



MEMORANDUM

Date: April 2, 2021

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

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CHH", is written over the printed name "C.H. Huckelberry".

Re: **Status of Asylum Seeker Transfers from Ajo, Arizona**

The US Border Patrol began transferring asylum seekers on Friday, March 19, 2021. Those transfers continued throughout the seven-day work period. As of Wednesday, March 31, 2021, a total of 315 asylum seekers have been released by the Border Patrol at their station in Why, Arizona. The Ajo nonprofit, International Sonoran Desert Alliance (ISDA) is facilitating communications between the Border Patrol, County and Catholic Community Services. Asylum seekers have received temporary transfer to Ajo where community volunteers are providing water and snacks. They are then transported to the Casa Alitas Welcome Center in Pima County.

Of the 315 individuals released, two were positive for COVID-19. These positive individuals and their families were transported separately to another facility for isolation during their infection period. The number of COVID-19 positive persons in this particular population group is less than one-half of one percent, an unusually low number.

Due to the time consumed and complexity of the transfer from the Border Patrol facility in Why to Ajo and then picked up and transferred to Casa Alitas and the extremely low positivity rate as well as to relieve the increasing burden on Ajo, we have asked the Border Patrol to directly release individuals to awaiting transport at their Why facility.

Each individual who is released will be provided an N95 mask and is required to wear it during transport. They will also go through a temperature check. If an individual's temperature is above 100.4 degrees, they and their family unit will be returned to Border Patrol for disposition with the contracted medical provider of the Border Patrol. Any drivers or those assisting in transport must be fully vaccinated as defined by receiving the last dose of the vaccine at least two weeks prior and will also be required to wear an N95 mask during transport or at Casa Alitas.

We will continue to communicate with ISDA, Ajo volunteers and others as this situation continues to unfold.

Asylum seekers will also be tested with a COVID-19 Rapid BINAXNOW test at Casa Alitas. The County has offered to provide a paid Ajo volunteer to ensure appropriate documentation during travel to Casa Alitas.

The Honorable Chair and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors

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The County is in the process of receiving proposals from transportation companies who can provide transportation services from Ajo or Why to Casa Alitas.

CHH/anc

c: Jan Leshar, Chief Deputy County Administrator
Carmin DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works
Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer,
Health and Community Services