



MEMORANDUM

Date: April 15, 2022

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshner 
County Administrator

Re: **Pandemic Update**

The overall trend in COVID-19 continues to be favorable for Pima County. Last week 281 cases were documented. For comparison, the historic high of 18,483 cases was reported the week of January 9, 2022. This continued improvement may be plateauing. Our weekly case count is still higher than during our low-point of 244 cases the first week of June 2021. (Attachment 1) At this time, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is reporting a case rate of 71.04 per 100,000 for the last seven days. This is notably higher than in the last two weeks, and is consistent with the increase in cases reported in other regions of the state and the nation associated with the BA.2 Omicron sub-variant.

The hospitalization of Pima County residents has been less than 20 per week for the last four weeks, compared to our most recent peak that occurred the third week of January 2022 during which 312 individuals were hospitalized. In the last two weeks a small but real increase appears to be occurring in COVID-19 inpatients. However at this time, overall COVID-19 related intensive care unit occupancy is at 4 percent (11 patients) compared to our most recent peak in January which was in excess of 45 percent.

Diagnostic COVID-19 testing in Pima County, which peaked at 80,431 test performed the week of January 9, 2022 has now dropped to 11,587 tests performed last week. Diagnostic test positivity peaked at about 28 percent the week of January 16 and has now dropped to 3 percent this last week. Accordingly, Pima County sponsored testing sites at which no-cost low-barrier testing is available have scaled down to two locations operated by Paradigm, which are at the [Tucson International Airport and 6009 E. Grant Road](#). State funded test site Ellie Towne Center will continue to operate until the summer. However, Federally Qualified Health Centers, retail pharmacies and the federal government continue to distribute test kits for self-administration and to offer on-site testing.

Based on the most recently revised CDC risk assessment, the COVID-19 Community Level for Pima County continues to be Low (or Green) Level. At this level, vaccination including boosters are the primary recommendation. Individuals who have COVID-19 symptoms should mask in public settings and undergo prompt rapid testing. Those at increased risk (and their household contacts) should consider additional mitigation measures including the use of masks and preventive medications.

Schools

Since the beginning of the current academic year, 337 schools have reported 24,302 cases. Case numbers have dropped each week from a high of 4,403 cases the second week of

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January 2022 to 45 cases reported last week. Students make up 85.1 percent of cases while teachers and staff are 14.9 percent. Children up to 11 years of age are 44.4 percent (10,783 cases) of school reported cases, while the 12 to 19-year age group made up 38.1 percent (9,270 cases). This school year, schools have experienced 436 outbreaks and 199 recommended classroom closures. (Attachment 2)

Collaborative school-based vaccination has continued to be a major focus of the Health Department with 307 such events taking place since the beginning of the academic year. In March alone, 60 events took place, however the number of vaccines delivered continues to decline.

Vaccination

More than 1,840,404 doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered in Pima County. At this time 68.6 percent (718,832 individuals) of the population of this County is fully vaccinated. Notably, 72.6 percent of the vaccine age eligible population (5 years and older) is now fully vaccinated. Additionally, 327,281 or about 45.5 percent of the fully vaccinated population has received a first booster dose. Overall, primary and booster vaccine uptake has slowed down significantly across all demographic groups throughout the County.

Since vaccine became available we have documented 53,210 breakthrough infections following complete vaccination. This is 7.7 percent of the fully vaccinated population that have developed subsequent COVID-19 infection. Breakthrough cases result in less severe disease and only 0.14 percent (987) of fully vaccinated individuals required hospitalization, and only 0.04 percent (285) died of COVID-19 related illness. ([Arizona – Rates of COVID-19 Vaccination Status April 13, 2022](#))

Vaccine remains abundantly available through retail pharmacies, federally qualified health center as well as other clinical entities, and at our own Health Department fixed and mobile locations as summarized in Attachment 3.

Conclusion

Pima County continues to closely monitor local and regional COVID-19 transmission and we are concerned about the increases of B.2 sub-variant cases across the country. Our guidance continues to be that residents protect themselves and each other with vaccination (and boosters), staying home when sick, and masking for the protection of vulnerable populations. These are all evidence-based interventions that will continue to be needed our community.

Attachments

c: Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator for Health and Community Services & Chief Medical Officer
Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works
Terry Cullen, MD, MS, Public Health Director, Pima County Health Department