



## San Francisco Department of Public Health

Grant Colfax, MD  
Director of Health

City and County of San Francisco  
London N. Breed  
Mayor

### **Director's Report for Health Commission Meeting of July 21, 2020**

*A current overview of issues affecting the state of public health in San Francisco*

<https://www.sfdph.org/dph/comupg/aboutdph/insideDept/dirRpts/default.asp>

#### **Remembering Maria X Martinez**

Longtime member of the DPH family, Maria X Martinez, died peacefully in her home on Wednesday, July 15<sup>th</sup>. Maria worked for San Francisco's Department of Public Health for 23 years, during which time she passionately championed the needs of vulnerable populations. She focused on building initiatives and developing care models for high-risk populations through new collaborations and system design. A key member of DPH leadership, she served in the following roles: Deputy Director of Community Programs, Senior Staff to the Director of Health, Chief Integrity Officer, and the Director of Whole Person Care. Maria continually strived to bring a racial and equity lens to creating a seamless network of services to engage and meet the most complex needs of San Francisco's most vulnerable residents.

The capstone of Maria's career was serving as the Director of Whole Person Care, a project that aims to improve outcomes for adults experiencing homelessness in San Francisco through enhanced care coordination. Maria truly led the way in creating care models and effective systems of care for people experiencing homelessness and other medically vulnerable people in our community. So much work that lives on in the Department of Public Health is a result of Maria's vision, commitment, and dedication to improving the lives of people experiencing homelessness or with unstable housing. She was a beloved colleague, leader, and mentor who touched innumerable lives during her 23 years with DPH.

#### **San Francisco announces next steps on controlling spread of COVID-19 and continuing pause on reopening**

Today, there are over 5,300 San Francisco residents with confirmed cases of COVID-19. And, sadly, a total of 52 San Franciscans have died. The San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH) sends our condolences to their loved ones.



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The key indicators of COVID-19 activity in San Francisco show that a surge of cases and hospitalizations is under way. As a result, the City is extending the pause on the reopening that began on June 29.

On July 17, Mayor London N. Breed and Dr. Grant Colfax, Director of Health, announced next steps for flattening the curve in San Francisco as cases and hospitalizations have continued to rise. The City's schedule for reopening will remain on pause indefinitely in order to slow the spread of COVID-19 in San Francisco and protect community health.

### Next Steps for Flattening the Curve in San Francisco

*Pausing Reopening* - San Francisco is experiencing a surge of cases and hospitalizations, and reopening cannot continue until the spread of the virus has slowed once again. The pause in reopening businesses and activities will continue until San Francisco [Key Public Health Indicators](#) improve. In addition to the health indicators, other data will inform the decision on how to proceed, including the Reproductive Rate of the virus, the State's actions, and the impact of the virus in the Bay Area region.

*Following the State's Requirements* - San Francisco is on the State's watch list due to rising hospitalizations. This means that San Francisco must abide by the State's restrictions, which includes closing indoor malls and non-essential offices, and continue the paused reopening, at least until the State lifts its restrictions. Indoor malls and non-essential offices must close, except for minimum basic operations, effective Monday, July 20. If the State adds more restrictions for counties on the watch list, San Francisco will abide by those restrictions as well. If local conditions do not improve, San Francisco maintains the ability to close additional businesses and activities that go beyond the State's requirements.

*Changing Behaviors – Face Coverings and Reduced Gatherings* - In order to slow the spread of COVID-19 in the short-term and adapt to living with the virus until there is a vaccine, San Franciscans need to redouble their efforts to consistently wear face coverings and limit gatherings with people not in their household. Research shows that if the vast majority of people wear masks that cover their nose and mouth, San Franciscans can effectively slow the spread of the virus and save lives. Many of the new cases of COVID-19 that are part of the current surge are the result of social gatherings among family members and friends, so it is important that San Franciscans limit such gatherings as much as possible. In addition to these behavioral changes, everyone must continue practicing social distancing, hand washing, and staying home as much as possible.

*Focus on Equity and Impacted Communities* - San Francisco has focused on equity and addressing the disparate impacts of COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic. As part of the City's five-point plan, San Francisco will continue to focus on the communities most impacted by the virus, especially members of the Latinx community, people who must leave home to work, Black/African



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American residents, and the eastern and southeastern neighborhoods. This focus includes expanding access to COVID-19 testing and conducting targeted community outreach in impacted communities.

*Expanding Access to Testing* - The City continues to exceed its testing goals, however in the current surge it has taken longer for people to access testing appointments and receive their results. In an effort to mitigate this challenge, the City will issued a health order Monday requiring private health care providers to increase their testing services by providing same-day testing for patients with symptoms and close contacts of confirmed COVID cases. Additionally, private hospitals and clinics must provide testing to asymptomatic workers in jobs where they have more risk of exposure, such as health care, first responders, and jobs with frequent public interactions at less than six-feet apart. Staff and residents of congregate settings also must be provided testing if requested.

Meanwhile, the City continues to expand testing access for neighborhoods identified by low resource availability and high prevalence of COVID positive cases, or low numbers of people who have tested. So far, throughout the month of July, DPH worked together with community partners and providers to establish testing sites in the Tenderloin, Mission, Sunnyside, and Potrero Hill, and to increase testing support in the Bayview. The Health Department is grateful to work with GLIDE< the Latino Task Force, HOPE SF, and Bayview Child Health Center to provide linguistically and culturally competent services to their community members and residents. We will continue to expand testing access and capacity throughout the city by focusing on neighborhoods that are high risk and high need.

*We need your help* - San Franciscans can use the same public health principles that are informing the City's reopening plans to help guide individual choices. When you think about risk of exposure and transmission, keep these things in mind.

How risky is the activity? Five questions to ask:

1. Is the activity indoors or outdoors? Outdoors is much safer.
2. Does it involve gathering with people outside your household? That is riskier and should be avoided.
3. Can you wear face coverings at all times?
4. Can you maintain at least six feet of physical distancing?
5. Can you easily wash your hands, and is the environment properly cleaned?

Think about any activity in terms of these four characteristics:

1. Number – As the number of people or sites increases, the possible interactions increase exponentially.
2. Frequency – The more often people interact, the higher the risk of virus transmission.
3. Duration – The longer people are together, the higher the risk of virus transmission.
4. Distance – The closer together people are, the higher the risk of virus transmission.



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Reopening phases and activities are detailed here: <https://sf.gov/step-by-step/reopening-san-francisco>. More information about the key health indicators driving San Francisco's decisions on reopening can be found here: <https://data.sfgov.org/stories/s/epem-wyzb>.

### **San Francisco Department of Public Health releases interim guidance to help plan safer reopening of local schools**

On July 8, the San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH) announced the release of interim guidance to prepare to welcome students back to school, potentially in the fall, if the conditions allow. While reopening is contingent on the containment of COVID-19 in the community and the authorization of the San Francisco Health Officer, the guidance outlines the health and safety practices needed to more safely resume in-person, on-site instruction and extracurricular activities at TK-12 schools. Additionally, the document includes specific actions schools should take to respond to an outbreak of COVID-19 cases.

Schools in San Francisco were closed for in-person instruction in March 2020 due to concerns about COVID-19 transmission among both students and staff. Since then, the medical community's understanding of COVID-19 has evolved. Although questions remain, studies indicate that children are less likely to become seriously ill from COVID-19 and less likely to spread COVID-19 compared to adults.

The guidance emphasizes required use of face coverings to minimize dispersion of respiratory droplets that carry the virus. Additionally, it recommends stable student cohorts, physical distancing, maximizing outdoor space and limiting non-essential staff and visitors to prevent COVID-19 transmission, as well as measures regarding handwashing, healthy hygiene practices, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces.

The guidance was developed by DPH with input from SFUSD, the Archdiocese of San Francisco and the Independent Schools Association. It is informed by guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the California Department of Education. The guidelines are one tool that schools will use to design their reopening plans. School buildings cannot not reopen until a formal health directive is issued.

More details are available in the interim guidance document online at <http://www.sfdcpc.org/covidschoolschildcare>.

### **Office of Student Placement and Career Advancement program**

In April, Dr. Tomas Aragon, Health Officer of San Francisco, established Population Health Division's Office of Student Placement (OSP). The OSP program provides undergraduate and



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graduate students of nursing, public health, community health work, medical interpreting, allied health, and ethnic studies with opportunities to support DPH's COVID-19 response while gaining multidisciplinary academic experiences to fulfill requirements for graduation. This summer, over 60 undergraduate and graduate students of nursing and public health from San Francisco State University, University of San Francisco, and UC Berkeley were onboarded. Student interns are now supporting DPH in the following ways:

- Case Investigation and Contact Tracing
- COVID-19 testing in community settings
- Health Education and Outreach to SROs, assisted living facilities, low-income housing
- Developing curricula, program plans, and conducting trainings for wellbeing programs and environmental health enforcements
- Reviewing policies and developing guidance documents
- Epidemiology and Surveillance
- Providing administrative support

### **Emergency Medical Services Agency COVID-19 Accomplishments**

The SFDPH's Emergency Medical Services Agency (EMSA) has been hard at work helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19 across the city. Over the past two weeks, EMSA has accomplished the following:

- The Field Nurse Testing Unit reached a milestone of conducting over 5,000 tests for COVID-19 at shelters, SROs, LTCFs, and most recently Community Pop-up Sites.
- EMSA completed the San Francisco EMS System COVID-19 Surge Plan Guidance Document, a comprehensive manual that provides detailed information on existing EMS processes and guidance regarding the steps that will need to be taken when/if the 911 system becomes overwhelmed.
- EMSA established a new Decedent Testing Unit (DTU), to facilitate testing of patients who are deceased in the field. In this coordinated effort with the Office of the Medical Examiner and local skilled nursing facilities, BLS ambulances assigned to COVID-19 transport operations respond to these incidents at the request of 911 EMS providers to perform sample collection.
- The COVID-19 Transportation Hub provides 911 system support by continuing to transport PUIs and COVID-19 positive patients to various locations throughout the City. As of July 9<sup>th</sup>, the COVID-19 Transportation Hub has conducted a total of 3,560 transports utilizing Paratransit Vans and BLS Ambulances.

### **DPH in the News**

AP, Jul 7 2020, Bay Area counties back off indoor dining as virus surges

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<https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Newsom-hopes-California-schools-won-t-be-delayed-15395409.php>

CBS, Jul 8 2020, San Francisco Health Officials unveil preliminary school reopening plan

<https://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2020/07/08/san-francisco-health-officials-unveil-preliminary-school-reopening-plan/>

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<https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Exclusive-San-Francisco-schools-unlikely-to-send-15392620.php>

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<https://theunionjournal.com/san-francisco-delays-reopening-of-indoor-dining-due-to-spike-in-covid-19-cases-nbc-los-angeles/>

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<https://theunionjournal.com/gov-newsom-hopes-california-schools-wont-be-delayed-by-virus-nbc-los-angeles/>

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<https://missionlocal.org/2020/07/7-11-datatracker/>

The Union Journal, Jul 11 2020, Some Bay Area Schools Plan to Continue Distance Learning in the Fall

<https://theunionjournal.com/some-bay-area-schools-plan-to-continue-distance-learning-in-the-fall-nbc-los-angeles/>

San Francisco, Jul 12 2020, As Bay Area coronavirus cases surge, focus on Sonoma and Alameda counties intensifies

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/As-Bay-Area-coronavirus-cases-surge-focus-on-15403289.php>

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[https://www.smdailyjournal.com/news/bay\\_area/san-francisco-zoo-to-reopen-monday/article\\_723b351e-c4a3-11ea-9f05-27cbb5e89c82.html](https://www.smdailyjournal.com/news/bay_area/san-francisco-zoo-to-reopen-monday/article_723b351e-c4a3-11ea-9f05-27cbb5e89c82.html)

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<https://sfpublicpress.org/s-f-identifies-sites-for-pop-up-covid-19-wards-in-case-of-surge/>

KPIX5, Jul 13 2020, San Francisco Allows Swim Team To Practice Despite COVID-19 Health Order Banning Pool Use

<https://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2020/07/13/sf-allows-high-school-swim-team-to-practice-despite-covid-19-health-order-banning-pool-use/>



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<https://www.sfchronicle.com/health/article/Do-Bay-Area-hospital-workers-have-enough-15417026.php>



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### **Addendum**

#### **San Francisco Department of Public Health Budget Update**

At its June 16 meeting, the Health Commission considered and approved a proposed budget submission for the Department of Public Health for Fiscal Years 2021-22 and 2022-23. This budget proposal reflected revised budget instructions from the Mayor's Budget Office, following the significant changes in the City's fiscal outlook following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To address the projected General Fund shortfall of \$1.7 billion over 3 years, the Mayor's Office pursuing multiple solutions including both departmental savings and a variety of citywide cost savings and revenue initiatives. One of these strategies has been to ask the City's labor partners to defer upcoming scheduled base wage increases for City employees. Deferring these wage increases would reduce growth in personnel costs, which is a significant driver of the projected deficit. Due to uncertainty about whether an agreement will be reached, on July 13 the Mayor's Office directed departments to propose additional General Fund reductions to provide options for closing the deficit. For DPH, these new targets are \$15.1 million in FY 2020-21 and \$62.5 million in FY 2021-22. Proposals for additional reductions are due on July 27. In addition, DPH continues to actively work with the Mayor's Office, Controller's Office and City partners on a budget plan for the COVID-19 response and Mental Health SF, to be included in the Mayor's August 1st budget submission. DPH staff will report to the Commission on the status of these initiatives as soon as possible.