



Committee: Directly to Council
Committee Review: N/A
Staff: Essie McGuire, Senior Legislative Analyst
Purpose: Receive briefing and have discussion – no vote expected
Keywords: Coronavirus, COVID-19

AGENDA ITEM #3(A)
March 15, 2022
Discussion

SUBJECT

Updates from County Government and Montgomery County Public Schools– Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Health Planning

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

Dr. Raymond Crowel, Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
Dr. James Bridgers, Acting Chief Health Officer (DHHS)
Mark Hodge, Acting Senior Administrator, School Health Services (DHHS)
Dr. Earl Stoddard, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
James D’Andrea, Chief of Staff, Office of the Superintendent, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)
Heather Dublinske, Coordinator, Student Welfare and Compliance, (MCPS)

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- Council sitting as Board of Health to receive updates.

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

The Council will receive an update on the public health data and response to COVID-19 from County Government and MCPS.

Background Information

CDC Community Level Metrics

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued new guidance around indicators to measure community level impact of COVID-19 in local jurisdictions. More information can be found at the following link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/community-levels.html>

The CDC webpage states the following regarding use of the community level indicators:

“CDC looks at the combination of three metrics — new COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population in the past 7 days, the percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients, and total new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the past 7 days — to determine the COVID-19 community level. New COVID-19 admissions and the percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied represent the current potential for strain on the health system.

Data on new cases acts as an early warning indicator of potential increases in health system strain in the event of a COVID-19 surge.”

The table below from the CDC website shows how the data are classified to determine COVID-19 community level.

COVID-19 Community Levels – Use the Highest Level that Applies to Your Community				
New COVID-19 Cases Per 100,000 people in the past 7 days	Indicators	Low	Medium	High
		Fewer than 200	New COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population (7-day total)	<10.0
	Percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients (7-day average)	<10.0%	10.0-14.9%	≥15.0%
200 or more	New COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population (7-day total)	NA	<10.0	≥10.0
	Percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients (7-day average)	NA	<10.0%	≥10.0%

The COVID-19 community level is determined by the higher of the new admissions and inpatient beds metrics, based on the current level of new cases per 100,000 population in the past 7 days

As of March 10, 2022, the CDC website classifies the community level in Montgomery County, Maryland, as **LOW**, citing the following data:

- New cases per 100,000: 61.1
- Hospital Admissions per 100,000: 4.3
- Hospital Beds Occupied by COVID-19 patients: 4.5%

DHHS staff will provide more information on the community level metrics and their application in Montgomery County. In addition to the new community level metric dashboard, the CDC website continues to show data using the previous rubric of the CDC COVID Tracker, and indicates that the data will be integrated in the future. During this transition in data presentation, this staff report will provide below the previous sets of State and County level data and the CDC COVID Tracker information for additional context.

State and County Data on March 10, 2022 (Maryland.gov website)

	Confirmed Cases	Confirmed Deaths	Probable Deaths
Maryland	1,005,716	13,965	265
Montgomery County	165,809	1,949	56

On March 10, 2022, the Maryland.gov website reported the State’s positivity rate was 1.58%.

On March 10, 2022, the CDC COVID¹ Tracker by county, showed that Montgomery County was in MODERATE Community Transmission with a case rate of 45.49 cases per 100,000 population for the last 7 days and a positivity rate of 1.18%.

The March 10, 2022, CDC COVID Tracker reports:

91.4% of the County population aged 5 years old and older is fully vaccinated.

85.8% of the TOTAL County population is fully vaccinated.

52.6% of the fully vaccinated population has a booster.

Montgomery County Case Metrics (from Montgomery County website)

As noted above, the Montgomery County website continues to monitor metrics regarding the spread and prevalence of COVID-19 in the community. DHHS staff will speak to the time and process for integrating the new community metrics as well. The primary indicators follow the CDC Tracker which classifies metrics by Low, Moderate, Substantial, and High. The secondary metrics are classified as the county as Very High, High, Moderate, Low, or Very Low risk of transmission/utilization. Indicators can be viewed at:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/data/>

Primary Indicators

Number of cases per 100,000 residents in the past 7 days. As of March 10, 2022, there were 40.54 cases per 100,000; which was a **MODERATE** level of transmission.

Test positivity rate – 7-day average percentage of tests administered resulting in a positive case. As of March 10, 2022, the County website reports a positivity rate of 1,40%; which is a **LOW** rate of transmission.

Secondary Indicators

Percent change in new cases per 100,000 population during the last seven days compared to the previous seven days. As of March 10, 2022, the rate was -31.3%; a **VERY LOW** risk of transmission.

Percent of hospital inpatient beds in the community that are occupied. As of March 10, 2022, 64.3% beds were occupied which is a **LOW** rate of utilization.

Percent of Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds in use. As of March 10, 2022, 68.5% of ICU beds were in use which is a **LOW** rate of utilization.

Percent of inpatient beds in the community occupied by patients with COVID-19. As of March 10, 2022, 2.5% of beds were occupied with COVID-19 patients which is a **VERY LOW** rate of utilization.

Mask Requirements

The amended Board of Health regulations that continued indoor mask requirements terminated on February 21, 2022.

¹ Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) COVID Tracker https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view?list_select_state=Maryland&data-type=Risk&list_select_county=24031

Other Updates

Montgomery County is distributing free N95 masks, while supplies last, through County libraries. The following is a link to the press release with specific information:

https://www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgportalapps/Press_Detail.aspx?Item_ID=39867

Montgomery County is distributing rapid tests, while supplies last, through County libraries. The following are links to the press release and additional information on the COVID webpage:

https://www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgportalapps/Press_Detail.aspx?Item_ID=39792

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/testing.html>

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)

The MCPS COVID Dashboard includes daily case counts by school. The dashboard can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/coronavirus/dashboard/index.aspx>

On March 8, 2022, the Board of Education unanimously approved a policy that masks be optional in all school facilities and transportation. The resolution can be found at the following link:

[https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/CCCSKK726A4D/\\$file/ADOPTED%20Optional%20Masking%20220308.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/mcpsmd/Board.nsf/files/CCCSKK726A4D/$file/ADOPTED%20Optional%20Masking%20220308.pdf)

In the discussion of this resolution, the Superintendent and the Board of Education stressed the importance of civility and respect among all students, staff, families, and community members as individuals make their own choices as to whether to continue wearing masks or not under the optional policy. The resolution also states that data will continue to be monitored and the issue can be revisited as needed.

MCPS has also updated its isolation and quarantine guidelines, "...moving from a 10-day isolation and quarantine period for students to a 5-day isolation and quarantine, if certain health conditions are met. This aligns with our requirements for staff, and the recommendations of the CDC, Maryland Department of Health and our local DHHS." More detail can be found at the following link:

<https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/coronavirus/quarantine.aspx>

Endemic Health Planning

On February 14, 2022, Council President Alborno and Education and Culture Committee Chair Rice wrote to Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Monifa McKnight and Chief Administrative Officer Richard Madaleno to request that the agencies collaborate to "continue or restart this work to develop a framework for the protocols, structures, and systems needed to position the County for an endemic state with the COVID-19 virus, understanding that variants can occur at any time." At the March 1, 2022 Board of Health briefing, Dr. Crowel and Mr. D'Andrea outlined the overarching framework for each of agency in approaching this work going forward. This framework included:

- Build on the work of the initial recovery planning efforts from the beginning of the pandemic;
- Examine best practices from other jurisdictions both locally and in other areas;

- Plan for both immediate needs and fostering long term recovery in each key mission area, such as health and human services, education, economic, government operations;
- Plan for future surges, outbreaks, and new variants;
- Re-establish the bi-agency workgroup between DHHS and MCPS; and
- Strengthen communication with residents to provide clear and straightforward information to facilitate individual decision making.

As the agencies continue this planning work, the Council will receive updates in future Board of Health briefings and schedule specific opportunities for in-depth discussion of the range of elements involved in endemic health and recovery planning.

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