

The Miller Report

Mendocino Coast COVID-19 Update for the Week of July 6, 2020

by

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

Cases on the Rise in Mendocino County

Mendocino County is beginning to see a rise in cases with 92 identified as of this writing, which is a 20% increase from two weeks ago. It should be noted that this represents all the cases thus far going back to March and that 85 of those have recovered. Nonetheless, it looks like it may be the start of an exponential increase, and if so, would mean that the County is about to have a significant outbreak. Currently, most of the cases are inland. This is probably occurring now because of the relaxed restrictions that happened around Memorial Day weekend. We can also expect to see a similar boosting in cases as a result of the Fourth of July weekend. If this continues, we will start seeing a rise in cases here on the Coast.

Sherwood Oaks is our community's skilled nursing facility with 58 residents. One of their employees recently tested positive for COVID on Monday afternoon with the result coming back late Monday night. Will Maloney, Administrator of Sherwood Oaks, stated that immediately upon learning of the result he and his staff started working with the County Health Department to respond appropriately. "We are in the process of notifying all residents and their families of the situation and the steps that we are taking to minimize the chance that this will become an outbreak at our facility," Maloney said.

According to Dr. John Cottle, Medical Director of Sherwood Oaks, this staff person last worked at the facility on Friday. An early assessment of the case suggests that this person most likely got infected from a family member and not from work. Dr. Cottle stated that at this time no other staff members or residents are showing any symptoms. "We are working with the Health Department to now test 100% of all of our residents and staff," he said. "We have always followed the CDC and State guidelines regarding COVID and we shall continue to do so." While this person does not work at our hospital, the hospital is fully prepared to respond if there is an outbreak at our local nursing home. I have been in touch with the new Deputy Health Officer for Mendocino, Dr. Mollie Charon, so that the hospital can help Sherwood Oaks stay ahead of the situation. Adventist Health has recently responded to a request from Sherwood Oaks by donating to them 2,000 medical masks and 120 isolation gowns.

As cases continue to rise nationwide, with several hot spots in the South and Southwest, we are starting to see a shortage of COVID test supplies like we had a few months ago. We had made recent progress in expanding testing, both to people with symptoms as well as community

surveillance. Hopefully, we will not see a falling back of that progress that had been made. What we are seeing happening in Northern California mirrors what is happening in many places around the US. It underscores the continued need for vigilant use of face coverings, social distancing and frequent handwashing.

From Tabatha Miller, our Fort Bragg City Manager:

Masks Reduce the Spread of COVID-19

As of July 3, 2020, masks or facial coverings were required in California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas and Washington. Many other counties and cities around the country have mandated facial coverings, including Mendocino County. Wearing or not wearing a mask has become controversial and for some a symbol of something more. What it should be is a symbol of a way to reduce the spread of COVID-19. According to Governor Newsom, in his press conference on July 6th, hospitalizations in California increased 50% statewide over the 14-day period, the positivity rate went from 4.9% to 6.8% in the same 14-day period and twenty-four (24) lives were lost to COVID-19 over the 4th of July holiday weekend.

I am not a doctor of medicine, but I try to understand the issues and rely on solid sources for information. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) states that COVID-19 mainly spreads from person to person through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice by shouting, chanting, or singing. Those droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly inhaled into the lungs. Face coverings are most likely to reduce the spread of COVID-19 when they are widely used and are especially important when one cannot maintain social distancing. The CDC recommends that people wear face coverings in public settings when around people outside their own household.

Not all the face covering orders are the same. [Mendocino County's order](#) is 6 pages long but the gist of the requirement of the order is in paragraph 7 on the second page. It requires facial coverings be worn at all times while inside any indoor facility or any enclosed open space, besides your residence, and outdoors when unable to maintain a six-foot distance from other persons. The order also provides for exceptions to the requirement, such as when a person has a health-related reason not to wear a mask, children under 2 years old, or when in a restaurant or bar with folks from the same household, while eating or drinking. Permissible stable bubbles are not required to social distance when engaging in allowed activities.

It's these exceptions that make it difficult for law enforcement to issue citations for not wearing a facial covering. A person outdoors is only required to wear a facial covering when they cannot social distance. Even when our streets or trails are busy, it is not too hard to maintain a six-foot distance from other people not in one's household. It is also almost impossible to determine who belongs to which stable household. Today's households are diverse and do not need to fit into traditional roles.

Another concern about citing individuals not wearing a mask is the current climate surrounding law enforcement and aggressive practices and unneeded violence. Our local police officers are doing everything they can to avoid association with those few officers from other agencies who have used their authority in unlawful and hateful ways. They are all well aware of the current

climate and making sure everything they do defuses situations and avoids escalation. While face coverings should just be a symbol of reducing the spread of COVID-19, it isn't always and we have seen examples all over the county otherwise.

The City is implementing new signage, developing pamphlets and working with our business community to encourage our visitors and residents to comply not only with the County order but heed the recommendation from the CDC which encourages everyone to wear face coverings when around people outside their own household. I believe before we enforce, we need to encourage good behavior and educate. I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to our community members who wear their face coverings everyday as they perform their essential work. I also want to thank our community members who diligently wear their face coverings and practice social distancing. As the number of confirmed cases continues to grow, wearing face coverings, social distancing and good hygiene are more important than ever.