



**COVID Responses from 7/15 Partnership Quarterly Meeting Questions
Answered by Rodney Jenkins, Durham County Public Health Director
July 2020**

Prevention

1. What is the health department targeting low-income families to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

The Durham County Department of Public Health (DCoDPH) provides universal guidance for COVID-19 safeguards that are applicable to all socioeconomic statuses. We recognized early on that COVID is an equal opportunity virus. We have worked tirelessly to ensure that information is readily available to all to protect Durham's entire population.

2. What advice do you give for best practices in multi-generational households?

I would encourage true isolation if possible. If there is a way to remain separated from other family members, it needs to be done. This is a tough task with limited space at times, but it is not impossible. I would also encourage the wearing of face coverings indoors to protect other family members because this is an effective means of reducing transmission. I would also advise to practice enhanced sanitation of surfaces as a means of reducing transmission as well.

3. What is being done to support & protect "essential" workers. ex: a childcare teacher tested positive for covid. Her co teacher had 2 options: come to work as usual or stay home 4 two weeks w/o pay & pay for testing on her own.

The answer to this question depends on the industry in which the essential employee works. There is also not an easy answer as it depends on the COVID situation. Per your example, if it is a childcare setting, the COVID response could result in the entire childcare center being closed due to the number of close contacts and subsequent exposure.

There have been updates on the number of days of isolation and who can still work while they are asymptomatic. Nevertheless, much emphasis has been placed on the essential worker and the need for some type of stipend that might help to sustain the essential worker during their quarantine period. While nothing has materialized, this has become a national point of debate.

Testing

4. Is there a way to expedite test results for congregate settings?

It really depends on which lab is performing the testing as there are some labs that have a quick turnaround time for results. The most commonly used labs are now seeing significant delays in reporting results.

5. What are the plans for increased testing so that everyone, and anyone, regardless of symptoms can get one?

Testing is tough currently because there is a national reagent shortage. Additionally, wait times for testing and obtaining results have increased nationally. Public Health has been told that more labs are being identified to curb this current trend. There are still ways to get tested through your primary care provider, CVS, Walgreens, and many others. The locations of testing sites in Durham can be found on the DCoDPH Coronavirus Datahub.

6. What is the status of mobile testing programs in Durham? Is the public health department working on getting testing sites into the hardest hit neighborhoods? (Zip 27703, the zip hit the second hardest, doesn't have a test site according to the Datahub map.)

We have employed the strategy of targeted mass testing. We are working with NC DHHS to get testing sites to impacted areas as they have the funding to provide the resources needed. More to come on testing sites!

Screening

7. What are the available resources for routine screening in congregate settings? We would like to routinely screen all of our residents and staff for COVID on a regular basis, but we do not have the resources. Would DCHD be able to support efforts to screen, like providing kits and manpower?

It depends on the type of congregate setting. DCoDPH has been heavily involved in contact investigation and tracing. We do not have the bandwidth to provide manpower to outside entities. However, we do provide guidance in terms of screening and may be able to assist with resources needed to set up screening (again-it depends on the congregate setting).

Additional information can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/broad-based-testing.html>

8. Why are fever checks the gold standard to determine who might have/spread coronavirus when smell tests would likely catch more people?

While a symptom of COVID positive individuals is loss of smell and taste, the CDC does not recommend a smell test. A fever has always presented itself as a sure way of determining the onset of COVID-19. While the list of symptoms has increased, running a fever has always remained at the top of the list. We will continue to act based upon CDC guidance.

Support

9. What support is in place for individuals/families who are dealing with food insecurity issues and they are quarantined?



Durham County really looks out for its residents. Durham City-County EOC has stood up a Food Insecurity Unit within its Human Services Branch to provide meals to those COVID positive families while they are quarantined. Many boxes of food and gift cards to Food Lion have been delivered to families to assist them while they are quarantined. This effort continues to be on-going through the collaboration of Durham County's DSS, Cooperative Extension, Public Health, hundred of volunteers and many philanthropic organizations.

10. Are there any safe options for COVID+ homeless persons for isolation in Durham? Have all hotel options been exhausted?

For three months, Durham's homeless were housed at the Marriott-RTP. The Board of County Commissioners appropriated \$1.6 million dollars for this effort. We were fortunate NOT to have a COVID positive homeless present at this location until the final week of stay. Durham City-County EOC has stood up a Homeless Support Unit within its Human Services Branch as a part of its COVID monitoring and surveillance work. It has been a difficult task in securing a hotel specifically for COVID positives. We have secured several duplex apartments for COVID positive homeless individuals. We are also working on a location for those homeless positives that have mobility issues (ADA complexities). We hope to bring this location on-line in the next few weeks.

Tracking

11. Do you have some plan to track data once schools are open?

We have always worked in concert with Durham Public Schools while school is in session. Durham City-County's Emergency Operations Center has been active since early March. Within our EOC, we have a Strike Team that is dedicated to outbreaks and clusters of COVID-19 cases. This team of Registered Nurses and Environmental Health professionals will track data as it pertains to school COVID activities. We have been preparing for schools reopening for months.

Outreach

12. How can the Durham Housing Authority partner to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

I have had several conversations with DHA Director Anthony Scott. He is concerned about COVID's impact on the Durham Housing Authority and is seeking to provide more testing and education to the residents. We are working toward setting up an event to do all these things. Additionally, Director Scott is a participant in our Multi Agency Coordination Call every Wednesday where he receives pertinent information about rates of infection and statistics to better prepare the residents of DHA.



13. Can there be a campaign to encourage people to wear a mask, specifically people encouraging one another (a hashtag, pics of everyday people wearing one, everyday people doing a video)?

This campaign is in the works. Stay tuned!

14. What is being done to encourage people to take this pandemic more seriously?

There are many things that have been done and are currently being done. In Durham, we have been fortunate to have a community that has taken COVID seriously. There have been media campaigns (print, radio, TV, social media) that have aimed to provide accurate information about COVID. As Public Health Director, I have filmed many weekly messages with topics specific to COVID for the community. The Mayor and Chair of the County Board of Commissioners have convened a Recovery and Renewal Task Force to help guide the Durham Community toward a safe reopening. All these actions will hopefully encourage people to know all about COVID's impact to Durham.

15. Our agency is coordinating Ed/outreach & testing events for covid. Who is a contact person at Health Dept to help us plan the projects?

Lindsey Bickers-Bock (Supervisor for Health Education and Community Transformation) and Dr. Alecia Smith (DCoDPH Public Information Officer).

16. Will hospital reporting now bypassing the CDC affect the state or county's ability to track state or local data?

The recent actions of the Federal government have done little to affect the way our state and/or county tracks hospital data. Local Public Health Directors were informed that NC DHHS has mechanisms in place to ensure that all hospital surveillance data maintains its integrity and is adequately captured and disseminated.

Enforcement

17. Why aren't our mayor and governor's mask recommendations being adopted by businesses, particularly our public officials/law enforcement, etc.? People are required to have on shoes and shirt to enter many stores.

Enforcement usually lies within the authority of law enforcement. If the elected officials do not place enforcement actions within the Emergency Orders, there is little that law enforcement can do to enforce compliance. I am happy to report that our local officials are having discussions around enforcement.