

Frank Warren:

Hi. Good afternoon. My name is Frank Warren. Last name is spelled W-A-R-R-E-N. I'm filling in as the designated media contact for this weekend for the San Luis Obispo County COVID-19 public information response team. This afternoon once again, we have our emergency services director, Mr. Wade Horton and the County public health officer, Dr. Penny Borenstein to speak with you. As always, we are joined by a fabulous ILRC interpreter. Today we welcome Emily Furr, last name is spelled F-U-R-R.

Frank Warren:

Mr. Horton will make comments first and then we will turn it over to Dr Borenstein. Of course we will then welcome your questions. For those of you in the room, I'm going to ask today so we can help out with our audio that you step forward and project when you ask your questions today so that we can be sure that everyone gets to hear your questions. Don't forget, all of these resources that are available to everything we talk about today will be put up on www.ReadySLO.org. With that, let's turn it over to Mr. Horton.

Wade Horton:

Thank you, Frank. Good afternoon. Wade Horton, County Ministry Officer and emergency services director. Before I turn it over to Dr. Penny Borenstein for a medical situation update, a couple of points I'd like to share with all of you. First, I'd again like to thank the public and our business community for working together to meet the intent of the shelter home order. Again, we are taking action now as a community to limit the spread of this disease so we can return to normal as soon as possible. We have received hundreds of questions through our call center on what's considered an essential business and what's not. We'll be updating the guidelines for businesses, employers, and employees today which will be available at ReadySLO.org.

Wade Horton:

I would like to note that following a conversation with our sheriff Ian Parkinson, licensed firearm retailers will be allowed to continue operation given that they maintain social distancing requirements to protect their customers. I'd also like to add in the beginning tomorrow County health inspectors will visit businesses who hold a permit issued by the health department and will be answering questions ensuring that they are doing what they need to, to protect public health.

Wade Horton:

On that note, preventing the spread of the virus among our homeless population is one of our many priorities. Today we will sign agreements with four motels throughout our region to provide housing to homeless individuals who are symptomatic or who have been diagnosed with COVID-19. We have no diagnosis of homeless individuals yet, but we are preparing for it. Referrals will be managed by our nonprofit partners, CAPSLO, Echo, and Five Cities Homeless Coalition. We continue to talk to local motel owners and will expand capacity if needed. More information regarding this program will be available tomorrow at ReadySLO.org.

Wade Horton:

I know this is a stressful time for everybody and I understand that we're receiving an increase in domestic violence calls for this month compared to the previous March. If you or a loved one need to talk to somebody about this, please call (855) 886-7473. Again, that's (855) 886-7473. We'll also put this information up on ReadySLO.org. I'll now turn it over to Dr. Borenstein for the public health update.

Dr. Penny Bornstein:

Thank you. Good afternoon, Dr. Penny Borenstein here. I'm the County health officer and not much has changed since we last met here 24 hours ago. Our case count has gone up to 27 individuals. That is about the rate of increase that we anticipated. We still have one hospitalized patient in intensive care. We have one other hospitalized patient outside of our County, but otherwise everybody is home and doing well and two of our case count of actually now fully recovered and are released from monitoring by the public health system.

Dr. Penny Bornstein:

We now have our first two cases in children. Both of those are of high school age and they are contacts of confirmed cases. The confirmed case themselves has traveled. So having that kind of household spread is not at all unanticipated.

Dr. Penny Bornstein:

With respect to our testing capability, we still are testing the same high priority groups and we still have sufficient supply and we are expecting to get more in the early part of the week. That said, we continue to try to move the needle and be able to significantly amplify the testing availability for our residents and we're doing that in two ways. One is we are continuing to try to get a high throughput machine to be available at one of our community hospitals so that we don't have to rely on private systems of care outside of our County. And the other means is some of you may have seen hot off the press news that a new point of care test is now available.

Dr. Penny Bornstein:

The company that makes that test is called Suffield and we have a contract with them. So that puts us in a good position to try to get that point of care test available sooner rather than later. We don't know the time frame at all for that, but we have already reached out to the company and are making our desire known for that test.

Dr. Penny Bornstein:

Let me tell you what point of care test means and why this is so exciting. That means that the test can be done on the patient on site, whether it's at a clinic or a hospital and the test results turned around in 45 minutes or so and the patient given their result right then and there while they wait. So there are a number of things moving on the testing front and we are well poised to jump on all of the opportunities that stand before us.

Dr. Penny Bornstein:

I did want to just add one thing related to measures for infection control. I've gotten questions along the lines yesterday I was asked about packaging. Today some of the questions that have come my way regard the essential business functions. So going to a grocery store or pumping your gas is not only of some measure of concern because there may be other people in those facilities or people lined up in some fashion, but the actual material that you touch and use while accessing the services such as shopping carts or the gas pump handle is of some concern.

Dr. Penny Bornstein:

I want to reiterate that the vast majority of cases are believed to be transmitted through direct contact with individuals rather than surfaces. But we have all along said that surfaces indeed may be a means of exposure. So for those, especially in high risk categories, who want to take the extra measures of making sure that they avoid all possible means of transmission, it is certainly reasonable to either use that which is available at those facilities or even bring your own hand wipes. I know that may be difficult to get them, but certainly to the extent that individuals have such devices that they may want to wipe down the handles of the shopping cart or the gas pump and similar devices as well. And with that we will open it up for questions.

Speaker 4:

Dr Borenstein step forward here. As you mentioned, there are two cases now under the age of 18, is there any significance in that because I know we've talked a lot about children and our ability to track this is readily. I mean what's the significance of having two now individuals? Is there anything that we should be aware of?

Dr. Penny Bornstein:

I don't think it changes the calculus at all for our population in general. We certainly expect to find household transmission inclusive of children when we have known cases and that's exactly what the situation is here.

Speaker 4:

[inaudible 00:08:57] High School just put out push to the parents saying that there's a sophomore at their school has tested positive for COVID-19, is that true?

Dr. Penny Bornstein:

Well the good news is that I don't even know, nor would I tell you if I did. I know that the population, sometimes the infected person themselves make themselves known to their community, to their class friends, et cetera. That's not information that you're going to hear from the public health department, but I'm very sincere when I'm saying I am unable to tell you because I actually don't know.

Speaker 4:

What happens in that case for that family? Is the whole family [inaudible 00:09:38].

Dr. Penny Bornstein:

Yes, so in that, this is one of the reasons for the school closure is so that there are no cases happening in classrooms as we speak, as schools have been out for some period of time. We additionally have continued to ask that children out of school do not congregate because that would be another means of spread. When we do have a confirmed case, we are continuing to do contact investigations and we put on notice any close contacts that we are quarantining them at home.

Speaker 4:

Doctor, when you say congregating, is it safe, especially this weekend, is it safe for kids to play with their neighbors or friends, things like that or would you advise against that?

Dr. Penny Bornstein:

Yeah. I know this is a very difficult situation, especially for young children to not have social outlets, especially for children that don't have siblings, but we very much are asking that that social distancing of six feet, even among small groups of friends be curtailed at this point in the epidemic

Speaker 4:

That goes with your neighbors-

Dr. Penny Bornstein:

Neighbors, schoolmates, friends, et cetera. All right, thank you.

Frank Warren:

All right, well thank you everyone once again for being here today. Let me point out a couple of other things. A media release went out today which outlines the essential services in the County, which counters are open, which facilities are operating, which services are available and which are not, so that is available at ReadySLO.org as well.

Frank Warren:

I want to remind you all of these media releases, all of this information, all of the statistics as they come in are being put up at ReadySLO.org. There's also a recorded public health information line that is available 24 hours a day, and that number is (805) 788-2903, 788-2903. And if you want to get your questions answered live between the hours of 8:00 and 5:00, you can call the County's phone assistance center. And that number is (805) 543-2444, 543-2444.

Frank Warren:

Briefings will continue every day. We will be back here at 3:30 tomorrow until further notice. Thank you so much for tuning in. Thank you for staying informed. Please continue to protect each other by staying home, getting out when you can to get some fresh air at a good social distance and we will see you tomorrow. Thanks.