

- Good afternoon. Today is Monday, May 4th, 2020. Thank you for watching today's San Luis Obispo County COVID-19 media briefing. My name is Michelle Shoresman and I'm the designated media contact for our public information team. This afternoon we have two speakers for you. We will begin with San Luis Obispo County District 4 supervisor and Board Chair, Lynn Compton. She will be followed by County Health Officer Dr. Penny Borenstein. Thank you again to our American Sign Language interpreter, Robin Babb. And now San Luis Obispo County District 4 supervisor and Board Chair, Lynn Compton.

- Thank you, Michelle. Good afternoon. Today I have some updates for you on the START guide, and, if you recall, START stands for Steps to Adapt and Reopen Together. We've asked for your feedback since we launched it on Friday and you have delivered. So far, the START guide documentation has been downloaded over 1,300 times. We've also received over 625 comments from the community. Every comment we receive is read, I can assure you, by our team. We appreciate that the community wants to give us input and we read and look at all of their letters, suggestions, and comments. Please keep in mind this process is evolving. While the members of the planning team are not able to respond to every email they receive, I can tell you comments are being heard. In some cases, your feedback may be incorporated into the document for future reference and updates. Please know that while your suggestions and/or comments may be absolutely excellent, there are some times why we can't incorporate the text in the next update or it wouldn't be practical. As a reminder, the START guide is a living, breathing document and describes our plans how to open our economy and our communities should the governor lift his superseding order to shelter at home. The State, the County, and the local cities have partnered together to expand COVID-19 testing in this community. Two free state testing sites opened today in our community. One is in Paso Robles at the Veterans Hall and the other is in Grover Beach at the Ramona Gardens Community Center. Tests are by appointment only at both of these sites Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. To make an appointment to be tested, one can be made on visit [Readyslo.org](https://readyslo.org), which is R-E-A-D-Y-S-L-O dot org, or you can call a phone number and that number is 888-634-1123. And I will end on some good news before turning it over to Dr. Penny Borenstein. The county received \$2.3 million in grant funds to assist residents who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The county received 1.6 million in federal block grants from the CARES Act and 750,000 from the California Department of Housing and Community Development. The county will partner with our local nonprofits to use the funding for eviction purposes, rapid rehousing, and other eligible programs. We are collaborating with the cities to ensure the funds are allocated equally across our entire region. Now I will turn it over to Penny Borenstein, Dr. Penny Borenstein.

- Okay, thank you, good afternoon. So first I'll start with our case count. It stands at 202 today. That is an increase of one case since yesterday. So that is good news. I want to remind folks that our recovery rate now is considering individuals who have had the disease, from the onset of symptoms to full recovery is a minimum of 10 days, not seven, so our recovery rates are now in the 75% range as opposed to, they had been as high as 85%. But we will see that ongoing in terms of our recovery percentages. I did also want to say that we continue to have seven individuals in the hospital and three of them are intensive care and that has not changed over the weekend. So with respect to the testing that you heard Supervisor Compton speak to, we're very happy to see that we have filled most of the appointment slots

at the two places that we're now testing in Paso Robles and Grover Beach and that will be ongoing, 12 hours a day, five days a week. So with that, however, I also want to communicate because we are really expanding our testing, we may well see additional positive cases coming out. So to look to our START guide, as we keep our eye on the epidemiology of this event, we said that we will be looking at both the number of cases but, even more importantly, the severity of cases and our hospitalization rates. So while we may see increase in the number of cases who are presenting to an outpatient site, a clinic, we are hopeful that we will retain the low numbers that we've had in critical care, especially, and in the hospitals. So in our guide, I also want to point out that it talks about looking at an increase in cases of 10% over consecutive five days but if the amount of testing remains stable. So as we increase testing, we absolutely think that there's a reasonable chance that we would see increased case numbers, but we're gonna look at the specificity of those cases. Are they in the outpatient arena? Are they hospitalized? Are they coming from our prison? CMC is continuing to see a small uptick in cases. So those are the types of things that we'll be looking at going forward. You did hear, also, Supervisor Compton talk about the many, many comments that we got from the public and I want to address some of those where there were themes. So there were clearly some areas that we were able to hear back from the public that need clarification and I want to try to address some of those today. So one of them I'm gonna start off with is personal care. In case those of you who didn't get our codewords, personal care means haircutting businesses and other types of salons like nail salons. So hair salons, barbers, and nail salons. We put that in our phase one plan but as the governor indicated today, that is very much in a later phase in the State's plan. And so we are probably not going to be able to step out in front of the State on that particular area but we, as health officers in communities that are continuing to see very stable rates of this disease, we're continuing to have that dialogue with our counterparts at the State Health Department. So stay tuned but for right now, that is the one area on a specific business arena that we have a difference between what the state plan says and what our plan says. With regard to gyms, there were a number of questions that came in regarding, what does gym opening look like? And we have put together a set of guidance in the first supplement of the START plan that talks about how gyms using the equipment, that is both cardio equipment and weightlifting equipment, that those can go forward with certain measures for sanitation. But we are asking at this time, in the very early phases, that it will not include within a room within the gym certain types of classes, you know, whether that's aerobics or Zumba or Pilates or things where there's a larger number of people, spin classes. And the reason for that is there is good scientific information that in those settings disease transmission is higher than that in an open area where you might have gym equipment that's being sanitized on a regular basis. So we again ask the public to be patient with us but we wanted to put out that type of clarification. We also got a number of questions that seemed to perhaps misunderstand the recommendations for vulnerable populations. So let me again define vulnerable populations. We mean individuals over the age of 65 and anyone with one or more chronic medical conditions, heart conditions, lung, kidney, diabetes, obesity, as well as things that might compromise an immune system, like cancer, like HIV in some cases, or other types of immune-compromising conditions. Those are the individuals that we call vulnerable populations and we are still very much recommending that those persons in our phase one and our phase two continue to shelter at home as much as absolutely possible. And one more thing I wanted to address is schools. We got a lot of questions on schools. There was misunderstanding or lack of clarity on our part as to the difference between a modified school opening and a partial school opening. So actually, in reverse, we indicated that school openings were possible in phase one on a partial basis. And what our intent is with that is that small numbers of children can

resume in-person instruction, if the school district is ready to do this, for those children who might otherwise be really falling behind in their academic achievement. So summer school is an option, special education is an option. Those are not the full number of students that would be looking to come back to in-person instruction in a modified phase two school reopening. And so partial in phase one refers to these individual groups of students that are much smaller in number. Modified school opening K through 12 in phase two refers to the vast majority of students being allowed back on campus but with modifications of how that instruction will be provided. And we don't have a great detail on that yet, we, the county. Public Health is working with all the school superintendents to try to vet all the ideas that they are coming up with and that we are able to provide them technical consultation on in terms of, you know, how do you spread out children in a classroom? To what extent is that possible? How do you rearrange the lunchroom? Do maybe children stay in the classroom and the teachers move around in the older grades? Do we look at AM/PM extended day? There's all manner of ideas that are emerging from the school organizations. But that is not fully vetted yet and because schools are not anticipating that type of opening for all students until at least the fall semester, late August, September, depending on the district, we're continuing to work through those areas. And one more thing is, so that's where I wanna leave it in terms of our START guide. So as we move forward and as we, oh, yes, there was one more thing, I'm sorry. Retail food facilities. For those who are not in the business, all of our regulated food facilities know who they are but we got quite a few questions about what that refers to. So that is code language for us. It represents restaurants, it represents bars and pubs, it represents anywhere that food is sold. It could be a food truck, it could be a wine bar or a wine tasting where they also serve food. So that's what we mean by retail food facilities. The guidance itself says restaurants, I think retail food facility in parenthesis. But those two terms are synonymous in our world in terms of looking at restaurant reopening, restaurants, pubs, bars, wine tastings, et cetera. So let me talk a little bit about what the governor said to the best of our understanding today. I also had the opportunity to get some clarification from the state public health department but more information is going to be emerging on this over the coming days. So the phase two that the state plans on initiating as early as this Friday will allow the vast majority of retail businesses to open, and I use that word carefully, as that is what is being said. However, if you listen more closely, or what you will see when the detailed guidance comes out, that retail is being asked in this first phase to provide their services at curbside or through delivery. So there are a lot of questions about what that will look like for people in terms of not being able to try on shoes in the store, you know, having to pick our your shirt either from the window or from an online presence. But it is a step in the right direction and as we have said, so too the state is saying, is we're gonna take these measured steps and move towards something that looks more like the kind of retail that we're used to. So I don't want the public who are watching the headlines on the bottom of the TV screens to say California's reopening its retail sector of Friday to misconstrue that as a full reopening. Once again, you've heard us say many times, in that we are a constitutional sector of the State of California, even though our phase one START plan goes a little bit further, we are still unable to move more aggressively with respect to retail businesses. But it is a movement in the right direction. Retail businesses is all manner of, you know, the shops themselves, so whether it's bookstore, toy store, shoe store, sporting goods, antique shops, a whole host of different shops, and the manufacturing and logistics that support those industries is also going to be able to start up their business sectors again. What's not included universally in the state's next move toward phase two is restaurants. However, as you know, in our START guide, our next phase does envision reopening of restaurants and the governor has heard our local call, along with many other counties, that we feel that we have the conditions in our

jurisdiction to begin to move more rapidly and in some additional sectors. With that, the governor has laid out a plan to allow counties to submit an attestation regarding our state of readiness with all of the types of things that we already have looked at and put together and made available to the public in terms of our readiness vis a vis testing, our case rates, our hospital surge capacity, how we're going to address movement across the county, a number of factors that we already have made available to the public and put together. We will likely have to tweak that once we see the details of what the state is specifically looking for but we feel that we are ready in this county to submit our plan just as soon as we get guidance on the specifics of what we need to submit and we think we can turn that around in a very quick order and be ready to go with that next set of businesses, particularly restaurants and other retail food establishments, possibly as soon as this weekend. That will depend on getting from the state the details of what we need to submit but I can assure the public that we will work as long and as hard and as fast as we have to to be able to meet that challenge. As I mentioned before and I just wanna reiterate as I'm looking at the differences between the state plan and what we can and can't do, is, unfortunately, though we include in our first phase that personal care sector related to haircuts and nail care, that that will not at the present time be something that we are able to do moving forward within the next days. So with that, I'm gonna pause and open it up to questions. Thanks.

- Is that gonna be something, in terms of the personal care, that you kind of negotiate with the governor?

- So the question was, with regard to the personal care, is that something that may be, that we may be able to negotiate with the governor? I can tell you that I know that there are a number of counties, ourselves included, as well as some big counties that are still experiencing higher rates, are trying to communicate a sense of the essential nature of that particular service. I am quite sure it's not going to happen between now and Friday, that that changes. I may be wrong but that's my sense from the dialogue that I've been able to participate in. But there has remained open a window for ongoing consideration and dialogue on that front.

- [Reporter] In terms of that new expanded testing in Grover Beach and Paso Robles, you filled all 264 slots today?

- So the question was, did we fill all 264 available appointment slots for the testing in Paso and Grover?, and I don't actually know the answer to that question and there may be some ongoing last minute registrations so we will report back to you on Wednesday, if not sooner, what actual number of people were tested but I did hear that they were filling up at a good pace.

- [Reporter] And in terms of getting those results back, how quickly are we gonna be able to see those results turned around?

- The question was, how quickly will we see the results of this expanded testing? And we're told it will be within 48 hours and we hope that that will be the case.

- [Reporter] And just one more question, couple of hundred yards from where we're at right now we see CMC testing. What can you tell us about that?

- Yeah, so the question was, right up the street from where we are here on Kansas Avenue there seems to be testing going on for CMC. And indeed, we, the County, decided to make the testing available to staff at CMC who are part of our outbreak investigation to make it as easy as possible for staff to access, even on their lunch hour or break or shift change, to get all of the remaining people tested who are part of that outbreak investigation.

- [Reporter] So the hope is to test essentially everyone on that campus there?

- So let me be clear, the question was, so the hope is to test everyone on the campus? No, at this time. We are doing what we call sort of ring investigations. So based on, all of the inmate cases up 'til this moment have been in one particular block. So all of the staff who have any contact with inmates from that block, including medical staff where the inmates may have gone to medical care, that is the amount of staff that we are testing and that number's more like 200, whereas the entire facility staff makeup is on the order of 1,500 or 1,700. So there's a considerable difference there. We will expand testing as we need to should the disease move into new parts of the campus.

- [Reporter] Sort of along the same lines, Melissa Newman would like to know how the county is performing contact tracing and how quickly is the turnaround with notification to those parties?

- The question was, how is the county performing contact tracing and how quickly does that occur? I just wanna give an incredible shout-out to our communicable disease team. We have a cadre of nurses who have been at this from the date of the first case, which is now six, seven weeks out. The same people have been working six, seven days a week. They wait until the laboratory information comes out from our public health lab. If that's into the evening, they stay. They call people same day. They get contact information elicited from 100% of the cases that we have and then they start to call those contacts and find out what their situation is in terms of illness, in terms of work setting. I can't speak highly enough about how well that team is working.

- [Reporter] It looks like around less than 2% of the county residents have been tested for coronavirus so far. What are your testing goals and on what timeline?

- So the question, it appears that maybe 2% of our residents have been tested to date and what is our goal and how quickly do we expect to get there? So there are a couple of metrics that are available in terms of recommendations for the amount of testing we should be doing. The one that we referenced in our START guide came out of Harvard University, Harvard Global Institute, a study that said we should be doing on the order of 150,000 roughly per 100,000 population. In our supplemental, our status report in the START guide, we talk about potentially getting there or close to there within the next three weeks and that, we think, will put us in good stead. That was just one study. We're now hearing from the state numbers of what they expect to see in terms of our testing capacity that's considerably lower than that and we think, given with this additional testing that we've been doing, we probably have already achieved that. 2% of the population puts us at 5,000-ish already being tested and that is, yeah, probably close to the accurate number, thanks.

- [Reporter] Just a followup to the contact tracing, what is someone told if they have had contact with someone? What is that individual told?

- So when we determine that someone, the question is, what are the individuals who are part of our case investigation identified as contacts, what are they told? So they are given quarantine orders in many cases, which means that they are told to stay at home for two weeks. They are told what all the symptoms are to look for and to call us as well as their personal physician at the first sign of any symptoms. We will immediately get them tested if they do have symptoms that align with COVID-19. In some cases, contacts cannot stay away from work. There are certain provisions whereby if they are a critical employee, particularly in some of our health sector or first responders, if they are critically needed at their place of work, they are allowed while they are asymptomatic to return to work but to use a face covering or a mask during the entire 14-day period. If they are in a high-risk setting, then we do check back with those contacts on a routine basis, as well as our case.

- [Reporter] She does have another question if you don't have one.

- Thanks.

- [Reporter] She is wondering what happens if someone breaks the quarantine order? If they are not allowed to return to work and still--

- So the question was, what happens if someone breaks their quarantine order? We do communicate with employers about the quarantine orders and so often people are compliant because both the employer and the employee honor that request of ours. We're not sending law enforcement out to people's homes. We do check with them by telephone. Occasionally we might think, hey, doesn't sound like you're at your home, but for the most part we think that our community is really adhering to our guidance and doing a very good job.

- [Reporter] With Memorial Day weekend coming up, does the county have any thoughts on how to help mitigate tourism and, yeah, anything in that regard?

- Yeah, so the question was, with Memorial Day weekend coming up, what's our plan to mitigate tourism? We've been talking a lot about tourism. We've talked with the director of Visit SLOCAL, we've talked the individual lodging businesses. We are asking both our visitors from out of the county as well as our tourism industry to please be patient with this. We recognize that there is a real hardship to maintaining businesses that are considerably below where they normally would be at this time of year but we are asking people to not come to our county because part of our plan and part of what the state is looking for and why they are giving us this allowance to move other business sectors forward more quickly is that we continue to have modest numbers of people coming from out of town. There are some people that always will need to come because they are essential workers in the health industry, Diablo Canyon, other sectors that need out of town workers for their important activities, but we are asking both our lodging sector, our entertainment sector, you know, businesses, and our out of town guests to heed our request to not make your travel plans to this county at this time.

- [Reporter] And do you plan on increasing staff for the contact tracing or only on a need basis?

- The question was, do we plan on increasing our staff for contact tracing or only on a need basis? Yes. So we do anticipate that we will see additional cases and we are already gearing up. We've got desks already apportioned and we're identifying the next people who will be assigned to that very task.

- [Michelle] Last question.

- [Reporter] Are wineries included in phase one? That just came in too.

- Yes, wine tastings are included in phase one. Thank you.

- Thank you all for tuning in today. A few reminders for the day that have been mentioned by previous speakers. All of our updates and information about the county's COVID-19 response are available on our [Readyslo.org](https://www.readyslo.org) website. As Supervisor Compton stated, we have received over 600 comments on our START guide which is posted there on [Readyslo.org](https://www.readyslo.org). There remains a form there on the website with the START guide that allows you to provide feedback on the guide. Please use that form to provide your feedback and this will ensure that your comments get to the right place. [Readyslo.org](https://www.readyslo.org) also remains the place to go for the state-sponsored testing which is where you can go to sign up for an appointment and, also, if you have no internet access, you can still call the appointment phone bank at 888-634-1123. Our phone assistance center remains open daily as does our recorded public health information line. Thank you again for tuning in today on the San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department Facebook page as well as our county's website as well as the livestreams of KCLY and KSBY. You can find these briefings rebroadcast on Public Access 21 at midnight, 8:00 a.m., and 5:00 p.m. until our next briefing on Wednesday. Thank you for staying engaged, be well, and we'll see you on Wednesday at 3:15.