



MEMORANDUM

Date: January 3, 2022

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

From: Jan Leshner 
Acting County Administrator

Re: **COVID-19 Testing Update**

Attached please find a December 30, 2021 Memorandum from Dr. Theresa Cullen, which summarizes the status of COVID testing in Pima County.

In the Memorandum, Dr. Cullen notes that since July 2020, over 2,468,026 COVID-19 tests have been performed in Pima County. During the last week of December alone, the number of tests performed daily ranged from 2,600 to a high of 5,590.

Currently there are 88 different fixed sites throughout Pima County that provide testing in addition to the mobile testing provided by the Pima County Health Department at schools, long term health care facilities, churches, low-income housing and other community settings.

In addition to providing approximately 300 tests per week at mobile testing sites, Pima County coordinates, supports or funds testing at a variety of locations in cooperation with the Arizona Department of Health Services, Paradigm and with the support of Arizona State University, Chicanos Por La Causa, Tucson Electric Power and Tucson International Airport.

Antigen Sites

- Downtown (TEP) - Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday 10 AM – 6 PM
- Liberty Plaza (across from the Laos Transit Center) – Monday thru Saturday 10 AM – 6 PM
- Grant Road – Daily 9 AM – 5 PM

PCR Sites

- Ellie Towne Center – Monday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday 7 AM – Noon
- Ellie Towne Center – Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday Noon – 6 PM
- Tucson International Airport – Daily 7:30 AM- 4 PM (Paradigm/State of Arizona)

Self-Test/At-Home

- Over 50,000 test kits hve been distributed through libraries, Pima County Health Department clinics and mobile sites.
- Over 70,000 test Kits have been distributed through area schools.

It is anticipated that all funds currently allocated for testing will be spent no later than the first week of March, 2022.

JL/anc

Attachment

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

Date: December 30, 2021

To: Jan Leshner
Acting County Administrator

From: Theresa Cullen, MD, MS 
Health Department Director

Re: COVID-19 Testing Update

Background

Since the start of the pandemic Pima County has provided, coordinated and supported COVID-19 testing for individuals in this community. In fact, our Health Department was among the first in the country to create the infrastructure for SARS-CoV2 testing when it was not readily available.

Since July 2020, over 2,468,026 (an increase of 150K in the past 20 days) tests have been performed in Pima County. Over the last week, testing ranged from a low of 2,600 tests to a high of 5,590 tests/day. Currently, testing is abundantly available at over 88 different fixed sites including retail pharmacies, urgent cares, grocery stores, medical offices and other locations scattered throughout Pima County. These fixed locations are robustly supplemented with Pima County directed efforts that bring testing into testing centers, schools, long term care facilities, churches, low-income housing and other community settings.

The Board of Supervisors recently (December 7, 2021) augmented the testing budget for the Pima County Health Department (PCHD) with an additional \$3M allocation of American Rescue Plan (ARPA) contingency funds.

Current PCHD Supported Testing

Antigen Sites

- Downtown Tucson Electric Power (TEP) site is operated by Paradigm in partnership with TEP. Hours are currently Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday from 10:00AM-6:00PM.
- Liberty Plaza Paradigm Also operates a site in partnership with Chicanos Por La Causa (CPLC) at Liberty Plaza (across from the Laos Transit Center). This site operates six days per week from Monday to Saturday 10:00AM-6:00PM.
- Grant Road Paradigm operates testing at their Grant Road site from 9:00AM-5:00PM daily.

PCR Sites

- The Ellie Towne Center site is currently operated by Arizona State University (ASU) and funded directly by the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) at no cost to the County. This site operates seven days per week (5-hours each day). Support for this test site has been extended by the state through March.
- Paradigm operates a site at the Tucson International Airport supported by the State that is open from 7:30AM-4:00PM daily.

Mobile Testing

- Mobile testing outreach efforts resources targeting vulnerable communities and supported by Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) resources continue to move forward. These efforts provide approximately 300 tests per week over the next three months.

Self-Test/At-Home

- Over 50K test kits have been distributed through libraries, Abrams Public Health Building, PCHD Clinics and multiple pop-up sites.

Schools

- We have distributed over 70K test kits for supervised and self-administration and plan to continue to respond to school demand for these assets.

Positivity

- We have recently seen an increase in positivity results. The test positivity has ranged from approximately 8-18% in the last two weeks. The vast majority of self-test kit results have not been reported to PCHD, so the accuracy of the positive test results may have been diluted by a large number of home test kits distributed by PCHD as well as those at home kits available at commercial pharmacies and other vendors.

Expenses

- Current expenditures from December 7, to date have been approximately 425K for Paradigm since December 7 (exclusive of RRI/Casa Alitas testing).
- At home tests have been available through ADHS as well as a recent transfer of approximately 3K home test kits to PCHD from El Rio (through the federal distribution of at home kits to FQHC's). We will distribute these test kits at our Abrams Building starting January 5. We have obligated \$100K in at-home test purchases and \$25K in additional proctored antigen tests at this time.

Testing Cost

- While the average tests per day was higher in November (607 total tests per day) than December (502 tests per day), the most recent ten days of December have averaged over 750 tests per day; since December 27, the average has been 1,100 tests per day. Additionally, there has been a significant increase in the number of PCR tests being performed, moving from an average below five to over 45 per day in the last 10 days (increased at the PCHD Director's request to facilitate early sentinel awareness of COVID-19 variants in the County).
- The Pima County cost per day for general public testing has increased from an average of \$21K per day in November to nearly \$30K per day over the last 10 days due to this increase in testing. Layered onto this expenditure is the targeted testing done in high risk populations through mobile deployments of contracted testing teams. This carries an additional \$6K - \$13K per day expense.

- If the past ten days is indicative of future utilization, Pima County will expend the Board authorized \$3M supplement on or before March 3, 2022. If the past three days are more reflective of future demand, the County will deplete the Board authorized funds on or before February 15, 2022. These projections do not contemplate the expansion of testing at the fixed downtown location to include Tuesday and Thursday hours. If that expansion proceeds as expected it will cost an additional \$12K - \$15K per week. At this time, a conservative estimate is that the appropriated \$3M will allow PCHD to continue testing until February 15, +/- 10 days.

Additional Demand

- Our current estimates above do NOT include any significant acceleration in testing (for instance, similar to January 2020, when testing demand was over 2K/day). PCHD anticipates that demand for testing may continue to increase as Omicron increases in the County, due to the increased transmissibility of this variant. Recent CDC guidance supports testing for contacts when testing is available (five days post known contact). This guidance acknowledges the possibility that testing may not be available in multiple situations as cases surge, and may mitigate a significant surge in testing. In addition, this guidance will enable PCHD to support modifications in testing protocols depending upon fund and test availability.

c: Francisco Garcia, Deputy County Administrator