

- Good afternoon. Today is Wednesday, April 15th, 2020. Thank you for watching today's San Luis Obispo County COVID-19 media briefing. My name is Michelle Shoresman and I'm the media contact for San Luis Obispo County's response. This afternoon, we have two speakers for you. We will begin with San Luis Obispo County District 4 Supervisor, Lynn Compton. She will be followed by County Health Officer, Dr. Penny Borenstein. County Administrative Officer and Emergency Services Director Wade Horton is also here and will be available for questions after the two statements. Speakers remember to repeat your questions before answering them. Thank you again to Robin Babb, our American Sign Language interpreter. And now San Luis Obispo County District 4 Supervisor Lynn Compton.

- Thank you, Michelle. And good afternoon, everybody. I'm pleased to start off with an announcement that's good news. We've received 10 more ventilators yesterday, which increases our county supply and count from 71 to 81 now. These ventilators will be available to our local hospitals. And next week we're scheduled to add 15 more to our local supply count. We're working with our local hospitals to determine where and when to distribute these once they arrive. Because of proactive decisions, like ordering these ventilators and the preparations for the Cal Poly Alternate Care Site, along with our shelter-at-home ordinance, we feel like we've accomplished our goals. The most important initial goal was to prevent our healthcare system from being overwhelmed and unable to care for sick individuals in the event of a local health crisis. We built infrastructure, ordered masks, and ventilators, gowns, and other protective gear for our medical workforce, and collaborated on both a local, regional and state basis and did so in an amazingly short period of time when everyone in the country was scrambling for the same items. Because we're doing our part, and when I say we, I mean the county, but all of the residents, all of you out there, we've bought time for our local health care system to catch up. We've made the necessary focus of our health care delivery system and we believe it's now secure. You have all adopted strategies that were population based to mitigate the spread. And as such, physical distancing and following the shelter-at-home order were to a large degree very successful. You've all done a wonderful job. Thus, we feel like we have bent the curve. Our collective actions and changes in behavior have put us in a good place to move forward and to look to the next phase, which I'm very optimistic about. As you're probably aware, the state is now evaluating parameters for modifying California's stay-at-home order. And we as a county are bound by the state's overlapping order. The county's shelter-at-home order will continue with two week reviews, which will allow us to have as much local control as possible. We are creating a framework to move forward in order that we're ready for the transition back to normal or the new normal when the governor lifts his overlapping order. I'm keenly aware of how we all want to desperately get back to a normal situation. We all know we cannot maintain our current shelter-at-home situation indefinitely. We cannot stop this virus and we are having a severe impact on our healthcare system and those individuals who need other medical health care. We're severely impacting the economy and we're having a direct impact on poverty, not to mention the mental health of all of those affected by this. The governor has indicated, in fact, last night that localism is determinative. He has a vision for the state level, but has indicated yesterday that our local individuals, including healthcare directors and other stakeholders will have a large influence over the next steps as we transition out of this phase and into the next phase. As you continue to shelter home and observe physical distancing, please know that our goal has now shifted from a phase of healthcare preparation and accommodation and flattening the curve to one of putting together a realistic plan to reopen our economy. I hear from individuals and businesses every day, and I know there's a lot of uncertainty out

there. The consequences of extending the stay-at-home order are very profound on our mental health, lost jobs, our personal futures. And although it impacts all of our families differently, the impacts are substantial to everyone. Within the last two days, we've put together a team of medical experts, doctors, public healthcare professionals, business leaders, and representatives that are working to develop a phased approach and framework to modify and eventually lift the current restrictions in coordination with the state. The State of California has absolutely the final say. But our goal is to eventually get to a herd immunity level on both the local and state level. As we move forward, we need to do so safely. We don't want progress to be stalled. But we don't want a large increase in new infections to occur. If that happens, we'll have to reinstate some of the mitigating factors we have put in place right now. As chairman of the board, I've organized a subcommittee to review the medical guidelines and various recommendations that are being formulated as part of this new framework and to assist in shaping the overall approach as we move forward and lift this order. When we modify the existing order, we want to continue to protect the health of individuals until we have built immunity within our community. We still need to protect and care for those who get sick and protect especially those vulnerable individuals within our community, such as the elderly or the homeless. We're all in this together working across agencies, communities and counties to create a united framework to our economic reopening. There are guidelines we will have to follow put forward by the state in order to eventually relax the order and we're now working on meeting these guidelines. While many things aren't business as usual, there are several public services that continue to operate within the county. And I want to thank those employees who continue to provide those services for all of us. Many parks, county trails, and other facilities remain open and will continue to do so as long as everybody continues to keep a safe six-foot distance from each other. We don't want to close additional parks and trails, but we have to protect the public health. And if the six-foot distance isn't maintained, we'll shut them down. So thank you for doing your part. You've been really amazing during this crisis. Public safety services also continue to operate, including a large law enforcement presence on our streets. You may have noticed more Sheriff deputies patrolling our streets. In fact, the sheriff announced on Monday that the number of deputies patrolling our streets is increased 75% compared to the normal since the shelter-at-home order went into effect in order to protect our citizens and make sure nobody is trying to take advantage of us during this time of crisis. As we continue to be here and help and take care of each other, please remember a lot of local businesses and farmers continue to offer food and others goods to our community. And I hope we can all find a way to support any of them in any way that we can. So I will now turn it over to Dr. Penny Borenstein, our county public health officer, and then I will be available for questions if we have any after this.

- Thank you, Supervisor Compton. Good afternoon. So I'm here to tell you our daily case count continues to be modest in its increase. We're at 124 cases today. Good news is 85% of all of the cases today have fully recovered and only three individuals remain in the hospital, two of them in intensive care. So with respect to what's happening locally, we are very pleased to see the numbers that we're seeing not go up substantially. That said, I want to reiterate Supervisor Compton's message, that at the end of the day, the only way we go back to complete normal is when we have a vaccine, or when we have so many people who have been infected that we have widespread immunity or otherwise known as herd immunity. We don't foresee either of those things happening in the very near term. And thus, some of the measures that you heard from Supervisor Compton and from the governor yesterday is what we

have to have in place in order for us to move forward toward the new normal. So I'm gonna take a moment to go over the six steps that my secretary, your secretary of health, Dr. Angell said yesterday at the governor's press conference and reiterated by the governor himself. These are the things that we need to keep our eye on and be sure that we have in place in order to begin lifting the restrictions that we've had in place. So they are six in number. First and foremost, we have to have contact case identification, contact investigation, contact tracing and enough testing that goes along with that. We feel like we are in a good position in this county and have been doing that kind of detailed contact investigation all along and with contact tracing, and isolation and quarantine orders. So to some extent, check for San Luis Obispo County on that one. However, as I've been saying over and over again in this county, we still need to see much more testing to get a good sense of where we're at. Secondly, we have to protect the most vulnerable people. So even if we do go back to some measure of congregate settings, not of the same type or numbers that we've seen in the past, we have to be very careful to have situations in place for our elderly and for our medically vulnerable to continue to get what they need but without putting themselves in harm's way in congregate situations. Thirdly, we have to have treatment options available. And some of that is available in the form of convalescent plasma, I've talked about some clinical trials that are going on. So we think we're doing a reasonably good job in moving that forward as a nation, but still much more to come. Fourthly, and one of the things that you know we have focused on quite a bit in this community is making sure that our healthcare system can absorb the increased numbers. We've talked about ventilators, we've talked about our Alternate Care Site. Our hospitals have taken some of their beds and ventilators out of mothballs and they are prepared to take on more patients than they normally would under routine circumstances. Fifth, we have to provide meaningful guidance to our businesses, to our schools, to all sectors of our population as to what this new normal looks like. We've thrown out ideas but we don't have all of the meat on the bones of our plan at this time, but things like fewer people might have to be present in a restaurant if and when we get to that point of opening restaurants, not if but when. School settings, they are starting the process I was talking about, how do you keep kids apart in school settings, maybe we don't do physical education in the first weeks or months back to school, things of that sort. And we're looking to doing that level of detail as we move forward. And lastly, we have to know, what is it we're looking for that will tell us that we've done too much too soon, and that we are seeing, again, the same signs of worry about the case increases in our county and surges on our hospitals and particularly, the very sick that might have us having to go back a step in terms of our mitigation efforts. So those are the issues that we are talking through over the next couple of weeks. We have this committee that's working on the plan. And Mr. Horton, myself, our board and other sectors of the community will be responding to our plans that we hope to bring forward in the next two weeks. I will leave our plans at that point. And I want to talk a little bit more about the Alternate Care Site. I had the opportunity of being there this morning. And I was really thrilled to see how advanced and ready that this facility is. We had for the first time real staff on site. They've been all the way through the vetting process, the volunteer process, they have badges, they were there for training. We did donning and doffing training, that's putting on and off PPE, personal protective equipment. And we ran through actual patients coming into site. They were actors of a sort, people who are volunteering, but nonetheless, we actually went through the entire process from entry into the facility, to getting screened, to getting your vital signs taken, to being assigned to a location within the care facility, getting treatment, getting better and exiting the facility. And I was extraordinarily pleased with what I was seeing in terms of our level of readiness as a county. That is one of the key elements that we have set along is necessary for us to be able to loosen some of the

protective measures that we have in place, that we have this capacity to take care of a large number of sick people, should we get to that point. And the last thing I wanted to touch on today is masks. Again, we continue to get a lot of questions about, in this county, who should wear a mask, when you should wear a mask, how you should wear a mask. So I'm going to do a little show and tell. So, first, I brought with me a face cover otherwise known as mask, but you can see it is not a medical mask. It is a homemade mask made actually just down the street at our Honor Farm, our corrections facility. There's any number of ways you can do this, you can use scarfs, you can use this type of a mask with elastic straps. But the important thing is that this is a face cover and not a respirator mask. So the first thing you need to know is which side is out. And so I'm here touching the edges, but I'm being careful not to touch the front, okay, because when I take it off, I want that front side to be not as dirty as it might get if I'm messing with it, or I'm touching it, or I've just had lunch and pick up this mask. You don't want to keep it in your pocket or your purse. You want to keep it in a clean place. And then when you go to put it on, it's simply put the two elastic straps over your ears, you want to pull it down so it's over your chin. You want to pull it up, I am touching it for a second, but I want to squeeze the nose so that I've got a good level of protection and I've got protection across here. And you can go about your day, see I'm moving and I'm perfectly comfortable. I may sound a little funny, but I have a loud voice so we can communicate. And when you go to take it off, you want to try to preserve the condition and make sure that you do so with clean hands. So I'm going to take a little bit of hand sanitizer here. You can go to the sink and wash your hands or you can use a hand sanitizer. And so what you don't want to do over the course of the day is this, you don't wanna do this, you don't wanna do this and have it hanging off your ear. You want to either keep it on or have it off. So that having it off is simply using my fingers to take my elastic bands off. And then I'm going to fold it in half and I'm gonna take a clean bag, brown paper bag, you can get at the supermarket. I'm gonna put it in here. I'm really outside touching the bag. I'm gonna fold it. I'm gonna put it away for tomorrow. The one thing I forgot to do, I'm sorry, is look at your mask as you're taking it off, make sure it doesn't have any goobers in there, it's clean. If there's any scent you've been wearing it for a long time, if you've been sweating, if you've got mucus, if you've got tears or saliva, wash it overnight. If you're taking it off for a short period of time, you want to eat your lunch, you're putting it in your bag. And now you need to go back and take it and use it again. I'm going to re-hand sanitize. And then I'm just gonna reach into my bag and pull it out with the elastic. I'm gonna take my two elastic straps. I'm going to re-put it on, pull it down, pinch the nose, and I'm back in business. And that is your lesson for today on wearing a face covering. So with that, I am going to open it up to questions related to this or any other matter that we've discussed.

- [Reporter] Dr. Borenstein or any of our speakers, with the recent talk last year couple of days either at national state and now here local level of the phasing in of reopening, any concerns about people getting complacent right now and kind of easing off of some of the things that they've been doing here for the last month?

- We certainly recognize that people are tired of the conditions under which we are living, we recognize that people are anxious to go out and do things. I continue to stress that getting fresh air and exercise and good sleep, and talking with your friends is important. But this is not the time to be letting up on those physical distancing measures, on the hand washing, going back to work when you're sick, we

really need to keep those in place. Otherwise, everything we've done for the last month will have been for not. So, let me take a moment because I just remembered to repeat the question is, we're potentially seeing a lot of people who are wanting to loosen up the protective measures that we have asked for. And my message to them is, please don't do that. This is not the time. What we want to do is work with the community to provide very clear guidance on ways in which we can step by step get back to a new normal. We're not going to be fully there until we either get a vaccine or the less good way of getting there is for lots and lots of people to get sick. And so we want to avoid that. And we're going to continue to keep some of these protective measures in place so that we can avoid having wasted our time being hunkered down for a month. That's what I would say to the public.

- [Reporter] Another question, we've seen a significant outbreak of the Lompoc Penitentiary. I guess it's the worst in the nation in terms of prisons. I'm not sure what kind of jurisdiction you have, say over CMC, which I think had one positive case over the weekend. Any concerns about that institution and what can be done to avoid what's happening in Lompoc?

- So the question was, Lompoc Penitentiary, federal penitentiaries experiencing a very large outbreak, perhaps the largest in the corrections facilities across the nation. What is our jurisdiction with respect to the state prison in San Luis Obispo County, CMC, California Men's Colony, and the fact that we had one case. So we feel that we have done a complete outbreak investigation on that one case at CMC. We feel like we have dodged a bullet in that that particular individual was not in contact with other inmates. And so we're hopeful that we can manage the situation. But we are always very concerned about any congregate setting, especially like a prison or our county jail, or our long term care facilities as our most vulnerable. So we work very closely with the directors of all of those places to ensure that they've got the PPE that they need, to ensure that they understand best infection control practices to jump on any single case that may come to our attention as soon as possible, and thoroughly investigate it and quarantine individuals as necessary. So we can never be perfect. You can see what can happen when things aren't, how quickly things can go awry, as in Lompoc, and we're just doing our best efforts to make sure that that doesn't happen here.

- [Reporter] I have a question, Penny, on which models you use for basing decisions? The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation of the state of California, which apparently have vastly different projections. Do you look at either one of those or prefer one of those?

- So the question was, what kind of models are we looking at to have metrics that help us guide our decisions? And the answer is all of them. So we've looked at the CHIME model out of University of Pennsylvania, we've looked at the IHME model, but there's a new model, the state of California has invoked some experts from Johns Hopkins University, we had a teleconference with them just I think last night, where they were giving us our local numbers. There's a wide disparity across those, both in terms of raw numbers as well as timeframe. And so I would say at the end of the day, what we're looking most closely at is what's really happening on the ground. So we keep our eye on all of those models. It is

those models that helped us decide how much surge capacity we need to build to address the possible worst case scenario. But in terms of making our decisions going forward, we keep those numbers in mind and yet very much focused on what we're actually experiencing going forward.

- [Reporter] Do our numbers fall behind California's or are they at par with them? How would you assess that?

- So, as if the question was, do our numbers fall behind California's or what does our modeling look like compared to what others may be doing on our behalf? So, I think for anyone who's been watching the governor's press briefings and Dr. Mark Ghaly who's the Department of Health and Human Services secretary at the state level. And I had shown once here a similar chart that shows that we are doing better than most of the models. That's true at the state level, it's true at our county level. And so again, we're very happy with that outcome. But we can't take our eye off the prize. And that's why we need to continue to be very judicious and cautious as we move forward with lifting some of the restrictions. But at the end of the day, we're seeing ourselves on the lower end of all of the models and that's a good thing.

- Thank you all again for coming today and for tuning in online and on TV. Remember, there are a number of ways that you can get information and resources related to the county of San Luis Obispo's response to COVID-19. We continue to update ReadySLO.org and maintain our public health information line recorded message with daily updates. Our Phone Assistance Center is also still available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. And it's open on weekend days until 4:00 p.m. And all our information is still available in English and Spanish. Thank you again for tuning in today. Our next regularly scheduled briefing will be Friday at 3:15. Please remember to tune in on San Luis Obispo County's Facebook page on our county's homepage and on the live streams of KCOY and KSBY. Thank you again, be well and we'll see you on Friday.