



The Miller Report

Mendocino Coast COVID-19 Update for the Week of June 8, 2020.

by

William Miller, MD, Mendocino Coast District Hospital Chief of Staff
Tabatha Miller, Fort Bragg City Manager

From William Miller, MD, our hospital's Chief of Staff:

First Local COVID Case Identified

Last week, Fort Bragg had its first local resident to be diagnosed with COVID-19. This person had traveled outside the community and became ill shortly after returning home. The person was seen in our ER, where the diagnosis was made, however, did not require admission to the hospital and is currently isolating at home. The County Health Department is handling any necessary contact tracing.

As we continue to slowly roll back on shelter-in-place requirements, we will see more travel in and out of our community. This will include such things as local residents traveling outside to visit family, friends of ours traveling here to visit us and people coming to the Coast to get some fresh air after being cooped up in the cities for the past 2-3 months. With this travel, we will also see cases of COVID locally.

Our hospital and clinics, both North Coast Family Health Center (NCFHC) and Mendocino Coast Clinics (MCC), are prepared to take care of anyone who may become infected. Thanks to the strong shelter-in-place mandate, we have had time to make such preparations. Also, thanks to this mandate, we do not expect to see an overwhelming surge as initially predicted, but instead a slow rise in cases which should be completely manageable.

This reality also makes it very important for us to have adequate surveillance testing all along the Coast. Implementing such remains a challenge largely due to a lack of availability of COVID testing on the scale needed. A group of local leaders including Mayor Will Lee, Fort Bragg City Manager Tabatha Miller, MCC Director Lucresha Renteria, MCDH Administrator Judy Leach and myself are working closely with Dr. Doohan of the County Health Department to increase the number of community tests being done locally. It will be helpful for local residents to contact their County and State representatives to request their assistance in helping us achieve this important goal.

In the meantime, our hospital and clinics remain a safe place to get your health care. I know that some folks have avoided getting needed care due to fears around this epidemic. I encourage anyone who may have personal health issues to not hold back, but to seek the care that they need.

Lastly, we have all been living under an increased amount of stress as this pandemic has unfolded. I ask that all of us continue to treat each other with respect and compassion. Times like this allow us to demonstrate who we really are as a community.

From Tabatha Miller, our Fort Bragg City Manager:

Tourists and Testing

As most of us are aware, the State issued guidance, effective June 12th, to allow for the opening of Campgrounds, RV Parks, Outdoor Recreation Areas, Hotels, Family Entertainment Centers, Restaurants, Bars, Wineries, Fitness Facilities, Museums, Galleries, Movie Theaters, Zoos and Aquariums late last week. Although not as close to home, guidance is also provided for music, film and television production and professional sports without a live audience. Dr. Doohan, Mendocino County's Public Health Officer, has pledged to allow businesses to open compliant with the state and we anticipate a new Order on June 12th. Of course there is and will be significant guidance and limitation on how those businesses can operate but this list means we are very likely to be open to tourism as early as this weekend.

I have received dozens of inquiries, thoughts and comments on this topic in the last week. I don't know any details and will likely learn them with everyone else on Friday when Dr. Doohan issues the new order. However, I do know that she has been meeting with business groups, including the lodging industry, to figure out how to implement this significant easing of the Order as safely as possible.

For some, this official opening up to tourists, is too early and for some way too late. City officials have received strongly worded advice from both camps. Regardless of which side of the debate we sit, we all must prepare for this opening. If you haven't taken a look at the guidance documents provided at the state level, they are fairly complex. [The COVID-19 Industry Guidance for Hotels, Lodging and Short Term Rentals](#) is 16 pages long. The County Health Officer will likely add additional guidance in her new Order. Which means that businesses are working hard to meet those standards.

Here at the City, we will be opening the restrooms at the North Noyo Headlands Park on Friday. Our Public Safety Team will be ready for the additional traffic in town. At home, my family will be considering how to safely navigate our town this weekend. Each one of us must make a decision about how much risk we are willing to take in moving into this next stage of reopening. Social distancing and wearing face coverings when you are out will remain a staple of health and safety.

One area of concern for all of us is the lack of testing availability here on the Coast. One aspect of [Mendocino County's Attestation](#) is the County's determination that there is testing capacity to detect active infection and that the County has the capacity to test a minimum of 1.5 per 1,000 residents or 135 per day. Testing is also to be available for at least 75% of county residents, which is measured by 60 minutes driving time. Without testing on the Coast, the availability measure is not met.

The County's OptumServe testing at the Fairgrounds in Ukiah is a wonderful resource but not very practical for many. As we invite tourists from all over to our City, we need to secure adequate testing capacity here on the Coast. This is not something we can just expect the County to provide us but something we must ask for and be active partners in securing. This

means reminding the County Officials of our needs, partnering with our health providers to administer the testing and for all of us to be willing to get tested. This is especially important for essential workers, who should be tested every two weeks, who will now come in contact with more people travelling from greater distances.