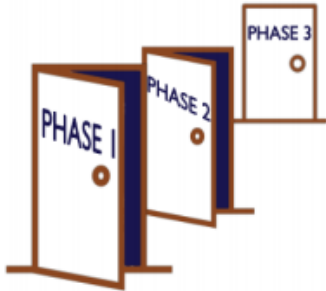


COVID RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

Regional and National Practice Highlights

Issue 5 – September 22, 2020



If the Council’s August recess felt more ephemeral than escapist, then welcome to Autumn 2020 in our pandemic’s new normal. The Labor Day holiday was the first weekend that many Maryland counties entered Stage 3, per Governor Hogan’s order. However, Montgomery County, Prince George’s County, and the District of Columbia remain in Stage 2; while Fairfax County, VA entered Phase Three in July. Among the key metrics in Montgomery County’s cautious approach that County Health Officer Travis Gayles, M.D., discussed with the Council on Sept. 15 and Sept. 22 were:

- MoCo **case counts** steadily increased in September.
- Positivity rate remains low: 2.4% was the 3-day average on Sept. 21.
- 7-day average of new cases per 100,000 residents ranged from 8.1 (Sept. 21) to 9.3 (Sept. 17), putting MoCo at the mid-point range governing school reopening, per Maryland Dept. of Education guidance.
- Those **under age 30** represent over half of new cases: within that age group, most are age 20-29. “This is very different from the pandemic when it started,” when older residents had the most cases.
- Testing capacity is back up to early-Aug. levels; it’s important to remind people to get tested.
- **Contact tracing** reveals that large family gatherings, and potential worksite exposures, are tied to the majority of positive cases in Montgomery County.

On Sept. 22, the Council approved [Executive Order 114-20](#) that clarifies or modifies rules in several areas, such as children’s sports’ face coverings; and expands religious facilities’ gathering size limits. Further guidance is expected soon regarding an opt-in program for alcohol sales beyond 10 p.m., and Halloween precautions. Meanwhile, many outdoor county pools are open through October 4. Also, the county issued guidelines for venues hosting [outdoor live performances](#), following the County Executive’s Sept. 4 ruling allowing live music at restaurants. Whenever you’re out and about, remember to **#MaskUpMoCo!** – Lee Rucker Keiser, MSPH

“VIRTUAL” REOPENING: MCPS & NEIGHBORS

For many families with school-age children and the educators on whom they rely, a collective catch-our-breath reflex is likely reverberating nationally; and may be imminent for New York City students with their grade-level-specific phased opening for [in-person schooling starting Sept. 21](#). Relatedly, the Centers for Disease Control issued [Indicators for Dynamic School Decision-Making](#) (Sept. 15), and considerations for [Mitigation Strategies in K-12 Schools](#) (Sept. 18). [COVID-19 Return to Sports](#) guidance was released by the American Academy of Pediatrics (Sept. 18). The next page features a chart with updates from MCPS, which is currently seeking parents’ feedback on the new academic year; and from adjacent school districts.



(Graphic: MCPS website)

School System / Enrollment in 2019	Start Date / Format	Return-to-School Website; News
Montgomery County / 165,380 Enrollment Updates: K-12: 159,058 (Sept. 7 BOE) Pre-K: 3,598 (Sept. 7 BOE) Sept. 22 (BOE) update from Dr. Smith: All elementary schools are under their 100% projection. High schools came in close to projection. Middle schools met, or are slightly over, their projection. Next enrollment count: Sept. 30	Aug. 31 / Virtual Parent/Guardian feedback survey opened Sept. 17; student/staff survey imminent	https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/reopening/ -- MD school-reopening metrics: positivity rate <5% and case rate of 5 per 100,000 people (MoCo ranges from 8%-9.3%). -- School bus mobile sites (for meal service) reinstated; starting Sept. 18, MCPS provides triple meal service on Fridays, to help address weekend meal insecurity. -- 133,000 student Chromebooks distributed.
District of Columbia / 51,060 (traditional) & 43,556 (charters) Sept. 11, 2020 Enrollment: Incomplete for 22,000 students (W. Post interview with Deputy Mayor for Education, Sept. 12) Next enrollment count: Oct. 5	Aug. 31 / Virtual	https://dcpsreopenstrong.com/ -- Tech support: https://backtoschool.dc.gov/ -- Virtual attendance policy (hyperlinked) -- \$3.3 mil. Internet for All program to serve up to 25,000 low-income students (Sept. 8 DC release)
Fairfax County, VA / 188,940 Next enrollment count: Sept. 30	Sept. 8 / Virtual	https://www.fcps.edu/index.php/returntoschool -- Sept. 22: Bd. of Ed. to update return-to-school plans --Attendance: https://www.fcps.edu/attendance --School bus drivers required to run their routes (with empty buses) twice a week (W. Post, Sept. 11)

This chart was developed exclusively for the *COVID Response and Recovery* newsletter by Lee R Keiser, Editor.

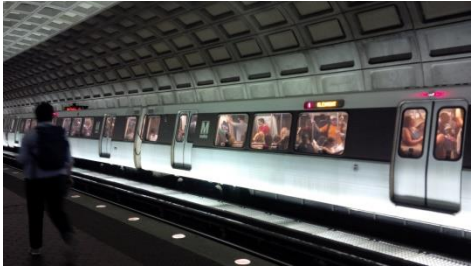
SECTOR HIGHLIGHTS

Health: Communities are trying to maintain connections with residents who have been tested for COVID-19, and with youth to learn how the pandemic is affecting their lives. [Miami-Dade County, FL hosts a survey](#) for persons who were actually tested through their Community Empowerment Program. [Chicago Dept. of Public Health hosts a COVID-19 survey](#) for persons 18-29 years that asks about their information sources, attitudes, behaviors, and medical history. (Demographic information is requested, but not one's name.)

Nearly four months after Chicago first announced its \$56 million, 600-person [COVID Contact Tracing Corps](#), the 31 community health-equity based organizations that are partners to train and certify contact tracers were identified on Sept. 14. Tracers will be paid between \$20-\$24/hour to work in economic hardship communities they may know best. This approach is consistent with the National Institutes of Health's \$12 million award, announced Sept. 16, to promote in underserved communities COVID-19 awareness and research, including [recruiting for COVID-19 vaccine trials](#) populations that have historically been underrepresented in clinical research. The NIH outreach focuses on certain counties in AL, AZ, CA, FL, GA, LA, MI, MS, NC, TN and TX.

These independent efforts parallel in many ways Montgomery County's [Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar](#) that will provide culturally-competent and community-focused health care for underserved communities. The County Council created that program with a \$5.59 million special appropriation in July. Virginia's COVID-19 Testing and Contact Tracing [Health Equity Guidebook](#), published in July, provides extensive resources and practical tips for building culturally-competent outreach programs, building trust, and considerations of lower-tech methods beyond mobile applications to more effectively support communities' public health engagement.

SECTOR HIGHLIGHTS (cont.)



Transportation: Effective January 2021, **Metrobus** will resume fare collection and front-door boarding, they announced Sept. 18.

Weekday **Metro**rail ridership averages 12% of pre-pandemic levels, and is not expected to return to “normal” levels until a safe, effective COVID-19 vaccine is widely available. According to daily [ridership data](#), Metrobus ridership during the pandemic is at least double the number of daily Metrorail riders. However, versus daily ridership one year ago, Metrobus ridership has been about 50%-60% on weekdays,

and about 43% on weekends. On Aug. 23, Metrobus began offering extended hours, greater route operation, and more frequent service for the first time since Metro’s pandemic roll-back began. **The Capital COVID-19 Snapshot: Safe Return to Work**, a report issued Sept. 14 by the Greater Washington Partnership, found that employers “do not expect many employees to use public transportation in the near-term.” The Partnership nonetheless already created a Capital COVID-19 Transit Tracker to preview real-time crowding by station. This is similar to Ridership Dashboards for both rail and bus in [Chicago](#). In Montgomery County, **RideOn fares are still free**, with rear-boarding in effect. Remember to **#MaskUpMoCo!**

Income Support: St. Paul, Minnesota Mayor Melvin Carter enacted in September the [People’s Prosperity Pilot](#), a guaranteed-income distribution program that will provide up to 150 Saint Paul families with \$500/month for up to 18 months. Households will be randomly selected from “CollegeBound Saint Paul families,” who reside in the most racially-diverse and low-income neighborhoods that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Libraries: The new [Deaf Culture Digital Library website](#), a program of the Maryland State Library Agency that launched in Sept., offers videos in sign language, books and eMedia, and resources about deaf culture. Children can learn basic American Sign Language through virtual programs – a timely offering, as face coverings that block visual transparency around the mouth prevent lip-reading by others. This expertly-curated online resource had been developed and hosted by Montgomery County Public Libraries since 2015.

Public libraries in Wake County, NC (population: 1.1 million) launched on Sept. 8 free virtual [workshops on college prep](#), trade school, and certificate programs, in partnership with Princeton Review, College Foundation of NC, and CollegeWise.

The Los Angeles County Library [Laptop & Hotspot Loaner](#) program was expanded in the Board of Supervisors’ latest COVID-19 spending relief package (Sept. 16). The three-week loaner kit, for persons age 18 and older, was originally reserved for library branches serving households with lower-than-average internet subscription rates. The new funding will expand outreach with over 700 kits, from the current inventory of just 60 kits.

Please note:

effective with this issue, publication frequency will be monthly through December 2020.

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[See past issues of this newsletter here](#)