# COVID RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

Regional and National Practice Highlights

Issue 7 – November 25, 2020

Thanksgiving often occurs in lockstep across families' traditional guest lists, cuisine, and activities. Yet Thanksgiving 2020 brings another shared trait: COVID-19 cases' rising trajectory, including in Mont. County. From Nov. 5-24, our case counts exceeded 200/day on all but four days; the seven-day average of cases per 100,000 residents ended that period at 27.9, representing a "very high risk of transmission." Unlike prior holidays this pandemic year, however, "lockstep" also characterizes new, or newly-modified, public health rulings effective here Nov. 24; and in neighboring jurisdictions this month, including Virginia, the District of Columbia, and Prince George's County. Rulings govern expanded face mask use outdoors; reduced gathering and restaurant capacity limits; and more (click on hyperlinks for specifics). With COVID-19 mitigation strategies, "more benefits can be realized if they're done on a larger [geographic] scale," said Mont. County's Dr. Earl Stoddard at the County Executive's Nov. 12 media briefing.
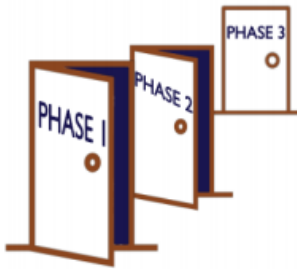
Further, wearing masks, hand-washing, and social distancing should be practiced well into 2021. Why? Following COVID-19 vaccines' roll-out, "If 50% of people do not get vaccinated, that would be problematic," said Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, during a Nov. 12 public (virtual) lecture at the Washington National Cathedral. Gallup's latest research (conducted prior to Nov.'s good news of three vaccines' effectiveness in clinical trials) found that 58% of persons polled were willing to be vaccinated against COVID-19, up from 50% in September. Will intent translate into actual shots-in-the-arm?

For example, in 2019-2020, only 48.4% of U.S. adults (age 18+) received an influenza vaccine; Maryland's rate was 53.1%, CDC reported in October 2020. Among children aged six months-17 years, MD's rate of 74.8% was the fourth highest nationally. This flu vaccination experience is important because the MD Department of Health's *COVID-19 Vaccination Plan*, submitted to CDC in October, references its "Fight the Flu" awareness campaign as influential for future COVID-19 educational awareness programs. – *Lee Rucker Keiser, MSPH,* Editor

SPOTLIGHT: DASHBOARDS CONVEY RESURGENCE

"I cannot emphasize enough the seriousness of where we stand" with new COVID-19 cases' trajectory, Montgomery County Health Officer Travis Gayles, M.D., told the County Council/ Board of Health on Nov. 17. **Councilmember Navarro** suggested that the county's data dashboard landing page should quickly, simply, "signal that we've entered a new phase…. There needs to be an ownership [among residents] that this is a new day." A re-design could help enhance such communication, she said. **Councilmember Jawando** said that a green/yellow/red indicator would be helpful. Thus, **these examples** from **Alabama** (right), **Franklin County, Ohio** (p. 2), and **California** (p. 2) may be of interest. (Continued)

Dashboards Convey Resurgence (cont. from p. 1)

From **Franklin County, Ohio** -- https://covid-19.myfcph.org/public-health-advisory-alert-system/

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY ALERT SYSTEM

The Public Health Advisory Alert System is a color-coded system designed by the Ohio Department of Health to supplement existing statewide orders through a data-driven framework to assess the degree of the virus' spread and to engage and empower individuals, businesses, communities, local governments, and others in their response and actions.

LEVEL 1
- Active exposure and spread
- Follow all current health orders

LEVEL 2
- Increased exposure and spread
- Exercise high degree of caution
- Follow all current health orders

LEVEL 3
- Very high exposure and spread
- Limit activities as much as possible
- Follow all current health orders

LEVEL 4
- Severe exposure and spread
- Only leave home for supplies and services
- Follow all current health orders

From **California** (partial stratification shown below) -- https://covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy/

County risk level	Adjusted case rate* 7-day average of daily COVID-19 cases per 100K with 7-day lag, adjusted for number of tests performed
WIDESPREAD Many non-essential indoor business operations are closed	**More than 7.0** Daily new cases (per 100k)
SUBSTANTIAL Some non-essential indoor business operations are closed	**4.0 – 7.0** Daily new cases (per 100k)
MODERATE Some indoor business operations are open with modifications	**1.0 – 3.9** Daily new cases (per 100k)
MINIMAL Most indoor business operations are open with modifications	**Less than 1.0** Daily new cases (per 100k)
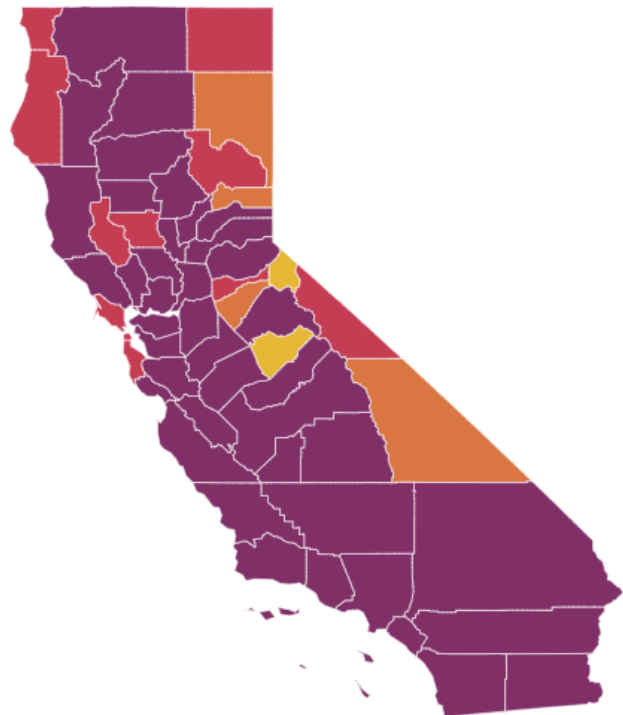
SPOTLIGHT: COMMUNITY RECOVERY ADVISORY GROUP

Since the summer, several COVID-19 recovery groups have been working, often behind the scenes, to help plan for our new normal, and stay attuned to needs of residents most afflicted by the pandemic. For example, the **Community Recovery Advisory Group** (CRAG) takes a boots-on-the-ground approach, listening to and engaging community members.

With new COVID cases and seven-day averages at record highs nationally and in Montgomery County, **CRAG Chairman Elijah Wheeler** (left) does not expect his group's 46 members to be lifting those boots anytime soon. "We're preparing for a long winter," Wheeler said in a Nov. interview with *COVID Response and Recovery*. Meeting several times a month, the CRAG carefully reviews Dr. Stoddard's "Recovery Situation Report," before deciding where to focus future efforts.

The CRAG's guiding principles are: (1) innovation, (2) racial equity, (3) diversity and inclusion, and (4) sustainability in government operations. In the equity arena, CRAG members bring an inclusive perspective of what various communities need, and assess how to optimize strategies to ensure a community's access to needed resources. "We work to address long-standing marginalization" of subpopulations that has been laid bare during the pandemic, Wheeler said.

For example, the CRAG learned that some communities avoid being tested for COVID-19, fearful that personal information collected at the test site may be used against them. This type of feedback is shared with Dr. Stoddard and his team. "The role of nuance in diverse communities" is extremely important to ensure effective communication and program implementation, Wheeler explained. However, the CRAG operates independently of the Council's *Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar* COVID-outreach initiative, and of the African American Health Program's COVID-19 response.

"Longstanding inequities mean that we have to work double-time to ensure that members of our communities who are most in need ever return" as we see the pandemic through, Wheeler said. Such commitment comes naturally to Wheeler, Executive Director of the Collaboration Council, the county's Local Management Board supporting collaborative efforts to improve outcomes for children, youth and families. Leading the CRAG in 2020 and beyond, "We want to ensure that our communities are well taken care of," Wheeler concluded, sharing a goal that permeates across Montgomery County Government. – *Lee Rucker Keiser*, Editor

COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDS TRANSPARENCY

December 31, 2020 is the deadline by which Montgomery County and other U.S. jurisdictions must use funds appropriated by the Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, that created the **Coronavirus Relief Fund**. Mont. County received over **$183 million** from the CRF, for which the Council approved 35 Special Appropriations, since the pandemic began, to support recovery and reopening. To closely track CRF disbursements, weekly discussions between the Council and Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Rich Madaleno began at the Council's October 13 hearing, with the CAO presenting updated CRF expenditure data on October 27, Nov. 10, and Nov. 17; click on hyperlinked dates for details. These updates will resume in Dec.

Examples of states' CRF transparency are **Indiana**, https://hub.mph.in.gov/dataset/covid-19-funds-transparency and **New Jersey**, https://covid19reports.nj.gov/#!/dashboard

Further, the **City of Detroit** (pop. 670,000) issues monthly **COVID-19 Financial Transparency** reports; below is Nov.'s spending snapshot. Source: https://data.detroitmi.gov/pages/covid19-spending-dashboard

$69,192,877.89
Total Amount Approved

$37,064,594.50
Total Billed by Vendor

View By Activities

View By Vendors

Top Activities

Testing Support and Services	$17,127,174.32
Housing / Homelessness / Non-Congregate Shelters Services	$15,702,853.34
Additional Cleaning / Disinfection Support and Services	$7,842,115.40
Secure and Distribute PPE / Supplies for City Employees / Work	$7,025,972.53
Management / Administrative Support	$3,227,903.20
Elections Support	$3,001,332.15
Transportation Support and Services	$2,674,157.43
Food Distribution Services and Support	$2,487,306.51
Remote Work Planning and Support	$1,995,282.38
Not COVID Related	$1,188,980.70

Top Vendors

UNITED COMMUNITY HOUSING COALITION	$5,351,794.11
Arrow Strategies, LLC	$4,306,179.00
DETROIT EMPLOYMENT SOLUTIONS CORP	$3,341,895.05
SEHI COMPUTER PRODUCTS INC	$3,285,341.64
Abbott Rapid Dx North America, LLC	$2,857,377.40
Bio-Reference Laboratories, Inc.	$2,600,000.00
Premier Staff Services	$2,594,646.50
EDIBLES REX INC	$2,146,404.80
DETROIT GROUNDS CREW LLC	$2,087,539.21
ROCK CONNECTIONS LLC	$1,914,000.00

Relatedly, the **National Assn. of Counties** will host a Dec. 1 webinar, "Counties and COVID-19 Vaccine Planning: How Counties are Investing CRF Dollars." To register, contact NACo's Blaire Bryant or visit: https://www.naco.org/events/counties-and-covid-19-vaccine-planning-how-counties-are-investing-coronavirus-relief-fund

MoCo & OTHER LOCAL HIGHLIGHTS

Nov. 30, 7:00 p.m. – Montgomery County Council virtual Town Hall, with updates from MCPS and Dr. Travis Gayles. https://www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgportalapps/Press_Detail.aspx?Item_ID=28165&Dept=1

Dec. 3 – deadline for MCPS' Family Preference Survey about phased-in, in-person instruction. The survey is available in eight languages: https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/reopening/family-preference-survey.aspx

The District of Columbia launched on Nov. 23 a neighborhood-specific, online retail directory to promote local small-business shopping, "safely from your home" – https://shopinthedistrict.com/

(Seasonal art: CDC)

Launched in

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See past issues of this newsletter here