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Contra Costa County



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April 24, 2020

COVID 19 Update to Union Leadership

The following information is provided as the weekly update between our conference calls of April 17th and the next call scheduled for April 30th:

1. We received Contra Costa's CARES Act funding allocation of \$201,281,393.70. We expect this will cover a portion of the COVID 19 costs that will occur over the next eight months (funds must be spent by 12/31/20). Current projections are that if there are surges in the case load, they will occur over multiple time periods similar to the multiple waves seen during the 1918 Pandemic. CARES Act funding can only be used to address the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus and the obligation to the County wide safety net reaches beyond the immediate need to treat and care for COVID 19 victims. Even when the Federal Government, State, or our Bay Area Health Officers allow some or all of the restrictions currently in place to expire, this will not end the responsibility or the costs of providing COVID 19 related Health and Social Services to all residents of the County. The public health emergency will remain after the "shelter in Place" Orders are relaxed as the County will continue to test, treat and do contact tracing for victims of COVID 19. As individuals or groups of people continue to test positive for COVID 19 the County will to do tracing to identify anyone who were in contact with those who tested positive. This is a time consuming and expensive endeavor that will go on well into next year (2021). Contra Costa County anticipates that between March 1 and June 30, 2020 we will have already spent \$110 Million to address the immediate COVID 19 issues, not all of which will be reimbursable under the CARES Act guidelines.
2. Senator Steve Glazer amended Senate Bill 1349 to include language providing relief to the County and cities within the County for future transaction and use tax measures. The bill was immediately referred to the Senate Governance and Finance Committee. The bill provides relief for the County and cities within the County by exempting existing BART, CCTA and the potential County sales tax from the 2% cap. By partnering with the cities, the County has avoided conflicting bills being pursued with multiple legislative sponsors and allows the County to speak with one voice to the Legislature. There is no expiration on this authority in the current version of the bill text. The County provided a letter of support for the bill to Senator Glazer on April 22nd.
3. We distributed information regarding the CoCoKids Emergency Child Care Program. This is now opened to all County essential workers. Contra Costa County essential workers, who are on the frontlines of responding to the COVID-19 health crisis, may be eligible for free or low-cost care through the County's Emergency Child Care Program. The Contra Costa County Emergency Child Care Program is a collaborative led by the Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD) in partnership with County Office of Education (CCCOE), First Five Contra Costa, CocoKids, EHSD's Community Services Bureau (CSB), Contra Costa's Local Childcare Planning Council, the YMCA and Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS). These partners are committed to maximizing all available resources to support Contra Costa County families with childcare needs during this critical time. Spaces are available in centers and family childcare homes for infants

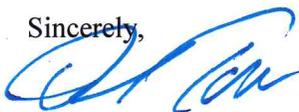
and children up to school age, whose primary caregivers are medical and other essential workers living or working in Contra Costa County, and for vulnerable children and teens, specifically youth who are homeless, at risk of abuse or neglect and those in the foster care system. In-home care may also be available for eligible families. The multi-phased rollout of the program began on April 10th with the opening of Head Start classes for preschool-age children. The task force prioritized and initially offered the Emergency Child Care program to support the needs of frontline County health workers, including doctors, nurses, respiratory practitioners, pharmacists and staff involved in direct patient care. It then expanded the offering to disaster service workers, behavioral health staff, social workers and other healthcare administration and clerical staff. Approximately 800 more childcare spaces became available over the past week, therefore the task force is now broadening outreach to include all essential workers. Childcare centers and homes are located throughout the county and staffed by qualified early care and education professionals. Per the California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing and CDC Guidance for childcare settings, classrooms will follow social distancing, sanitation and hygiene practices and small group care.

4. We have established a Contra Costa County staff wellness support line offering support and self-care suggestions. The services are available to disaster services workers working in the Emergency Operations Center, a Department Operations Center, the Health Services Call Center and is also available to first responders and public health employees. The support line is available 7 days per week from 8AM to 5PM at 925-957-5655. All other employees can access the County's Employee Assistance Program anytime as well.
5. We held a virtual department head meeting and reiterated the importance of getting our messaging to the correct supervisors and staff to correct our inconsistent interoperations by line management.
6. We reminded our department heads that labor relations are still in effect. Although the County emergency does provide for expedited handling of emergency situations, this does not mean that labor rules should be ignored. We need to work together with our labor partners to come out of this crisis stronger than we began.
7. We informed our department heads that we are identifying what may be missed opportunities for e-Work, and to that end will be coordinating with the departments to find ways for employees to work more from home. We have asked our labor analysts in coordination with our senior deputies assigned to the individual departments to work through these issues together. As our partners identify the departments, we have asked that they send that information to Jeff Bailey. Jeff will coordinate the CAO teams with the correct departmental staff to review the particular issues. We have asked our labor partners to identify the divisions by department that are their first priority.
8. We informed our department heads that we are establishing a small workgroup to develop a draft countywide e-work policy. The advent of COVID 19 creates many opportunities to look at how we will do business in the 21 Century. As part of that I want to develop one County wide policy for working from home that will be more flexible than what we have done in the past. Once the shelter in place is lifted, we need to consider broadly expanding the opportunity for employees to continue to work from home. As such I am establishing a workgroup to help draft one County Policy and then serve as the Committee that would negotiate a County Wide policy with our labor partners. Not an easy task to get one policy that will address all of our needs, but bottom line would be without such a policy we will have difficulty reaching the goal of allowing more employees to work from home. More to come on this topic.
9. We are taking the opportunity to expand the issue of continuity of operations for a remote workforce. To that end, we will continue working with our IT department to evaluate potential providers such as Adobe or DocuSign to facilitate a more streamlined, e-work environment.
10. We received an update on the 20,000 cloth masks ordered, the masks are expected to arrive next week, and we will ask you to help us to make these masks available to your members.

11. As we move through the COVID-19 crisis, it is important that we keep our messaging as consistent as possible. We have engaged County Counsel and Risk Management to continuously review and update our processes regarding notification of employees testing positive for COVID (attached is the April 21 update to the notice). Our messaging is especially important because there are privacy issues with insuring that we avoid disclosing the name or identity of any employee who tests positive. As these notices are updated, we will continue to send them to your attention.
12. We will take an action to the Board on Tuesday, to ratify contracts in an aggregate amount of \$4.6 million in response to our COVID-19 pandemic emergency declaration and another action allowing for advanced payments to non-profit organizations providing critical services to vulnerable residents of the County.
13. We talked to Congressman Mike Thompson yesterday. He called to check in on how we are doing in Contra Costa. I thanked him for all his work on behalf of Contra Costa County and in particular for the COVID 19 funding through the CARES Act. I pointed out that the Hospital is losing \$15 million per month in lost revenue and said that we hope to have the CARES Act expanded to allow replacement of lost revenue. I asked that Congress look to extend the use of the CARES Act funds into 2021 (currently we have to expend the money by December 31, 2020 or return it to the Feds) and asked if Congress has given any thought to what we do for the Homeless, whom we are Hoteling, once the shelter in place expires. I shared with him the issue of funding requested by the Cities. I reminded him that a significant issue still is obtaining adequate PPE for our medical, health workers, and first respondents – especially for gowns and testing supplies.
14. We received this positive update from our Chief Medical Officer, Samir B. Shah – *“When I began receiving Coronavirus updates in early February information was scarce, our preparation was incipient, and life hadn’t yet been impacted by physical distancing and sheltering-in-place. Now, more than 2 months later, even though information is widely available, actionable knowledge and interpretation of data remains confusing. - Additionally, our daily routines and lifestyles have been heavily altered by the need to physically distance. By some early projections this was the week to see a surge of COVID-19 patients in California. More mature modeling is now showing this surge, if it happens, to be delayed into late May or June for Contra Costa County. Although it’s difficult to be certain, this seems to be a positive result of our local government leaders and public health experts being aligned and proactive. This past week (April 6-12) COVID-19 became a leading cause of mortality in the U.S. This means that for some healthcare systems medical care has massively pivoted to COVID-19. But for some communities, like ours, the change in health care needs for COVID-19 to date have been minor. That isn’t to say that the impact on health care delivery hasn’t nevertheless been tremendous. It has. We have restructured how we provide ambulatory care, we have rapidly reduced our hospital census, and we have halted elective care and procedures in an effort to reduce exposure. Because of this restructuring we hope to be ready when we are called upon to manage a larger number of COVID-19 patients. But in the meantime, we have to re-imagine how we return to providing comprehensive medical care to those that depend on us. In the coming weeks we plan to re-calibrate how we allow patients to access providers and the system. We have a robust screening system and are optimistic that our testing capabilities will increase; both screening and testing will re-enforce our ability to safely care for patients in our facilities. It does not appear that COVID-19 will be behind us for some time which means we need to learn to work in our new environment. Epidemiologists suggest that this virus could strike in waves. The possibility of flexing the system on and off repeatedly makes this preparation hard. Yet no matter how difficult, we continue to learn, iterate, and change. We will persevere and succeed in our efforts to be innovative in our return to comprehensive care.”*

Our next conference call is scheduled for Thursday, April 30th from 10:00 to 11:00. Thank you for all you do, and I look forward to what we can do together for the communities we serve.

Sincerely,



David J. Twa
County Administrator