracing costs using the County's portion of CARES Act Funding received from the Department of Local Affairs.

Expected Outcome – rapid contact tracing will enable identification of cases, containment of spread, and identification of additional individuals who should take necessary steps to eliminate additional spread.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Working closely with Tri-County Health, the County will continue its simultaneous, ongoing integration of data-informed, multiple online and traditional disciplines and distribution-means, including consistent messaging to target audience(s), in the space(s) they trust, often where they already are.

Distribution means include paid media, social media, live town halls, media relations, and a variety of other digital means. The County will continue to maximize information distribution and message penetration via its collaborative relationships with its municipalities, large special districts, law enforcement, Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development Councils.

A critical addition to this mitigation plan is an multi-disciplined, regional public education and citizen engagement campaign in partnership with Arapahoe County and Tri-County Health designed to inform and encourage our communities about public health behaviors including personal responsibility associated with mask-wearing, hand-washing, social distancing, getting tested, staying home and isolating when sick, and cooperating with public health investigations.

Expected Outcomes

- Personal responsibility and positive choices by our communities leading to a decrease in new cases.
- Communities will see the relationship between their responsible choices and benefits for our community and economy. That connection will positively reinforce their responsible behavior.

COMMUNITY GOALS

Douglas County's community goals for the mitigation of COVID-19 are to minimize the internal and external stressors on citizens, limit the chances for a medical surge in excess of hospital capacity, and avoid an economic collapse. Douglas County has not exceeded the 14-day average positivity rate's 5.0 percent threshold used by Safer at Home Level 1 and Protect Our Neighbors since May 14, 2020. In addition, using Douglas County's 2019 population estimate of 351,528, the incidence rate per 100,000 population in the county would be reduced from what is currently reported on the Department of Public Health and Environment website. In order to maintain low transmission rates seen in Douglas County, the County has implemented the following community and response efforts:

1. Support for adequate case investigations of positive COVID-19 cases within the County
2. Continue encouraging citizens' continued compliance with state public health orders – especially social distancing and mask wearing requirements
3. Maintain strong message of personal responsibility, especially for those who are positive or presumed positive, along with direct household members, to remain isolated for 14 days and to high-risk and older individuals to remain at home when they can
4. Strongly encourage citizens to get a flu vaccine to reduce flu related illnesses.
5. Constant collaboration with hospitals to ensure there is not a medical surge in excess of capacity
6. Continued support for businesses who have established social distancing protocols with visibly posted signage
7. Support Tri-County Health Department in its testing strategy
8. Development of County-wide website for COVID-19 information related to Counties, municipalities, and partners
9. Establishment of 4 task forces to address different aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic:
 - a. Communications Task Force – a standing, multijurisdictional group of communication officials
 - b. Economic Recovery Task Force
 - c. Human Needs Task Force
 - d. FEMA/Local Government Task Force
 - e. Coordination, acquisition, and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) to hospitals, long-term care facilities, and other essential businesses

DISEASE TRENDS

TCHD is working to utilize the full range of COVID-19 data to inform decision making of the work outlined in our efforts related to community testing as well as case investigation and contact tracing. We continually work to identify and categorize new and existing data sources for surveillance and compile reports and visualizations of critical metrics.