



ASSEMBLYMEMBER

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DISTRICT 37

COVID-19 Ventura County TELE-TOWNHALL (03-19-20)

Speaker 1: Mike Powers

- Declared a state of public health emergency, which instituted social distancing in the county.
- Shelter in place for individuals 70+ with a chronic condition and seniors 75+.
- Restaurants have closed, except for take-out.
- County facilities have closed. Encouraging telecommuting. Most cities have done the same.
- Essential safety, health care services, and social services are being maintained.
- Services to seniors still being provided, ensuring they receive food. Working with food banks.
- Working to identify medically vulnerable homeless population and they have a place to go.
- Priority is testing and expanding testing capacity. Ventura County lab was one of the first few to be certified to test. Results to community physicians quickly. There has been a limit and we continue to work with our state & federal partners to ensure we have the materials to test. Private labs have come on board to expand our capacity, one is Quest lab and two others. We have 7 sites in our county facilities that do drive-up testing, which is helping to expedite things. Safe for both physicians and patients.
- Messaging has been really important. We want the right people to get tested. Patients to contact their physicians. We don't want everyone tested because that clogs-up the system.
- We have a hotline 211 24/7 to get information.
- Established a physician hotline for community physicians to get guidance on who should be tested and how.
- We have worked with our emergency services agency to prepare for hospital surge. We are prepared for spike as we have seen in other countries. Working closely with all hospitals. We are fortunate to have new hospitals and older hospitals to help us with capacity.

Speaker 2: Rigoberto Vargas

- Lots of attention on testing. Given the limited testing and supplies, swaps, protective personal equipment. Local public health lab working with hospitals to prioritize those most at risk and get those tests to the laboratory as soon as possible. For the most part, we can do same day or next day delivery of results. This helps physicians provide treatment.
- Pleased with significant improvement of testing with advent of commercial lab testing. We have had 500 tests done, half by local public health department lab and the other half by 3rd party labs. They return both positive and negative results electronically. This allows us to communicate with local provider immediately.
- We have 17 confirmed cases, with 7 cases being community acquired. We expected Coronavirus would be in Ventura County with community transmission and now we have documentation. We have moved from disease prevention to disease mitigation efforts.

Speaker 3: Dr. Levin:

- We have people saying what is this all for? Well we now have seen community transmission and it's unclear where they got the infection from.
- To be realistic, we can see a doubling of cases in our county, every week.
- Places that have not been responding aggressively, like we are, have seen a ten-fold.
- We hope to see a decrease in about 6-8 weeks. We hope to have a lower bump, rather than a higher peak, as a result of our aggressive stance. This is expectation on watching other counties, with similar aggressive measures.
- We will continue to use and advance measures as needed.

Speaker 4: Ashely Bautista:

- It is our top goal to keep community informed.
- We have launched vcemergency.com. Has information in both English and Spanish. We have videos in three indigenous languages.
- We have a FB groups in English and Spanish speaker groups. Have over 30,000 members.
- We know our community wants information and quickly and up to date.
- VC site is kept up to day with stats. Community wants locations of cases, we will be issuing that on the website tonight.
- The total number of tests will also be released. We want to be transparent as possible and will be providing information.
- We have 10 native Spanish speakers working around the clock and being creative in outreach efforts, not everyone is on the internet or have computers. Especially farmworkers who are providing an essential service to our area.

- Encourage you to visit the website and text COVID-19 to 211211 for updates and to get a text when website is updated.
- You can also call 211 with questions and speak to someone in English and Spanish.

Q&A

Q: Staying-in place, sheltering in place, what does this mean? What do you mean by social distancing? What are you asking people to do?

A: Another way of saying is that we are asking you to stay well by staying home. When you shelter in place, you decrease contact with others. Where you get the infection is from small droplets, when people speak, when they sing, when they cough. Because they are droplets, they drop about 3 ft. that's where the 6ft of social distancing comes from. When you are sick you should not leave the house. For older people, the virus is more sever for older people.

The only people that you can get together with is people you have spent a lot of time with. If you have a best friend, you can have that person over, if they are social distancing themselves and not out in the real world interacting. Discouraging having casual friends over. Children play dates with other children will spread the virus.

Q: What challenges are local medical officials dealing with and what are our hospital doing to ensure we have the help we need, if we get ill?

A: The biggest challenge is a lot of patients want testing and the amount of testing desired is not near what is available. We are reserving for the sickest people. Public health does not have the capacity to test everyone, we need to find a better way to communicate to physicians that it is their responsibility to manage patients who think they may have COVID-19.

Q: What business should be closed? What is considered essential and non-essential? How are orders/directives enforced? Why are day care centers allowed to stay open at the owner's discretion?

A: Day care health centers can stay open if there are 12 or fewer children, if they are stable, if place is bigger and if caretakers don't mix with other care takers. It should be safe for children to be with one another. They have spent time together.

Essential: health care; grocery stores; anything that sells food, farmers markets, food banks; pet supplies; any form of ag and processing; social

services; media; television/radio; gas stations; banks and financial institutions; hardware stores, etc. I can keep going, but you get the idea. Anything that provides us food and what is important to keep us going.

Q: What is being done in the county for the homeless population?

A: Ventura opened their first-year-round shelter in January and Oxnard has one as well, that has been helping. Ventura County also has Hope Person Care, a program protecting the most vulnerable homeless, and finding hotels and shelter for them. Also have a program called Backpack Medicine, a program where physicians go visit homeless individuals and provide care where they are at.

Q: Follow-up: is there any way we can protect the rest of the homeless population if a homeless individual who has the virus is admitted to the shelter?

A: In close proximity spaces, we want to make sure to test people. However, the same rules would apply if anyone was ill, which is you stay as isolated as possible, you wash your hands, limit the amount of people that go into a room, we know there is community spread of Coronavirus in Ventura County. We need to continue taking those precautions, to keep us all safe.

Q: Our Governor just made an announcement where he is hoping people stay at home. Do you have more thoughts on what does that look like? What does it mean? How do we react to the announcement?

A: We have taken some measures like that in the county. We are right in the cusp of preventing the rise of cases. We need to understand where the Governor is coming from, to avoid following what Italy and China are facing. Protecting the health of the community is our priority.

We are doing our best to keep this county moving and protect people, sometimes those things are in conflict. We know this negatively impacts the economy, it is a reality, it is a reality that a county problem, a state, a national and a worldwide problem.

Q: Follow up: What we are learning is that essential services will continue? So, are we asking people to self-monitored their ability to stay at home?

A: That is correct, essential services will continue. The problem is that some of the services that many of the things that we enjoy are being injured by this, but yes people will continue to have access to food and healthcare. They will

be able to move around, get gas, get their care repaired, drive to get groceries, etc.

Q: What is being done to ensure that our hospitals have proper supplies and protection gear as well as isolation spaces?

A: Our emergency service agency is working closely with our local hospitals, public and private. Assessing the number of beds, we have the number of critical care and critical equipment has. Each hospital has their own surge plan, they are being proactive, canceling non-essential surgeries. Our county hospitals, have built new hospitals, which means we have old hospitals that we can look into using.

We are hoping to get flexibility from the state to get staffing increases and hours to be more prepared.

Q: People who want testing because they are concerned they are showing symptoms, who are not in the top tier but they believe they have been exposed, can they get testing for free or is there a cost associated when those tests become available?

A: The federal package does provide a no cost of testing once we have more tests available, including the uninsured. Currently, our health professionals have developed a tier system based on risks that determines who gets a test and who does not.

Q: Are we going to run out of food?

A: No, the Grocers Association has confirmed there is enough food, but people need to stop overbuying. California and our country has enough food and supplies, the main issue is that people are overbuying.

Q: How are we protecting farmworkers in Ventura County?

A: The county has developed a resource program, where people go out and interact with the farmworker community and ask how they are doing. They are tri-lingual, they speak English, Spanish, and Mixteco. They are meeting to share materials to explain what is happening, how we deal with it and what resources are available for them. The materials are also offered in video in two additional indigenous languages.

The risk is not any greater than others, if they feel they are at risk to come to our community clinics. They can call ahead to call ahead if they think they

are at risk or want to get tested. They can call ahead to get tested through drive-thru in a safer way.

Q: What mental health services are available for people during these times? What can people be doing to maintain or improve their mental health?

A: Health services are still available to people over the phone or in person.

Q: Is there food delivery services for the elderly?

A: Social workers and staff go out and visit seniors in the communities to do health checks and to make sure they get food – this is an essential service. This will continue. The employees will have the appropriate supplies to stay safe. If there is non-essential state workers in the county, we are looking into having their role rearranged to be able to meet the need.

Q: Can we talk about any advice we have for pregnant women and undocumented?

A: For pregnant women, they should reach out to their pre-natal care provider. They should discuss if their visits are necessary or if they can do it online. This applies to all visits, not just regarding pregnancy. If you have a routine visit, try to do it over the phone or video to receive the care. Federal and state laws have been waived that you can do this online or over the phone. There will be times you will have to go see them but if not, try to avoid going to a medical provider physically.

For the undocumented community, as providers we provide care regardless of citizenship. The care continues for the community and everyone.

Q: How long does the Coronavirus last on surfaces?

A: This virus survives for several hours to several days, survives the longest on hard surfaces. Moisture mitigates the survival of this virus.