

- Good afternoon, today is Friday, May 22 2020. My name is Michelle Schwartzman. Thank you for watching today's San Luis Obispo County COVID-19 media briefing. This afternoon we have three speakers for you. We will begin today with emergency medical services director for the county of San Luis Obispo, Vince Pierrucci. He will be followed by San Luis Obispo County Superintendent of Schools James Brescia. We will conclude with County Health Officer Dr. Penny Borenstein. Thank you to our American Sign Language Interpreter Katie Voice and now, Emergency Medical Services Director, Vince Pierrucci.

- Good afternoon, my name is Vince Pierucci and I'm the EMS Director for the county of San Luis Obispo. Today, it's EMS week. As the director of the county's EMS agency, I am pleased to have the opportunity before all of you to honor and recognize our local emergency medical services personnel. The life saving contributions of these individuals, EMTs, paramedics, firefighters, first responders, nurses, and physicians all play an invaluable role in our community. As we respond and adapt to the many new challenges of the COVID-19 epidemic, our EMS personnel have stepped up and continue to put their own health at risk to ensure we all get through this challenging moment. To all of our EMS providers, thank you for all of you do. And now, I will turn it over to Dr. Jim Brescia, thank you.

- Thank you. I'd like to start by thanking all of our first responders, medical professionals, essential workers, school employees, teachers, students and families for doing their part to keep community safe. I appreciate the patient's professionalism and dedication that all of our school employees have employed while navigating an immediate move to distance education. I'm pleased to announce today that some forward movement on local COVID-19 reopening draft guidelines related to in person activities for childcare, day camps and summer school programs were introduced. Local leaders in education are working with our county public health officer Dr. Borenstein to review interim physical distancing and sanitation guidelines from a variety of reputable state and federal sources. We now have some guidance documents that local organizations can refer to in planning and opening summer activities. Some of the topics covered in the document include, physical distancing requirements and the number of students allowed to cohort in different settings. Indoor versus outdoor activity guidelines, recommendations for sanitation, hand washing and availability as well as frequency of hand sanitizing. Also, health screening for staff and students. We intend to make sure that all agencies have current information. My office shared the guidelines

recently with all private and parochial schools in San Luis Obispo County and will distribute to all childcare centers and related programs such as the YMCA, Champions, Boys and Girls Clubs, in addition to all of our districts and charters. Programs will look different across the county depending on local staffing, the finance and enrollment capacity. Please check with your local district and childcare camps for program availability and enrollment information. Regarding commencement ceremonies, the state has approved drive-thru commencement events and many local districts and schools are choosing that option. Others are delaying commencement ceremonies until a later date. Please consult with your local school district charter or school, their website for additional information related to specific commencement ceremonies. I also want to take a moment to address how parents can continue to dialogue about COVID-19 with their children. Children look to adults for guidance on how to react, to change and to stress for events. Adults, you are the role models, please stay calm, exhibit compassion, be thoughtful about how you talk to your children regarding COVID-19 and the changes that are current in our society. Continue to explain how physical distancing is important and how hygiene is important. Focus on positive and celebrate the projects and activities you've completed together. Let them know that school, summer camps and recreational activities will look different this summer than they did last summer. Our local councilors, County Mental Health Professionals and the National Association of School Psychologists have information online that can assist families. As we begin to resume in-person activities, please remember to take care of yourself, your family and the community. Eat healthy food, exercise, and follow the recommendations set out by the health department. Meal distribution will continue across the county at school sites and drop off locations in partnership with the food bank. COVID-19 donations for food insecurity, childcare and technology can be made online on the County Office of Education website. And finally thank you, it's an honor to serve as your county superintendent of schools, Dr. Borenstein.

- Thank you Dr. Brescia, Good afternoon. I'm Penny Borenstein, the County Health Officer and I have the daily report of number of cases with down today at 253 with 227 of those, so nearly 90% having recovered, that is an increase of two from yesterday, and three individuals remain in the hospital and two of them in intensive care. So, we continue to see good numbers going forward, that's what we want. Speaking of what we want, I want to address the issue of how difficult this is on all of our population and how tensions are beginning to show themselves in certain

areas. Sheltering at home has been a difficult thing for all of us to do. But I want us to remember that we are in this together. So, as I see videos and emails and Facebook posts and everything having to do with people taking up sides, particularly related to the issue of masquerading, I want to once again ask of our community that we not make this an us and them thing. So, while masks remain a recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control, California Department of Public Health and your SLO Public Health Department, there are situations where people cannot actually wear a mask. They may have asthma, they may have bronchitis, emphysema, they may be children or adults with disabilities, and so, I asked on both sides of this very passionate issue, that we continue to work toward doing everything that we can to keep this disease at bay, but not turn on each other. No one knows each other's circumstances. And these recommendations are an additional measure of protection, but it is not a panacea. It is not a cure all that every minute of every day in every circumstance that everyone needs to be wearing a mask. You know that I have put out a white paper on this. I continue to read new information and absolutely it appears that masks do offer protection. I continue to advise that they be used in situations especially when other measures like physical distancing is not possible. And they are not a substitution, mask wearing is not a substitution for all of the tried and true measures of hand washing, staying home when you're sick, coughing into your sleeve or a tissue and keeping distance from others. So, I just wanted to take that moment to ask that we move forward together. There is not a political bone in my body, when we talk about and make decisions about what we should do to protect our community. It is all based on the information, the best information we have at hand and in case anyone hasn't been paying attention, with this disease, we are continuously getting new information and better understanding of what are the best methods for protecting all of you and ourselves. So, I just make that plea to our community. I also want to honor and respect that I know how difficult the changes are for businesses. Many of our businesses now are moving forward with opening and we have asked of them that they implement protective measures like distancing, like limiting capacity, like adding sanitation measures, cleaning hand sanitizer, et cetera, and I want everyone to know that we at the county are taking all of the same measures for our staff. So, to just give you some examples and maybe ideas, all of this information is in the toolkits but just to also share with what county actions are taking place as we speak is we have increased cleaning protocols, including how often we're cleaning our restrooms, we've placed touch-free hand sanitizer units next to elevators in all

public entrances. We're just putting up signs to limit elevator occupancy. We've designed in place signs for social distancing and hand washing, and added plexiglass in certain places, especially public counters to keep both customers and employees safe when the six foot distancing or beyond is impossible. For our employees, we have offered online training, including for telecommuting and how to prevent COVID-19. And we're encouraging our employees to get tested, actually, next week's testing is open to county employees as well as some others. The use of cloth face coverings and we're making them available and telework continues for those when possible. We've created daily symptom monitoring protocol and we'll continue to use those. Many county departments are practicing physical distancing by limiting the use of our lobbies and the number of people who are allowed in a facility at any time, separating our workstations by at least six feet, staggering work schedules and employee breaks for physical distancing, establishing one way directional hallways and passageways for foot traffic, offering public services online or by appointment only whenever possible. And again, placing those tape and markings on floors and especially in customer areas to have physical separation of our patrons as well as our staff. So, the bottom line here is that we are not asking of our businesses anything more than we ourselves are implementing to keep our own employees safe as well as all the consumers of our services. I did have a couple of other things I wanted to mention today, with all things pandemic, as we continue through this, I've talked in other cases of side effects, if you will, of the pandemic and there's a couple of things that have come to my attention recently and one of them is pretty stark, and that is related to childhood immunization rates. So, as you know, many of our routine health care providers closed their doors for in-person health care services, many continued with telehealth, but one thing that you cannot do virtually is deliver an immunization to a child. And so, now we have some metrics on that and they as I said, are fairly dramatic. So, throughout the state of California and consistent with what we're seeing in this county is year over year vaccine dose ratios are showing 50 to 60% of what we did last year in the number of immunizations delivered to children. That's for the month of March and April, we actually looked at January and February and everything was normal 96, 97, 98%, number of vaccines delivered in those months early in the year compared to last year, but when we look at March and April, it is dramatically down. So, I want to remind parents, we certainly don't wanna see outbreaks of whooping cough or measles or chicken pox or any of the routine childhood immunizations in the middle of a pandemic. So, this is your time to get back on the horn with your doctor

and try to get in to catch up on those immunizations. I know that our health care providers are doing that, my own children yesterday, each one of them, got their meningitis shot, so, I know that the providers are open for business and please call your pediatrician or your family practitioner to get caught up on those. Additionally, an issue that we were hearing a lot about last year for the first time in a number of weeks, in early part of May, we have now seen eight new cases of EVALI. So, let me remind you what that was, seems like ancient history, but is E-cigarette, vaping associated lung injury, eight new cases in the state of California as of May 9. So, the reason I bring that up in this context is this is not a bad time to stop smoking because lung injury associated with COVID is putting individuals in a worse situation in terms of their recovery and the severity of illness. So, with that, I don't wanna be a real downcast on a Friday afternoon, but I did certainly wanna make sure that people are aware that there are other medical considerations that continue while we work our way through this pandemic. And with that, I will open it up for questions.

- [Journalist] As we continue to move into the state's resilience roadmap and move into the new stages, what's the latest you can update us on youth activities, maybe sports or scouting, dance classes, I mean anything related to gatherings of children like that?

- Yeah, so, in the guidance that Dr. Brescia was referring to, we in this county, I've seen in a very specific guidance from the State and I'm hopeful we'll be allowed to move forward with the guidance that we've put together because whether it's private summer camps or school summer school or school activities, like the snow camp, I know that the County Office of Endurance people need to make plans and it's right upon us. So, we have move forward with guidance, we think it's practical, we think it's reasonable, and what we've done is determined that up to a certain number of children in a cohort for certain kinds of activities can begin to come back into play in the month of June, after the school year is over, as you heard mentioned, so it's going to look different if it's an indoor activity versus an outdoor activity and also it's a contact type of sport versus non. So, for instance, and also if it presents a higher risk in terms of droplets spread or aerosolized transmissions. So, we dissuade groups, whether indoor or outdoor from singing activities, because that is a great means of transmission, theatrical performances indoors, we've said even though I know that there are a number of drama camps that are out there. Gymnastics is an area that we don't think can be supported in an indoor

environment. And then even in the outdoor environment, we're still looking at things and we will continue every couple of weeks to see what our metrics are as we dip our toe into this water of returning to activities for children, but at this time, even with outdoor activities, we're saying no direct contact sports. There's a lot of debate about what a direct contact sport is, I think people would say wrestling is for sure, football is for sure. Little League is an area that we're continuing to discuss and look at and there'll be more information coming forward but that's where things sit right today.

- [Journalist] Another question, it's probably better geared to wait over here Mr. Horton, regarding the recent restriction on camping for residents as we know. This is broadcast in the Santa Barbara County, and we've had people contact our station, just want to have you explain why folks from say Santa Maria or anywhere outside of San Luis Obispo County can go to a place like Lopez Lake or Santa Margarita, which are both sold out this weekend, they can recreate their use the water use the lake but then not stay overnight. Just to have you clarify that and explain that.

- So, the question if I could summarize was why are we allowing overnight camping right now? Why are we limiting that to county residents only? So, as you know, under the governor's order right now, recreational travel is prohibited. And normally, we would welcome visitors with open arms into our County. Tourism is a very important part of our economy. In fact, the county government receives about \$25 million a year from bad taxes and sales taxes, a lot of that is driven by tourism. However, now's not the time, right now the county is focused on moving through the governor's resiliency plan and we want to get through stage two into stage three as quickly as possible. We wanna get those nail salons, those barber shops open. We wanna open up places of worship. That's what we're focused on right now and the more quickly we can get there, I think that's good for San Luis Obispo, the community of San Luis Obispo County, and again, that's what we're focused on. There will be a time when we can welcome our visitors back but right now it's just we're not there yet.

- [Journalist] Those people, I guess they're frustrated that they can use the lake but they have to leave at the end of the night and they're just trying to figure out why that is?

- Well, again, so the question is there's some frustration that they'll leave the lake and then or leave the lake go home at night. Well, again, we do have an order in

place right now that's limiting occupancy to 50%. We're reevaluating that every two weeks, but the goal that really is to comply with one, there is a state order right now that's limiting the ability to travel for recreation. So, we're complying with that. But also, again, we're focused on trying to maintain our forum momentum from stage two and stage three. And well, if you look at San Luis Obispo County, we're doing really well, the community has done very well. Some of the counties around us, they have a higher incidence of disease than we do. So, right now we're doing what we can to try to get our community as quickly and as safely as possible through stage two, where they're right now, but we'll be ready to go to stage three as soon as the governor allows us to do so.

- [Journalist] Another question?

- Sure.

- [Journalist] So, back to the houses of worship question, we've been hearing that there seems to be some confusion on when they're allowed to reopen. We've heard that some are saying that they're going to be reopening soon. What exactly is the county's stance on that right now?

- So, the question was, what's the county stance on houses of worship? Well, it's really what's the state's stance on houses of worship? So, as you know, we fall under the governor's plan right now, if you looked at what the Start Guide, what the county came up with, our plan was to allow churches to reopen in our phase one. However, we're not under the Start Guide, we submitted the Start Guide to the state and the governor decided to take us another direction which is resiliency roadmap. So, that's what we're complying with. I do understand, though, that there are a number of churches that I've heard that are planning to open up within a week or so, and again, I would just remind them that right now we're under the state's plan, but if they do decide to open up and move forward with that, I would hope that they would implement physical distancing. I hope that they would implement sanitation measures and follow the best practices that we have posted on readyslo.org to keep their members safe and the community safe.

- [Journalist] Will there be any sort of penalties that they could face if they do choose to open up against the stay order?

- So, the question was, were there penalties that they could face if they do choose to open up against the state order? I think that that's go be something that they

have to determine if they wanna move forward with or not under the state order. Do I anticipate, do I anticipate fines on churches? No.

- [Michelle] Any other questions?

- [Journalist] Yes I have another one, this might be for Penny. So we know that the Mid-State Fair Board is planning to meet sometime next week to make some sort of decision on that, from a public health standpoint, do you think that we'll be in a place in late July, where that could happen, where we can have the Fair?

- Right, so, this is similar to the questions I get a lot when we're go get to stage three, when we're gonna get to stage four and a lot of it will be dictated by what the virus does in our community and I understand how incredibly difficult it is for specially very large venues to make decisions without having the crystal ball, I don't have one either. With regard to the State Fair, I have previously indicated to the leadership of that entity that I think it is very unlikely that we'll see the circumstances by which an event of that of that type and I looked it up today that we typically have over 420,000 people who attend the State Fair over the 10 day period. I think it is unlikely that we are the state more so under whose roadmap we are following that we'll be able to move forward but I am looking also to the State as that being of state jurisdiction to coordinate with the California Mid-State Fair to have that conversation with their leadership. And I just wanna, everything Mr. Horton said about the people coming from out of county and having frustrations with not being able to stay overnight, I just would like to reiterate 'cause we get a lot of these kinds of questions, we've been asked to pay back people who have their reservations canceled and such, is we continue to ask of everyone that they not travel across county borders at this time. This isn't, martial law and nonetheless, so, if they're frustrated, perhaps they shouldn't be coming here at this moment in time and hopefully we'll move off of that mark soon, but that's where we are at the moment.

- Just a few reminders before we conclude today. This coming Monday, May 27, we will not be holding this regular 3:15 media briefing while our phone Assistance Center will be available on Monday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and the Emergency Operations Center will be operating our next media briefing will be scheduled for May 29. Remember that all our counties information related to COVID-19 is located on readyslo.org in both English and Spanish. This includes information about our Paso Robles and Grover beach testing sites, and instructions for making appointments at one of those two sites. The phone number to make an

appointment is 888-634-1123, but it is better to register online if you can. One is not required to have symptoms for COVID-19 to make an appointment to have a test. Thank you again for tuning in today, You can find today's briefing rebroadcast on Public Access Channel 21 at midnight, 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. until our next briefing occurs. You can also keep watching this briefing on our San Luis Obispo County Public Health Facebook page or on our county's homepage throughout the weekend. Thank you for staying engaged, be safe, be kind and have a good holiday weekend. We will see you here again next Wednesday.