Building the Teton County Public Health Infrastructure During the COVID-19 Response

Key Activities and Strategies for COVID-19 Suppression

JODIE POND, MPH, DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

Since March of this year, the Teton County Health Department has collaborated with many local and state partners to improve Teton County's Public Health Infrastructure and bolster the COVID-19 response. This work has thus far allowed the local economy to remain open to residents and visitors despite the increasing number of cases and the continued community spread of COVID-19. By targeting the seven priorities listed below, the Health Department is aiming to sustain and improve our ability to respond to the current crisis.

I. EXPAND COVID-19 SURVEILLANCE AND TESTING CAPACITY

GOAL: Secure testing supplies and capacity to meet demand for symptomatic, close contacts and asymptomatic surveillance.

Testing is a key component to understanding the spread of COVID-19 in Teton County. Since March, the testing capacity in Teton County has significantly increased. Even with this increase in capacity the demand for testing from both locals and visitors is at an all-time high.

A. Refer to Teton County Testing Plan
- Increase availability of active disease testing supplies (Viral transport media and swabs).
- Wyoming Public Health Laboratory is making Viral Testing Media (VTM). Each County can put in weekly orders for VTM and swabs. Currently, we are ordering approximately, 700 for both VTM and swabs. This VTM is only temperature sensitive after a sample is taken which helps with storage space. All clinics and labs in the County have limited cold temperature storage.
- Private laboratories are sporadically sending testing supplies to clinics. This helps to supplement what is being ordered from the State.
- St. John's Health has received an Abbott Rapid Testing Machine from the Strategic National Stockpile.
- St. John's Health has also been able to secure testing cartridges for their Cepheid testing platform. The allocation of these testing cartridges is set to stop at the end of September. We had been receiving them due to being a gate way community for both Grand Teton National Park and Yellowstone National Park from Health and Human Services (HHS).
- The Wyoming Department of Health is in the process to make Vault tests available around the State. The contract for these tests is not finalized.
- Teton County Health Department has worked with local partners to make vouchers available for people who are uninsured or underinsured.

Surveillance testing can be used to identify those who are asymptomatic or have only mild symptoms. It is an important step in keeping our community and economy open to residents and visitors. By identifying positive cases quickly, the Health Department can work to limit the spread of COVID-19 by conducting rapid and efficient contact tracing.

B. Refer to Teton County's Surveillance Plan for more details.
- Wyoming Department of Health has worked with Curative to provide oral tests to all Counties.
- Teton County Health Department has developed a surveillance testing plan to begin to test 1,000 workers on a weekly basis. Recruitment for surveillance testing has begun.

II. INCREASE CAPACITY FOR CONTACT TRACING AND ISSUING ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE ORDERS

Goal: Fully staff Case Investigators and Contact Tracers for the Teton County Health Department COVID-19 Response Team.

Contact Tracing is a key component of managing a disease outbreak. By rapidly isolating sick individuals and quarantining their close contacts, we can slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

- Through the CARES Act, Teton County has received an MOU from the Wyoming Department of Health to hire case investigators and contact tracers.
- Teton County Health Department has currently hired 7 Case Investigators and 6 Contact Tracers to assist in this effort.
- Teton County Health Department has coordinated with other partners to ensure individuals in isolation and quarantine have the necessary supplies to ensure they can fulfill the requirements of the orders. These resources include food, medication drop-offs, thermometer drop-offs, references to financial resources, symptom monitoring logs, and educational information. The housing coordination group has been working to continue to develop housing solutions for individuals who cannot isolate or quarantine in their residence.
- Use of the PathCheck SafePlaces mobile app to aid in contact tracing. Those who voluntarily download the app can provide a history of their location information in order to aid in identifying all of the locations they have been.
- The Health Department is investigating no/low cost technology solutions for contact investigation and tracing. The Department is interested in using the SARA Alert platform, an open source tool that allows public health officials to enroll individuals at risk of developing coronavirus infection and enables those individuals to monitor and report symptoms daily.

III. ENSURE THE COUNTY'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM CAN RESPOND TO POTENTIAL SURGES IN CASES

GOAL: Provide St. John's Health with requested resources to expand Teton County's Healthcare System.

Allowing our healthcare system to expand when needed is the only way Teton County will be prepared to manage a large increase in COVID-19 hospital admissions.

- Teton County Emergency Support Function #8 (Public Health and Medical) worked to ensure that St. John's Health had the needed resources to be able to implement their surge plan.

IV. PROTECT ESSENTIAL WORKERS AND HIGH-RISK POPULATIONS

Goal: Purchase PPE to increase Teton County's Stockpile by 50% before October 2020.

Providing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is critical to keeping our essential workers safe while they continue to provide needed resources and services to the community.

- Teton County Health Department has filled PPE orders for partners organizations that have direct interaction with potential COVID-19 patients or vulnerable populations.
- Teton County Health Department has provided guidance to partner organizations on how to

properly use PPE.
- Teton County Health Department has continued to purchase PPE to increase our available stockpile.
- Wyoming Department of Health has filled Strategic National Stockpile requests for Teton County.
- Wyoming Department of Health has assisted the Counties by paying to make the COVID-19 supplies available on County's Amazon Business accounts.

V. MONITOR DISEASE TRENDS TO UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND TO THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

Goal: Provide a weekly update of COVID-19 cases numbers, case demographics, impacted industry sectors, and Teton County's metrics.

By reviewing Teton County's statistics for the COVID-19 pandemic we can provide information to elected officials and the public to help inform policy development and decision-making.
- Update Teton County's COVID-19 dashboard Monday-Friday.
- Provide a weekly synopsis of new trends in cases.
- Create weekly visual updates for Teton County's 10 metrics (new cases, community spread, positive tests, hospital admissions, hospital bed availability and ICU bed availability, PPE inventory, testing capacity, contact tracing capacity, public health guidelines/orders.

VI. USE OF OTHER NON-PHARMACEUTICAL INTERVENTIONS

Goal: Continue to educate the public on current public health orders and proactive measures such as hand washing and mask use to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

Non-pharmaceutical interventions are methods that do not use vaccines or drug therapies to treat or prevent the spread of an illness. These measures are generally inexpensive and effective. Statewide and local public health orders are just one of the many non-pharmaceutical interventions that can be used to help slow the spread of COVID-19.
- Ask for variances to statewide public health orders when Teton County's metrics indicate more restrictive measures are necessary.
- Encourage the public to continue to maintain a 6-foot distancing to reduce the likelihood of being exposed to COVID-19.
- Educate the public on the use of cloth face coverings especially when physical distancing is not possible.
- Urge the public to frequently wash their hands or use hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- Instruct the public on proper cleaning and disinfection of surfaces that may become contaminated.
- Encourage those who are experiencing symptoms to stay home when sick to prevent further spread of COVID-19.

VII. PROVIDE CLEAR COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION TO THE PUBLIC

GOAL: Work with the Public Information Officer group to put out weekly messages about COVID-19.

Timely and accurate messaging to the public is a vital to effective emergency response. By educating the public and businesses on the latest information, the Health Department hopes to continue to provide the answers and direction.

- Educate impacted businesses and the public on requirements of current local and statewide public health orders, directives, and guidelines.
- Coordinate with designers and artists to communicate public health messages in convincing, contemporary methods.
- Attend weekly Public Information Officer calls with nonprofits, business, schools, federal partners, and other groups to develop and coordinate public messaging.
- Create, update, and maintain websites in English and Spanish with up-to-date information about the pandemic and links to resources.
- Ensure timely translation of various information into Spanish and share it in a targeted manner.
- Provide information on social media platforms in both English and Spanish.
- Work with a Spanish proofreader to ensure translations are accurate.