



The Miller Report

Mendocino Coast COVID-19 Update for the Week of May 11, 2020.

by

William Miller, MD, Mendocino Coast District Hospital Chief of Staff
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From William Miller, MD, our hospital's Chief of Staff:

Positive Case of COVID-19 Identified at MCDH

On Monday, May 11th, we were notified that one of our staff members at the hospital has tested positive for COVID-19. This test was done out of the county and will not appear on tallies for Mendocino County. As you know, we have been preparing for the inevitable eventuality of our first case in the community since this pandemic hit our shores.

Upon receipt of this information, we immediately notified the Mendocino County Health Department and have been working closely with them in our response to the situation. We have generated a list of all staff and patients who may have been in contact with this staff member. As of this writing on May 12th, we have already tested 54 of our staff members who may have had contact. Fifteen have come back negative and we expect the rest of the results in the next day or so.

We have started the process of notifying each patient who was in our hospital or ED between April 29th and May 5th and who may have had contact with this staff member to instruct them on self-isolation and offer testing to them. If you think you may be one of those patients, you can call us at 707-961-4718 and leave your name, date of birth, date you were in the hospital and your phone number. We will call you back with information on whether or not you should be tested. However, please, only call if you were a patient here in our ER or admitted to the hospital between those dates of April 29th to May 5th.

There is a lot of speculation already flying around on social media about this case. So, let me respond to some of the rumors. Yes, this person is a traveler, but she is also one of our regular nurses who has worked here for several years. The fact that she is a traveler does not mean that she brought it into the community. In fact, since she has been here for a significant period of time, it is equally possible that she contracted it from a community member already here, even perhaps from a patient. We simply do not know at this time and should not jump to conclusions.

Since the onset of the COVID crisis, we have been closely adhering to the latest guidelines from the CDC. We have been screening all staff and visitors prior to entry. Staff who have symptoms are referred for further evaluation and are tested and/or asked to self-quarantine for 14 days. Symptomatic employees are not allowed to go back to work without prior clearance.

Additionally, all of our staff and patients are required to wear masks as well as patients prior to coming in. We have also been practicing distancing and doing frequent handwashing. We also greatly appreciate all of the community members who have also been doing those things as well as sheltering-in-place. We know that this is the best way to prevent the spread in our community. This is the reason that we need to enforce such requirements.

We are committed to keeping our staff and patients safe. We are also committed to keeping our community members informed. We will continue to put out information to the community as it becomes available.

From Tabatha Miller, our Fort Bragg City Manager:

As I write this week's Miller report, the community just learned that a nurse who recently worked at the Coast Hospital was diagnosed with COVID-19 and we are all waiting to hear the results of additional testing of those who had contact with this individual. These days I spend a lot of time trying to guess at the future and plan for it. The exposure from the nurse is an example of something that is almost entirely out of my control, but I so want to understand how it will impact our community.

Another area that I have little control over is the impact to our economy from the shutdown. These impacts are still developing and hard to measure. I spend time reading the Wall Street Journal, CNN articles, LA Times and listening to the news to get a better understanding of the impact on us all financially. At these early stages, this is estimation, observation and predictions. As most of you are aware, the City laid off four employees and partially furloughed another twelve over a week ago. In addition to that action, we froze four part-time seasonal positions, an open Police Sergeant, a soon to be open Community Services Officer, a Planner and we will not replace the Public Works Director who is retiring at the end of the fiscal year.

A steep decline in projected sales tax revenues is part of the reason C.V. Starr Community Center will likely remain closed until after the first of the calendar year. The other reason is health and safety. Community pools remain shut by the shelter-in-place orders. These actions were done to ensure that the City conserves and prepares for the eventual recovery. These are tough decisions but every day financial indicators tell us that this recession is not going to be V shaped, with a steep drop but quick steep recovery. Instead, many economists now predict that this recession and recovery will be more U shaped with the impacts lasting well into next calendar year.

Early projections put together by Tourism Economics for Visit California project a 50% decrease or loss of \$72.8 billion in travel spending for calendar year 2020. This is a decrease in tax revenue for the state and local governments of \$80 billion. California travel spending for the months of April and May are projected to be down 81% from the prior year. Statewide, 613,000 jobs or 51% of the industries' jobs will be lost in May alone. This is similar to what we are experiencing locally.

Governor Newsom and the Mendocino County Health Officer have already indicated that lodging and tourism may be the last industries in our state and county to reopen, in late stage 3 or stage 4 of the Governor's four-stage resiliency road map for reopening the state. I am not trying to present a dire picture. There is quite a bit of hope in the recovery. But I also believe we need to take a realistic view and plan ahead. Many local businesses such as hotels and lodges, retailers, restaurants and other industries are planning together and figuring out how to reopen and how to communicate to health officers that they know how to do that safely.

As county officials urged us all to do late last week, we need to politely but adamantly demand more testing capacity in Mendocino County. We need to prepare to welcome visitors back, but not until it is safe for all. One thing I was reminded of today, is the changes in travel and tourism that will likely be with us for years. I don't see the popularity of cruises returning any time soon. Most of us will avoid overseas travel and airplane trips for a while. I see us shying away from crowded destinations like Disneyland and Las Vegas. Which leaves Fort Bragg and the Mendocino Coast as an ideal road trip destination. Don't get me wrong, this isn't the entire answer. We will still need to consider our health and safety – not to mention stable and more diverse ways to make a living. Which by the way, is another thing we need to plan for now.