

- Good afternoon. Today is Wednesday, August 5th, 2020. My name is Michelle Shoresman, and I'd like to welcome you to San Luis Obispo County's COVID-19 media briefing. This afternoon, we will hear first from San Luis Obispo County Child Care Planning Manager, Raechelle Bowlay. She will be followed by County Health Officer, Dr. Penny Borenstein. County Administrative Officer and Emergency Services Director, Mr. Wade Horton is also here and available to take your questions. Thank you to our American sign language interpreter, Shelley Lawrence. And now San Luis Obispo County Child Care Planning Manager, Ms. Raechelle Bowlay.

- Hi, my name is Raechelle Bowlay. I'm the Planning Council Coordinator for our local Child Care Planning Council. I first want to just say thank you to our County Health Officer, Dr. Borenstein for inviting me and for her continued support for the child care field. So in working with the Child Care Planning Council, we, in partnership with families and the community, plan for and promote the highest quality and accessible services for the care of all children and youth. We work as a collective of many organizations and agencies dedicated to the field of child care, and our communities, children, and families. Some of our partners include First Five, the County Office of Education, Head Start, Early Head Start, Public Health, a dynamic group of local child care providers, including some of our school-age programs, the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club champions, city of SLO, as well as Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo. We know that this pandemic is straining systems and limiting resources. We're here to support families seeking childcare options and the child care provider population. We have seen this community come together. Local families have been creative and resourceful in meeting their child care and distance education needs. During this time, families, friends and neighbors are reducing our children's exposure to COVID-19 by maintaining small child care groups of children that would've already been together. We also know that families rely upon many other forms of licensed and license-exempt child care. Currently, we're operating at 75% of our typical license program capacity. We know that a dedicated group of child care professionals in child care programs countywide continue to serve our county's children and families. Our local early care in education, school-age, and recreation professionals are committed to following local, state and federal guidance to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. This means regular and deep cleaning and disinfecting, additional screening before children enter facilities, and a cohort model of care that promotes reduced group sizes and limits exposures. We also plan for response to

COVID exposures for families, children, and the child care staff. As we reopen, the Child Care Planning Council is here to help keep your children and families healthy and safe in the child care setting. We have a dedicated part of the council's website for these resources. You can visit us at [www.sanluischildcare.org](http://www.sanluischildcare.org). Additionally, the We Are the Care Initiative that was launched a little over a year ago highlighted the critical role a child care plays in the lives of children, families, and our local economy. Our need for access to child care options was significant before this public health emergency, and our system has increasingly become strained during this time. However, there are many options. That CAPSLO Child Care Resource Connection assists with child care planning and refers families to programs that might be able to meet their needs. If you need assistance, please call 888-727-2272, or access our online database at [findchildcareslo.capslo.org](http://findchildcareslo.capslo.org). That CAPSLO Child Care Resource Connection also works to build quality options for families by providing training and support to new and existing programs in our county. If you're a community member that is interested in taking an active role in addressing child care needs in our county, please contact them at 888-727-2272. Also, if you're an employer that's interested in developing a more family-friendly workplace, you might consider things like flexible scheduling, access to technology and assistance to support remote work. Some also may have the ability to implement onsite child care for their workers. A state developed guide is available online at [covid19.ca.gov](http://covid19.ca.gov). And we are working on a local family-friendly workplace toolkit that is going to be available in the coming weeks through First Five. We're fortunate to serve and support such a connected community that cares about our children and families. So thank you for having us today. And again, all of this information can be found on our website [sanluischildcare.org](http://sanluischildcare.org). Thank you.

- Thank you, Raechelle. Good afternoon, everyone. So we are here now in San Luis Obispo County approaching 2,000 cases. Obviously our case numbers have been going up considerably in recent weeks compared to where we were in the first several months. Yesterday, that increases, number 44. But it bears mentioning, for certain, that, and many of you may have heard, that there is a technical issue happening in the statewide database, in which electronic lab reports come into the state. And then through a process and a system called CalREDIE, they get distributed to local health departments. So our numbers in recent days, as much as a week, or even a little bit more are considered to be underestimated because this problem has been recognized in the last couple of days. But in looking back, the state believes that this problem has been ongoing for at least a week. So the case

numbers that we're reporting to you are definitely lower than they may be in actuality, the positive results that are coming in from labs. And we do not have a timeline for that fix. The state has made it their absolute top priority. They are working with the labs to try to ensure that we can get the information another way. We, in this county, had long ago asked our healthcare providers to give us the information in addition to the labs. So while at the state level, this may account for as high as half of all cases. We think it is not that level of problem in our county. But as we learn more information, we will continue to make our public aware of this issue. And obviously it's important to have all of our positive cases known so that we can begin that important work of outreach investigation and contact tracing. So with that, you will see that our numbers have recovered. Our percentage is possibly higher, because we're not getting as many new cases in. But today, we stand at just under 1,600 recovered cases or 81% with just over 300 recovering at home at this time. We do have a high number for us in this county, of 17 in the hospital, and seven of those persons are in intensive care. So as we've said, every time we continue to watch our hospital numbers very closely. We also, unfortunately, in the past week, have experienced additional deaths that relate to this pandemic, COVID. We're now counting 16 individuals who have died with or from COVID, and these persons who have died have definitely been, all of them, in the vulnerable category of either advanced age, underlying medical conditions, or both. We're particularly concerned at these vulnerable populations being affected in facilities where we're seeing a number of outbreaks. And we now have seven different facility outbreaks going on at the present time. So that is what our metrics look like in SLO County at this time. We do have some good news for you, and that is that our testing, our community testing is going to resume next week with a new location at, in Atascadero at the Pavilion on the Lake. We will be there for at least two weeks. We have had a contract solidified with the same vendor, who manages our SLO city and our Grover sites, and this will be an additional clinic that we are able to stand up, the same five, this one will be Monday through Thursday, seven a.m. to seven p.m. We continue to have a lot of availability, particularly at the Grover Beach site. So we really do want individuals who need testing to know of that resource and to get tested. This would be people who are contacts of known cases, people who are working in essential industries and are at high risk, and individuals who are experiencing symptoms. So obviously if you're experiencing symptoms, that's the most important folks to get tested, but also we can loosen up a little bit on people who are in these higher risk categories at Grover beach. We have some space there

for additional people. With relation to child care and our school system, let me talk first about schools. As you know, we are accepting now school waivers for elementary school attendance. We distributed through, actually it was the County Office of Education, distributed information, applications, and frequently asked questions to our school districts to enable them to submit with all of the right materials and criteria met for a school waiver. At this time, we have received four such requests and they are all from smaller private schools. But that information is out there and available for all of our schools. The state, additionally, provided additional FAQs tomorrow, and I mean, yesterday, sorry. We will make those additionally available to the school system. The other thing that came out yesterday was youth sports guidance. We had been waiting for that for a long time, for sports fans, and especially those who have been engaged in sports leagues with children. I'm afraid it's gonna be somewhat disappointing, but at least we have something now in writing. And I have authorized that this county can move forward and do all of the activities that are allowed under the state's guidance for youth sports. To give you some examples, there's no contact allowed, there's no indoor sports activities allowed, but teams and youth leagues, et cetera, can do drills and conditioning and training. So this is somewhat forward progress in that arena, but doesn't go quite as far as a number of our youth and families would have hoped. So I did say I was gonna talk about child care. As you heard from Raechelle, this is absolutely one of our most important industries. And we have worked closely with the Child Care Planning Council to support the necessity for child care ongoing, and it becomes even more important to have systems in place as the school environment is less certain, and not in person. I know I've gotten questions already about one study that just came out regarding younger children under the age of five, and the possibility that they are actually carrying a lot more of this germ, this organism, than even older people. And at the same time, we're saying that elementary school-age children under the age of 12 transmit disease less. So how do those two things work together? I have looked at that study. I have heard commentary from scientific experts and we don't really know enough yet about this newest study. But the information regarding the lower rates of spread from younger children, as well as the lower likelihood of becoming infected among that age group of below 10 or 12 seem to be solid pieces of information. As you know, with this pandemic, I have stood before you many times with new information. This is just one more. We will continue to look at it and make any adjustments that we need to, as we continue to learn new information about this COVID-19 illness. With respect to healthcare

services, I have spoken before but I want to repeat, that our healthcare system is safe. We have our, our hospitals are open for business, our pediatricians are ready to see your children and the Public Health Department, along with pediatricians, would like to continue to offer vaccines to the younger children who are in need of them. We have continued to see a drop off in the number of children who are getting their vaccines on schedule. And I just want to remind everyone that we do not want one of the side effects of this pandemic to be cases of measles or cases of whooping cough, or other vaccine preventable diseases. So please don't wait for your schools to open. It is still required for child care, school requirements, for vaccines are still in place, and now is as good a time as any to get caught up on your immunizations. So finally, I wanna talk a little bit about what we can do. I know I also have addressed these things on many occasions and I probably am beginning to sound like a broken record, but we all want to get back to some normalcy in our community. This pandemic, as you heard me say, is not a static event, but there are some things that have become clearer and are absolutely the new understanding. Age of transmission is one of those things, mask wearing is one of those areas. We know what we can do to stop the spread, to bring our cases down. We just, unfortunately, however, unpleasant it may be, we need to double down on these things. Mask wearing over time has become one of those quintessential absolute requirements to keep our community safe. I don't like wearing one, you don't like wearing one, my kids don't like wearing them. Little kids, however, if they can do it, we can do it. So I just wanna drive that point home again. There continues to be a lot of dialogue about masks being dangerous, about them not being effective. I'm the first one to stand here and tell you that I started out in a different place in my understanding about the effectiveness of mask use. But I think that that is settled science at this time with this disease. So please cover your face when you go out in public. It not only protects others, but we're also beginning to understand that it may well protect the wearer to some extent as well. We have talked about do this for others, but for those who are concerned about themselves getting this disease, this may be an important additional protective measure. Another item that has been have of some debate or consideration is with regard to, and I know that I'm standing here and talking to you without a mask, I hope that that's okay, you need to hear me. But talking, loud talking, singing, chanting, hard breathing during exercise are absolutely more likely to transmit this disease. I have a graphic in front of you if you don't wanna listen to my words. I think a picture tells a story. So we ask of the community that you need to keep your distance. And the more

aggressive, if you will, the communication, singing, coughing, sneezing, those are more likely to transmit a higher number of organisms. And so the distance between people, even with mask wearing, still needs to be in place in order to control the spread. We've been talking a lot about family and friend gatherings. That is one of the sad side effects of this disease. I got a phone call yesterday. I'm trying to help this woman, who has not seen her elderly mother in a nursing home for five months, figure out how we can create the conditions for touching her mother. But beyond those absolutely critical touch points, if you will, we still need to ask and think, ask of you and have you all think about whether that gathering of your friends and family is critical at this moment in time. I would venture to say, for the vast majority of them, they are nice to have, they lift us up, but I continue to ask of people in these challenging times that we find other ways to communicate and gather and lay eyes on through other means than coming together across family units and with lots of people especially. So again I have talked about if you have that one other family that you move through society with and they have not been anywhere else and you have not been anywhere else. We joke in the EOC, Mr. Horton, myself, we now consider ourselves family members because we spend more time together than we do our families, but we, so keep it very limited in terms of the number of people that you get together with. Keep it mostly to your household or in very discreet numbers and the same people over time. And of course, I've said this many times, to stay home when you're sick. I won't say anything more about that. I think it goes without saying that that is most likely to be a situation when you transmit disease. But all these other things, mask wearing, distancing, avoiding singing, et cetera, we know that nearly half of the people with this disease can transmit it without even knowing that they're sick. So stay home when you're sick, but do all these other things as well. And, of course, finally, wash your hands, don't touch your face, sanitize surfaces, and stay tuned in. I know people are tired. I know that we all think, "Okay, we're just gonna hang on for the vaccine "and do our best at trying to not infect others "or get infected ourselves." We're still in a bit of a long haul. It's unpleasant, it's challenging, it's emotionally draining, but you need to also stay tuned in so that we can continue to update information and give you the best understanding of additional ways or pearls of wisdom, hopefully, that can help us get to the next month and the month after that and the month after that in moving forward in this pandemic together. So with that, I will stop and open for questions.

- [Man] Dr. Borenstein, we've seen recently a pretty significant outbreak near us here at California Men's Colony. What, if anything, is Public Health doing with that, and can you just address what's happening there?

- Yeah, we have a very worrisome outbreak now at California Men's Colony. The number of cases through lab reporting is not available to us, and so we are deferring to the state website to keep eyes on that number. We certainly have been in communication with them. We validated verbally that information, that they're up to 77 inmates now infected and 13 staff members. We are working very closely with their team to try to do everything that we can, not that we can, that they can within the facility to segregate infected individuals from those who have been exposed, from those who have not been exposed. That is the mainstay of pandemic, or infectious disease response, is isolation, quarantine, cohorting, separating, and using all these other prevention measures that I've been talking about. So it is worrisome. It is absolutely at the top of our priority list: to test, and work with the facility to do all manner of infection control, and to cohort, and isolate, and quarantine those who are impacted.

- [Man] County's been on that monitoring list now for at least two weeks, two, three weeks. What are you seeing countywide? Compliance, people being mindful of what, what the rules are, the state rules.

- You know, as I mentioned, I'm not out and about a whole lot, but when I am, I do see an increased compliance with, especially mask wearing. I ask that of everyone. We're not there yet. I think some of you saw a letter from the city manager in Paso who said, "You know, there's still those occasions. "I see them out, other people see them. "You go to a business where everyone "is supposed to be wearing masks, and nobody is." We still are working with our enforcement branch to try to make sure that when those come to light, we take action. But I do think, in general, I do think our community, our population is normalizing some of these things, like mask wearing, separating, when you're online, whether indoors or outdoors. And again I hope that we will do better in terms of our gatherings, because that is where we have seen a large proportion of our new cases.

- [Woman] Dr. Borenstein, are cases Atascadero State Hospital included in the county's case numbers.

- They are, but we have, we've not separated them out in terms of patients. We have had some staff impacts there as well, but we don't have a current outbreak going on.

- [Woman] Can you tell us why you're not separating them out? Is it the number of cases? Is it because the state isn't releasing that information?

- Yeah, so we treat Atascadero State Hospital as a healthcare, as a hospital. So in the same way, we haven't separated out other hospitals or particular healthcare settings, clinics or wherever the diagnosis happens. I know it's a residential facility, but so are our French Hospital, Twin Cities, et cetera. So we're treating it as a healthcare hospital.

- [Woman] Yeah, I guess if people can't get information from the state and they can't get it from you guys, that basically that information isn't available.

- Yeah, so as I've said on many occasions before here, if numbers get to a place in any particular facility, and that could be a non-healthcare facility, or again a store or what have you where the public needed information in order to understand their immediate exposure, we would share that information. We don't have that situation with that facility at this time. And haven't, let me be clear.

- [Woman] I just had another question. So we've heard from contact tracers that you guys are collecting demographic information on people who've been tested and have been talked to by them. Can you tell us why you're not really seeing that data and do you guys intend to in the future?

- Yeah, so we're in the process, we're constantly updating our information that we show publicly, and it's always a balance between resources and what the public wants and what we think is gonna actually impact the community's behavior or understanding of this disease. So it's a balance of all of those things. Our resources are, in fact, quite limited, but we, when we do start to hear a lot of the same request, and certainly when we think it is meaningful to the community in terms of changing behavior or having a greater awareness of what's going on in our community, we will try to make that information available. Right now, we're in the process of doing our next update. We plan to add ethnicity data to be routinely available. We've spoken about it on a couple of points in time, but that's an example of something that we're gonna make more available moving forward.

- Thank you.

- Sure.

- [Man] I have a question for Wade. Wade, earlier today, the county announced that 28 positions will be cut, primarily due to the effects of COVID-19 and the budget shortfall. If you could comment on that, and how it has directly impacted, at least significantly, due to the pandemic?

- Sure. The question was regarding the county issued a press release today, specifying that we will be cutting 27.75 full-time equivalent position, to be exact, from the county workforce. Of the 27.75 positions, all but two of them are vacant positions so, unfortunately, we will be laying off two individuals. That is directly due to COVID-19 impacts the county budget. Thus far, the Board of Supervisors has, in our budget hearings last month, we've cut about \$19.2 million from the budget. These 27.75 positions were part of that. There'll be a, there's a very detailed staff report online today in preparation for our next Tuesday's budget meeting where every department will be briefing their specific cuts, which these positions were part of. And again this is due to COVID-19 impacts to our revenue sources, and what we anticipate being revenue shortfalls as we move farther into this current fiscal year.

- [Man] Most of them were unfilled right now. But I mean, just overall the impact that this has on the county, what would it be, knowing that these won't be filled moving forward?

- Well, it's gonna be, so the question was regarding what's this gonna do to county services. So we have, if you consider temps, we have approximately 3,000 individuals working for the county. This is cutting almost 30 individuals. So that's when you, when we provide services, services are people. So people provide services. So there will be a service level reduction associated with these cuts. It's unfortunate, but we have to deliver a balanced budget every year.

- [Woman] Any other questions?

- Thank you.

- Thank you again for coming today and for tuning in online and on TV. A few closing notes for today. You can still get all our county's COVID-19 information at our website [readyslo.org](http://readyslo.org), or by calling the phone assistance center or the Public Health Information Line recorded message. We continue to offer free COVID-19 testing by appointment at several locations around the county. Appointments are

available at both the San Luis Obispo and Grover Beach testing sites. I believe Dr. Borenstein also mentioned an additional testing site that is opening next week in Atascadero. You can make an appointment online at [readyslo.org](https://readyslo.org) for any of these testing sites, as well as see a list of criteria for helping you determine whether or not you should go get tested. If you have limited or no access to the Internet and need to make a testing appointment, you can also call the number 888-634- 1123. Thank you again for tuning in today. You can find these briefings live on our SLO County Public Health Facebook page, as well as our county's website. They're also live streamed on KCOY and KSBY. They are also broadcast live on cable channel 13 and rebroadcast on public access channel 21 every day at 8 a.m., 5 p.m., and midnight until the next briefing occurs. Thank you for staying informed. Be safe, be kind, and we will see you all next Wednesday, here at 3:15.