

- Good afternoon. Today is Monday, May 11th, 2020. My name's Michelle Shoresman. Thank you for watching today's San Luis Obispo County COVID-19 media briefing. This afternoon we have two speakers for you. We will begin with San Luis Obispo County District Four Supervisor and Board Chair, Lynn Compton. She will be followed by County Health Officer Dr. Penny Borenstein. Thank you to our American Sign Language interpreter, Robin Babb, and now, San Luis Obispo County District Four Supervisor and Board Chair, Lynn Compton.

- Thank you Michelle. I hope everybody enjoyed Mother's Day and celebrated in a safe and responsible manner. Mother's Day can remind us of the beneficial and lasting impacts of family connections and what it means to have a safe home environment. Sadly though, our county has many children in foster care who are in desperate need of that environment, a safe, loving, and stable environment, especially during this pandemic. For too long, we've had a severe shortage of homes in San Luis Obispo County for children in foster care, and with the COVID-19 pandemic, it has exacerbated the situation. The pandemic has put pressure on our foster care system at multiple levels. For a variety of reasons, we're seeing both an increase in the need and a decrease in the availability of resources for our families locally. We need individuals and families to provide homes in either a short or long-term basis, and in particular local children age 10 and older, including teenagers and young adults in extended foster care, need homes right now. If you are able to help, please call area code 805-781-1705 or visit www.slo-foster-care.com. It appeared to be a busy Mother's Day weekend at some of our beaches. While reports suggest that most people were practicing social distancing, we are concerned with out-of-area visitors coming here to recreate. Now is not the time to come to San Luis Obispo County for fun and recreation. We want to encourage potential visitors to vacation at home for the time being anyway. Regarding our plans for the re-opening of San Luis Obispo County, we have pivoted, per state direction, and are using the state's resiliency roadmap to ensure that we can adapt and re-open together quickly and as safely as possible under the state's order. The state determines when and how each county may re-open based on the ability of the county to meet the state's criteria. The county submitted an attestation, or a verification, to meet the governor's office describing how we are prepared to meet the criteria and fully open into stage two of the state's roadmap. The state's stage two does not include personal care businesses such as salons, body art, et cetera, and in-person religious services, but it does allow in-store retail and in-restaurant dining to re-open with physical distancing and other protective measures taken. We are waiting to be notified if the state will approve our attestation and allow us to do this. According to the state's resiliency roadmap, local retail establishments may now be open with curbside pickup and delivery. The associated manufacturing and logistics related to retail may also re-open. Local establishments that were allowed to remain open on the county's shelter-at-home order will still be allowed to remain open. Anybody wishes to provide input into the state's resiliency roadmap can do so by filling out an online survey at this website: covid-19.ca.gov/ Thank you very much, and I will turn it over to Dr. Penny Borenstein.

- Thank you, Supervisor Compton. Good afternoon. So the first thing I always like to do is tell you where we are in our disease counts. We are at 226 since our last press briefing. That's up 12 and six on the day. We still have 77% of all of the cases to-date have fully recovered, and four individuals are in the hospital, two in intensive care. I'm happy to report that we continue to enhance and make more available testing

in the county. Our two locations, one in Paso Robles at the Veterans' Hall, and one in Grover Beach at Ramona Community Center Gardens continue to be available by appointment, and appointments can be made either through our website at readyslo.org, or for those who do not have Internet access and would like to make the appointment by telephone, they can do so at 888-634-1123. Testing is one of our critical activities, and it remains available at these two locations as well as continued availability through urgent care, through community clinics, through the public health lab, and through private healthcare providers, so we continue to see increased numbers of people getting testing. I want to also address, we had a question about our alternate care site and what the future of that site looks like, so we've had communication with the Cal Poly president, and we are so grateful to that institution as a partner with us and continuing to remain, to allow us to maintain that site, that alternate care site, which is one of our most important strategies for being able to re-open the community is that we have the ability to care for people in an out-of-hospital location should the hospitals need that additional bed coverage, but in the meantime as you know, we have had very few people in the hospital. The hospitals continue to have a lot of availability, and so our alternate care site stands ready, but underutilized or unutilized, and therefore, we have been working with Cal Poly to ensure that, while it is in that state of readiness but not used, that we can partner with them to begin to use some portions of the facility in a very safe manner, so again, we're grateful to our Cal Poly partner, but we don't wanna restrict them from at least partial utilization of the facility, and that is our plan going forward over the next months. Should the facility need to be available, they have made clear to us that the priority is to have that alternate care site available for patient care if indicated. So let me talk a little bit further about, there continues to come a number of questions to the emergency operations center, our phone assistance center, emails. A lot of people continue to be unclear about the START guide that the county put together and the state's resiliency roadmaps. So you heard Supervisor Compton say, "Now that the state has come out with a very clear, "phased map for which sectors of our business "and organizational community can move forward "on varying timelines, we want to be clear to the community "and all of the stakeholders that participated "in the development of our start guide "that it still retains utility." So while we are moving forward on the state's plan and their timeline and their sectors under the laws of California, we feel that there are elements of the START guide that are very important. First and foremost is the development of that plan in a community-wide process. As we said from the very beginning, it is a guide. It was always in draft form. While we had hoped that we would finalize it after getting all the public input that we did get and move forward with it, we are not able to do so at this time, but there are elements of that START guide that remain very important to us. First of all, the process and the stakeholder input. We continue to want to get that feedback from the public. The state's allowing us to move forward into stage two is just that. It doesn't mean that we have to do all of it. It also means that we have some measure of interpretation within the framework of the state's guide, so we will continue to look at that. We will continue to look to our stakeholders and the public to help inform us. In a very specific way, there are two elements of our START guide that remain available to us and important to us, and those are the metrics that we put into place for making decisions about our state of readiness as well as in particular should our local situation worsen, it has built-in metrics for consideration of when we may need to withdraw on some of our re-opening plan at some point in the future, so that body of work remains very important to us and will remain available. The second is that there are many specific guidances for various business and other organizations, sectors. We call it standards and guidelines, and we continue to make those available, especially in the areas that the state has not yet come out with specific guidance, so while the state is now beginning to put forward similar guidance or very companion

guidance from the state level, we are beginning to take a look at what the state has put out, what we've put out, and reconcile those. We will most likely move forward with the state's guidance to the extent that it meets all of our needs, but we continue to have as part of our START guide all those individual guidances, some of which are not available at this time for our county anywhere but that start guide. Hopefully by way of explanation of why we haven't just completely shelved the START guide. It still remains available, and there are components of it that are very important to us, and the process especially is very important to us and remains important to us, but at this time, the main document and the main area for guidance and phases and timing of moving forward, our public really should look to the state's roadmap or resiliency roadmap. So with that, I'll stop talking about the START guide and the resilience roadmap. I do have one more thing to talk about, and that is an important notice from our public works department. As folks are beginning to think about re-opening businesses, it's important for those who have had stagnant water systems over as much as two months now, that the large water service connections in those buildings, if they've been closed or reduced water usage, it's important that they be thoroughly flushed of the stagnant water that are in those lines before restoring full operation. Those connections that have been shut down or significantly reduced their use have an increased risk of legionella as well as leeching of lead and copper, and so for those businesses that are going to go back into business in the coming days, weeks, months, be cognizant of the fact that unused water systems have these higher risks and that they need to be fully flushed before utilization. So I know that everyone is looking forward to the future, as am I, and we are still very hopeful that, in a matter of a very short period of time, that we will be able to begin the process of moving into those additional variance areas of the state's stage two. Stay tuned on that, and finally, I just wanna close with my green ribbon that I am wearing. This is national mental health awareness month, and we all are celebrating that in the healthcare system, and you'll be hearing from our behavioral health director for the county on Wednesday who can provide more information about that part of what's going on in our community vis-a-vis the impacts of our shelter-at-home order as well as just making sure that we continue to stress, whether it's under a COVID pandemic or just in general, this is a very important healthcare sector for our community for us to continue on the path toward wellness and well-being for all of our residents. So with that, I will open it up for questions or comments.

- [Man] Dr. Borenstein, regarding the attestation, just a brief update on that, and then on Friday you said that there was one criteria that you still needed some dialogue or you're hoping for further dialogue with the state. I think it was cases per 1,000.

- Yeah, so that--

- What's the update with that?

- Thank you, sorry. The criteria that was laid out is that, in order for a jurisdiction to attest to readiness, there be no more than one per 1,000 population cases in the last 14 days. We exceed that by a small percentage. We actually re-did those numbers over the weekend. On Saturday, I resubmitted that we

were a little bit closer to that metric counting all of our cases. It remains unclear to us at this time whether or not the state needs to approve. They have been saying all along that the attestation is a self-certification of a county's readiness to move forward. The governor at his press briefing today indicated that a number of counties had submitted that attestation and that he'd be making further announcements tomorrow, so we are awaiting that information from the state, and hopefully we'll get it as soon as tomorrow.

- [Man] And regarding the new cases, 12 this weekend, a slight tick up from the normal what we've seen over the last several weeks. Any kind of update on the transmission. Was family, no contact, things like--

- We continue to test and do contact tracing of household contacts. I don't know of these particular cases what proportion of them are in one category versus another, but they have tended throughout this period of more than seven, eight weeks now since our first case, to be a higher percentage in the person-to-person transmission, household contact, close contact, than they have in new areas of community transmission or travel-associated. I don't believe that these latest cases break down any differently than everything else has to-date. You said it's a small increase from where we've been, and that is part of our case to the state is, if you look at the past three days on average, it's four cases per day, and that is where we've been since the middle of March. Our average, I've looked at it across the entire eight-week period, and we run 3.8 cases per day. My attestation to the state is with that in mind, that short of a couple of bobbles, which we will have, that we have basically had a flat curve throughout this entire process of social distancing and all of our mitigation strategies, so I don't think that we can know where things might head until we actually take the next small steps forward.

- [Woman] Dr. Borenstein, question about the START guide. I hear you say today. I know it was said on Friday. You keep mentioning the fact that the state won't let you utilize that at this time, like put it in action, the full guide at this time. Does that mean you and other officials think that you will eventually be able to use it to its full extent?

- The short answer is we don't know. We, at this county and every county across the state of California, continue to have dialogue, both in regional settings, in individual conversations with the leadership of CDPH. Our elected officials have dialogue with folks in the governor's office to try to find what their thinking is on the, both using the language of local determinism and yet, a state approach to the timeline, so I think that is an ongoing, iterative process between locals and the state, this county included.

- [Woman] And then also, you mentioned using the START guide moving forward, talking about metrics for readiness, and pulling back on some things, but I'm just curious how that will work, considering the county is going to rescind its shelter-at-home, or you know, not renew its shelter-at-home order in just a few days, so how will local control be maintained?

- Yeah, so the idea of not moving forward with another order is as we come under the state's order, we believe that to be sufficient at this time. Should we diverge in any way from the state and want to be more restrictive or need certain areas of clarification or, you know, there are, as the state is using the term, variance for moving ahead at a different pace locally in some of these areas in stage two. We certainly retain our sights on we may in the future need to have a local order, but right at this moment in time, we're no longer seeing the benefit in having that.

- [Woman] Could you also, we've gotten some emails regarding the community numbers for cases, and sometimes, they seem to change day-to-day. For instance, it sounds like Morro Bay's numbers may have been like six yesterday, or like they go back, like it was seven one day, and then it goes to six one day. Can you explain that?

- One of the challenges for us in making real-time data available to the public is sometimes, there's additional information that comes forward from an individual case. We may get from a laboratory a report of a case and their address, and then when we make contact with their individual, it might turn out that they live actually somewhere else on a routine basis, but they had their lab done and used a different address, when they got that testing done. I mean, that's one possibility. We really value getting information now expediently to the public in real time, and yet, that is always going to mean that things get clarified and cleaned up in terms of the data as we move forward.

- [Woman] Could you also explain that you mentioned being able, Cal Poly partially using some of their facilities that are being used by the county right now. Could you explain what that means, like what, how will that work?

- So the rec center at Cal Poly is a very large facility. It has multiple components to it. There are offices, there's a rec facility, there's a gymnasium, there are upstairs components, and so our logistics team and operations team has worked very closely with their management to actually design how to maintain the sanctity of the patient care areas while still being able to move forward with opening up some of their recreational areas.

- [Woman] Okay, which specific recreational areas? Do you guys know that right now?

- The pool for one, and I think it's an ongoing process, but we are in dialogue with them repeatedly. At this point, it's not nailed down because it doesn't need to be because their student population is not there, but we are trying to work with them as they have with us as very good partners to make sure that we don't hold hostage some areas of their facility that need not be.

- [Man] Question for either Dr. Borenstein or Lynn or Mr. Horton here, we've heard since the beginning, now is not the time to travel to the county. I know you worked with Visit SLO CAL and other businesses, but traveling is starting to pick up here in our area, in particular along the beaches. Any concerns, I know there are county residents that are concerned that we're seeing an uptick, a dramatic uptick in people coming from other parts of the state to the Central Coast and our county.

- Yeah, so that is one of the areas of greatest concern for me. I think it's one of the areas of greatest concern for the state that we have no neighboring counties that qualify for the variance stage two, and I've had a lot of conversation with CDPH leadership around that very thing. I think that we are taking consistent and real steps to try to stave off our tourism industry at this time, and maybe Mr. Horton can talk more about our messaging that we have upcoming as well as a future speaker at this podium on that issue, but just from a public health officer's perspective, I want to take yet one more opportunity to talk to the public about we love having our visitors. Our county really thrives on tourism, but if our county is to be able to move forward and do so successfully, this is one part of our business arena that really has to sort of lie in wait for a little bit of a future picture on that, but I certainly can hand it over to Wade to talk about some of the specifics we're doing.

- Thank you Penny. So before I get to that, I just wanna clarify one issue regarding Cal Poly. So with the rec center, it's in a state of readiness to accept patients, and while it maintains that state of readiness as we get farther along down the timeline in our response, if there was still, there were any patients at Cal Poly, and that would allow Cal Poly to use a portion of the rec center, for instance, the pool, where there are still no patients in the rec center, that's what we're talking about. If there was a patient that moved, then obviously, there wouldn't be any co-use of that facility. In regards to tourism, yes, actually today, we began a targeted marketing campaign to some of the Central Valley counties where we traditionally would have visitors that would come to our county, and we certainly appreciate those visitors coming and recreating in our area. However again, now is not the time. I wanna be very clear with that. Now is not the time to come to San Luis Obispo County for tourism. Also, just to go back quickly to the start guide. So just so clarify, we worked with our stakeholders on a county plan called the start guide. We submitted it to the state; it was a good plan. The state said no, we want you to actually move forward with this plan. We can do that, we can work together as a community, work toward achieving what is in the state's plan, but we can still take components of the start guide and everything that we worked with the community and apply that to the state's plan to move us as quickly through the state's plan as possible safely, so all the work that we've done with the start guide isn't for naught. It will still help us work as quickly as possible, again, as safely as possible, through the state's plan. Thank you.

- [Woman] I have one more question. I think it might be for you, Wade. It's this kind of a state-county issue regarding the eviction. There's the eviction guidance on not evicting for renters who can't afford to pay rent because of losing income 'cause of coronavirus, and that's supposed to expire at the end of this

month. Has there been any talk about continuing that? I mean, 'cause this is kind of stretching out for a while now. I know it's a state issue as well, so.

- Yeah, we're working with our state partners in that regard, and that's certainly something that we'll be taking a look at. All right, thank you.

- Did you wanna make a

- Correction.

- Okay, thought so.

- Sorry.

- That's okay.

- No, thank you. I rely heavily on my team, including my board chair, to correct me on a statement. So the metric for the number of cases is one per 10,000 population, not one per 1,000 that I misquoted, so that means at 28 cases for our county in a two-week period is the metric that the state is looking for, and we, when I resubmitted that, was at 51, so 17 cases of community spread. The balance of 34, 10 of those being California Men's Colony, and the remainder of those being known household contacts under quarantine, so that's the case we're making for why we are ready to move forward based on having a community transmission rate that is less than one per 10,000 population. Thank you for that.

- [Man] Have all the tests now been conducted that you were hoping to do?

- Yes, we have completed our first round of testing with CMC, and we anticipate going back in two weeks' time to re-test everyone. That would be the full incubation period to make sure that we haven't missed any new cases that may have come up in the interim.

- [Man] 200 tests that roughly you were hoping to--

- 200 tests of staff and medical personnel, and we did another several hundred for the inmates in that block. We didn't do it, let me clarify. The institution tested the inmates. Public health tested the staff, so the plan is though in partnership with the institution that both inmates and staff would be tested in this two-week period. Thank you.

- Thank you all again for coming today and tuning in online and on TV. Just a few reminders and things to re-emphasize from what some of our speakers said. We continue to offer free COVID-19 testing at Ramona Garden Community Center in Grover Beach and the Veterans' Hall in Paso Robles. Monday through Friday of this week, that testing is available from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Also, Dr. Borenstein and I are wearing a green ribbon today in recognition of May being mental health awareness month, and as she said, our behavioral health director, Anne Robin, will be here on Wednesday to talk about the impact of this pandemic on mental health in our communities. Also on Wednesday, we'll have Chuck Davison of Visit SLO CAL. He'll be joining us to talk about the impact of this pandemic on tourism, so please tune in on Wednesday for the latest on those topics. Remember that all our county's information is available on readyslo.org in both English and Spanish. Our phone assistance center remains open 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. throughout the week, and our recorded public health information line remains available in English and Spanish as well. Finally, thank you once again for tuning in on San Luis Obispo County's public health Facebook page, on our county website, and the livestreams of KCOY and KSVY, and you can also view these briefings after the briefing has occurred at midnight, 8:00 a.m., and 5:00 p.m. on public access channel 21. Thank you again for staying engaged. Be well, and we'll see you on Wednesday.