



MEMORANDUM

Date: October 31, 2022

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

From: Jan Leshet 
County Administrator

Re: **Shifting COVID-19 Response**

As the COVID-19 response transitions to a sustained long-term response, it is appropriate for the Pima County Health Department to shift resources and efforts to meet the evolving needs of our community. The attached memorandum from Dr. Cullen provides a detailed update including some of the cost implications of recent actions.

High-quality, no-cost COVID-19 testing has been a cornerstone of the overall pandemic response in Pima County since the start. These efforts, supported by a range of contractors were scaled back and as of this month have been largely discontinued. The Health Department has absorbed COVID-19 testing in-house while simultaneously scaling up the distribution of home test kits to the community. Likewise, the case-investigation/contact tracing efforts that have supported schools this month transition from the contractor to our in-house team. Finally, the test-to-treat which initially operated with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) support, is now staffed entirely by Health Department providers who provide this service using telehealth.

COVID-19 is likely to continue to demand concerted resources and attention to ameliorate its impacts on Pima County. As we shift to the endemic phase of the response, we will continue to evaluate our efforts in order to invest resources in those tactics that have the greatest public health benefit.

JKL/dym

Attachment

c: Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator and Chief Medical Officer
Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Terry Cullen, MD, MS, Public Health Director, Health Department

Date: October 20, 2022

To: Jan Leshner, County Administrator

From: Theresa Cullen, MD, MS 
Health Department Director

Re: PCHD COVID-19 Response Update

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and amplified existing disparities in health outcomes as well as sociocultural and economic inequities across Pima County. As a result, the COVID-19 pandemic has offered opportunities to increase the quality and efficacy of public health service delivery and emergency response. The pandemic has helped Pima County Health Department (PCHD) facilitate the identification and integration of innovative evidence-based methods that help bridge the gaps between healthcare systems and the communities. The lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic continue to inform our approach to public health service delivery and guide the decisions on how to provide epidemiological services that are fiscally responsible.

PCHD has worked with external contractors (Maximus and SAFER) to support our Case Investigation (CI)/Contact Tracing (CT) needs from July 2020 through October 2022. As we transition to an endemic response and integrate new CI/CT guidance from external experts at Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists and Center for Disease Control (CSTE/CDC), we have continually evaluated what our current and future needs are for comprehensive epidemiological response, include CI/CT, disease surveillance and emerging threat readiness. PCHD will be transitioning from Maximus on November 1, 2022, to an internal staffing model, utilizing up to ten FTEs to provide continued epidemiological support in the most efficient and effective way. PCHD anticipates a savings of at least \$1.9 million through the end of FY23 based on current epidemiological case load with this transition.

As PCHD continues to adapt services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and variant changes, our service delivery methods and focuses have also evolved. PCHD has scaled down our testing and treatment efforts in accordance with current demand and community needs. Our testing services were supported with externally contracted partners until recent (October 4, 2022). Due to reduced throughput for testing demands, the PCHD has absorbed COVID-19 testing and discontinued using Paradigm contracted services for testing sites. This shift to PCHD supported testing provides an estimated reduction in testing expenses by 75%. PCHD is staffing the testing site with three Full Time Employees (FTE) three days per week at Abrams Public Health Building. PCHD also continues to provide COVID-19 home test kits to the community through our health disparities program at Pima County Libraries, PCHD clinic locations and through mobile outreach and events.

COVID-19 treatment options have changed throughout the pandemic due to efficacy issues from variant changes. PCHD has continued to monitor and provide education and services to help the community and health partners for treatment options as they become available. PCHD collaborated with Carondelet Hospital in late 2021-2022 to provide the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assisted monoclonal antibody (mAB) outpatient treatment. As the efficacy of treatment options shifted, mAB was discontinued with FEMA. In June 2022, newly developed oral therapeutics such as Paxlovid and

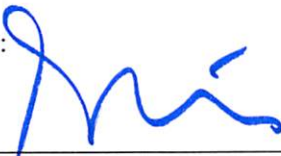
Jan Lesher
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Molnupirivir allowed PCHD to initiate a FEMA supported Test-to-Treat location at the East Clinic. This location provided onsite therapeutic prescription and testing combined with telehealth ePrescribed therapeutics for the community through the Test-to-Treat phone line. FEMA collaborated with PCHD and provided this support for thirteen weeks starting June 22, 2022, and successfully treated 1,719 community members who tested positive for COVID-19. Effective September 26, 2022, the demand for COVID-19 therapeutics has transitioned to allow PCHD clinic providers who manage the Test-to-Treat telehealth only phone line. PCHD is currently utilizing two FTEs to support the Test-to-Treat telehealth service comprised of one nurse practitioner and one community health worker. PCHD testing efforts have successfully referred patients to the Test-to-Treat line for treatment making this process a successful closed loop referral within PCHD.

PCHD continues to seek partnerships with Arizona Department of Health Services, other southern Arizona counties, community-based organizations and Tribal Nations to ensure a current and future collaborative public health delivery model.

TC/ar

Concur:



Francisco Garcia, Deputy County Administrator



Date

c: Andrew Rowe, Interim Deputy Director- Clinical Services/CHFS
Heather McGovern, Program Manager - Epidemiology