



# Tuolumne County Public Health Department

20111 Cedar Rd. North  
Sonora, CA 95370  
Office: 209-533-7401  
Fax: 209-533-7406  
24-hour Phone: 209-533-8055

**Rebecca Espino**  
Health and Human Services Agency Director

## Tuolumne County COVID-19 Update from Interim Health Officer

June 25, 2020

The Public Health Department was notified today of 7 additional cases of COVID-19 in Tuolumne County residents, bringing the total count to 22, more than doubling our case count in one week.

This rapid increase in cases is in line with the increase being experienced throughout the state, importantly in our neighboring valley counties. Based on our investigations and disease surveillance, it is clear that Tuolumne County is experiencing community transmission of the virus.

When community transmission is evident, the Public Health Department will continue to utilize all available resources to conduct case investigations, isolate identified cases and quarantine close contacts in an effort to limit further spread. However, if cases continue to increase, it may become necessary to implement, or reimplement mitigation measures in order to slow the spread of the disease. Those measures may include closing business and activity sectors that had previously opened, as part of the statewide stay-at-home order.

It is very important that people continue to follow state and local health orders and prevention recommendations:

- Practice physical distancing at all times. Keep 6 feet of space between yourself and those who aren't part of your household. Stay in your household bubble.
- Avoid gatherings with those who are not part of your household.
- Wear a face covering when in public or with people outside of your household.
- Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently.
- Stay home if you are sick. Do not go to work. Do not go to the store. Do not go out except to seek medical care.
- Avoid unnecessary travel and limit your outings to essential tasks.

We understand that there have been questions about whether the state face covering requirement issued on 6/18/20 is a recommendation or a requirement. The face covering requirement is a legal mandate, as the state executive order from March 19<sup>th</sup> states that "all residents are directed to immediately heed the current State public health directives." We continue to strongly encourage the public to adhere to this mandate, and to respect businesses and facilities who are following the mandate and are requiring their customers and clients to do the same.

Any type of gathering that involves individuals from different households presents an especially high danger of transmission and spread of COVID-19 and are not currently allowed per state and local health orders. We highly recommend that people do not attend such gatherings. “It is important that people not attend gatherings with people outside of their households, even private gatherings. It is not advisable for people to participate in protests, spend time in crowds or crowded areas, or travel outside of their community. Participating in such activity puts this community at further risk. Just because more businesses are open, does not mean it is safe to return to our previous activities without modifications. People should wear face coverings when around non-household members and stay at least 6 feet away from non-household members.” states Dr. Ortiz.

Several of our most recent cases involved private gatherings, requiring an extraordinary amount of work on the part of everyone involved in our response to identify and contact everyone who may have been exposed, stretching already limited resources. Due to the extraordinarily large number of case contacts which require identification, contact tracing and symptom monitoring, it has become necessary for Tuolumne County Public Health to request mutual aid from other county agencies, our tribal partners, and the Yosemite Gateway Area Coordination Team. We are deeply appreciative their assistance.

We have received many questions regarding information that is shared on positive cases, specifically whether or not they are symptomatic. We do not currently report the extent of an individual’s illness, as this is personal health information and a person’s health status often changes throughout the progression of the disease. Out of the 18 cases we have had locally, individuals have had experienced a range of symptoms. Some have been asymptomatic, meaning they did not experience symptoms at all. Some began to experience symptoms several days after they tested positive. Many have experienced mild symptoms which did not require medical treatment, and others have experienced symptoms severe enough for them to seek medical care and/or required hospitalization. We do report whether individuals are isolating at home, if they are hospitalized, when they have recovered, or if they have passed away. Thankfully, we have not yet had any COVID-related deaths in Tuolumne County.

Other questions we have received surround isolation and quarantine:

- Isolation is for those who are positive/sick. They are isolated for a period of 10 days from the start of their symptoms (or test date if asymptomatic) and they have gone 3 days with no fever without taking medication.
- Quarantine is for those who have been exposed to the virus. These individuals are quarantined at home for a period of 14 days from the last day of exposure to a positive case. This is a longer period of time because it can take up to 14 days for the virus to ‘incubate’.
- Modified quarantine is an unusual exception that is made by the Health Officer for asymptomatic critical essential infrastructure workers, typically only healthcare workers in certain positions, which allows for them to go to work and back home only. This may be necessary to ensure that critical services such as our healthcare and first responder services can continue to operate.

Public Health continues to recommend that individuals get tested for COVID-19 according to the guidelines below. We were notified today that the testing site in Angels Camp is no longer accepting walk-ins due to the high volume of those seeking testing. Appointments are necessary and can be made at [www.LHI.care/covidtesting](http://www.LHI.care/covidtesting) or by calling (888) 634-1123. Recommendations for testing:

- Those who work with the public and/or work in an essential critical infrastructure job (test every 14-28 days)
- Those who have participated in gatherings with people outside of their household, including those which are constitutionally protected, such as places of worship or protests (test 3-5 days after the gathering)
- Those who have traveled outside the county (test 3-5 days after travel)

We understand that the public has many questions and concerns about the ongoing pandemic and about the many response activities taking place. We encourage everyone to continue to stay informed by watching for our daily updates on the Tuolumne County Public Health website [www.TuolumneCounty.ca.gov/PublicHealth](http://www.TuolumneCounty.ca.gov/PublicHealth) through traditional media sources, and our Facebook page [www.Facebook.com/TuolumneCountyPublicHealth](http://www.Facebook.com/TuolumneCountyPublicHealth).

We understand that social media is a 24/7 medium, however our moderation capabilities are not. Please note that due to the extensive response efforts on behalf of all public health staff, our engagement on ability to respond on social media may be limited. Questions or concerns can be directed to our COVID call center at (209) 533-7440 or email [Health@tuolumnecounty.ca.gov](mailto:Health@tuolumnecounty.ca.gov).

Thank you to all who continue to support each other and those who are working so hard during this pandemic to protect the health and safety of our community.



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Dr. Liza M. Ortiz  
Tuolumne County Interim Health Officer