

CITY OF EL PASO, TEXAS
AGENDA SUMMARY FORM

DEPARTMENT: Mayor & Council

AGENDA DATE: August 4, 2020

CONTACT PERSON NAME + NUMBER: Representative Peter Svarzbein (915-212-1002)

DISTRICT(S) AFFECTED: All Districts

STRATEGIC GOAL: Goal 8 - Nurture and Promote a Healthy, Sustainable Community

SUBJECT:

Discussion and action to direct the City Manager to implement the COVID-19 United Taskforce recommendations concerning data.

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION:

This item seeks to address COVID-19 needs of the community.

PRIOR COUNCIL ACTION:

Has the Council previously considered this item or a closely related one? n/a

AMOUNT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:

How will this item be funded?

Has the item been budgeted? No

If so, identify funding source by account numbers and description of account. Does it require a budget transfer?

EL PASO UNITED

COVID-19 Transition Task Force



Submitted to:

Commissioners Court for the County of El Paso

500 E San Antonio Ave #301

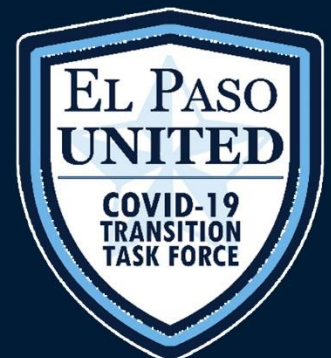
El Paso, TX 79901

City Council of the City of El Paso

300 N. Campbell

El Paso, Texas 79901

July 2020



El Paso United COVID-19 Transition Task Force

Strategy for the Path Forward in the COVID-19 Pandemic:
Interim Draft Report of Short-Term Recommendations

Prepared by:

Members of the El Paso United COVID-19 Transition Task Force

Submitted to:

Commissioners Court for the County of El Paso
500 E. San Antonio Avenue, #301
El Paso, Texas 79901

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Paso del Norte Region	1
1.2 SARS-CoV-2	1
1.3 SARS-CoV-2 Impact on El Paso	1
1.4 SARS-CoV-2 Impact on Doña Ana County	2
1.5 SARS-CoV-2 Impact on Ciudad Juárez	2
1.6 Potential for Additional Public Health Stressors During COVID-19 Response	2
1.7 Origins of Task Force	2
1.8 Task Force Mission	3
1.9 Task Force Guiding Principles	3
1.10 Task Force Priorities	3
2. Methodology	4
3. Recommendations	4
3.1 Overarching	4
3.2 Preparedness	5
3.3 Data	7
3.4 Testing and Contact Tracing	8
3.5 Communication	9
4. Partnerships and Key Stakeholders	12
Appendix A: Overarching Recommendations	13
Appendix B: Preparedness Recommendations	18
Appendix C: Data Recommendations	24
Appendix D: Testing and Contact Tracing Recommendations	27
Appendix E: Communication Recommendations	38

Task Force Members



Ogechika Alozie, MD, MPH, FACP, AAHIVS

Del Sol Medical Center

Co-Chair, El Paso United COVID-19 Transition Task Force

Ogechika Alozie (MD MPH FACP AAHIVS) is a graduate of the University of Minnesota's Infectious Diseases fellowship program. Prior to this he received his medical degree from the University of Benin in Nigeria and then completed an internship and residency at the Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where he got his introduction to Digital Health. He is also board-certified in clinical informatics by the American Board of Preventive Medicine (ABPM), making him one of less than 100 such certified physicians in the state of Texas. Dr. Alozie is the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) at Del Sol Medical

Center, where he oversees clinical quality, physician alignment and partners on healthcare innovations. He has also been the CEO of Southwest Viral Med (SWVM) a non-profit organization in El Paso responsible for the care of over 1000 clients living with HIV since 2014. *Dr. Alozie believes that patient care is the most important part of medicine. "Technology is not a replacement for patient care, but rather a way to enhance and catalyze the care our patients deserve."* As the chair, co-chair or member on multiple state committees, he represents El Paso, focused on how Health information technology can improve care. He gave a [TedX - El Paso](#) talk titled "The Digital Immigrant" in 2016, and in the same year was awarded "Best Doctor in the City 2016" by the El Paso City Magazine. In 2017, the El Paso Pharmacy Association gave his clinic the "Award for Innovative Practice."

Dr. Hector Ocaranza

City-County Public Health

Co-Chair, El Paso United COVID-19 Transition Task Force

Bio Forthcoming



Nicole Brennan, MPH, DrPH

Battelle Memorial Institute

Bio Nicole Brennan, MPH, DrPH, joins the El Paso United COVID-19 Transition Task Force with over 20 years of experience working in both public health and health care quality improvement. Dr. Brennan holds a Master's in Public Health from Ohio State University and a Doctorate in Public Health Leadership from the University of Illinois at Chicago. As the Director of Health Outcomes Research for Battelle Memorial Institute, Dr. Brennan and her team focus on improving health and wellbeing via healthcare quality improvement, environmental public health, health policy and emergency response. Dr. Brennan has focused much of her public health career working within complex systems, creating networks

focused on increasing health equity, equality, and wellbeing through sustainable public health action. Prior to joining Battelle, Dr. Brennan held public health leadership roles in the areas of chronic disease prevention and control, infectious disease prevention and control, cancer prevention and surveillance, injury prevention, HIV/AIDS prevention, immunizations, public health preparedness, and risk reduction/health promotion. Dr. Brennan is passionate about creating resilient and healthy communities, where all citizens have access to safe environments and exceptional healthcare.

Dr. Rogelio Covarrubias
Juarez Public Health
Bio Forthcoming



Dr. Alison Days, MD, MPH
El Paso County Medical Society

Dr. Alison Days is originally from New York and did her training in Rhode Island, Connecticut and New York City. She came to El Paso in 2002 to complete a 2-year commitment to the National Health Service Corps, but has remained for 18. Dr. Days was initially employed as faculty in Pediatrics at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center from 2002–2012. She saw pediatric patients in Horizon City, TX, collaborated on the new medical curriculum for the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine (PLFSOM) and was a community preceptor for 1st and 2nd year medical students. In 2009, she took over the position of Editor of the El Paso Physician Magazine, a position she still holds. In April of 2012, Dr. Days left Texas Tech to open her private pediatric practice, Healthy Days Pediatrics. In 2018, Dr. Days was nominated for the position of Chief of

Staff at El Paso Children’s Hospital and in February of 2020, she took on the role of President of the El Paso County Medical Society. Dr. Days is Board Certified in Pediatrics and also holds a Master of Public Health degree from University of Texas Houston School of Public Health. She speaks English and Spanish and is married with a stepson and 2 daughters. She is very happy to be part of the COVID-19 United Transitional Task Force.

Dr. Joel Hendryx
University Medical Center of El Paso
Bio Forthcoming



Michael Kelly, PhD
Paso del Norte Health Foundation

Dr. Kelly joined the Health Foundation in 1999, moving from his position as Assistant Professor of Health Science at UTEP. In his role as Vice President of Programs, he provides leadership for the Health Foundation’s health priority areas and supervises a talented program staff. Dr. Kelly plays a central role in Health Foundation leadership, including staffing the Allocations Committee and overseeing grantmaking. He also is instrumental in designing, implementing, and evaluating initiatives and leading special projects. Previously, he served as Program Officer for work in early childhood, sexual health, clinic-based health education, tobacco control, as well as healthy eating and active living. Currently, Dr. Kelly leads the Foundation’s REALIZE leadership programs and is designing an approach for funding diabetes prevention and management. His philosophy is for all people to have the ability, environmental support, and freedom to pursue health and quality of life. He has an unsurpassed ability to predict and navigate the many complex vicissitudes in philanthropy and population health. A native of Houston, Dr. Kelly received a Ph.D. in health education from Texas A&M University. He also holds a Masters of Education in Health Education and a B.A. in biology. His experience includes a brief time at Harris County Health and Brazos County Health Departments, a soil analysis lab, and substitute teaching middle and high school.



Robert A. Kirken, PhD
University of Texas, El Paso

Robert A Kirken, Ph.D, has greater than 25 years of leadership, administrative, strategic planning and research experience within academia and government institutions. He is currently the Dean of the College of Science at The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), the second-largest university in the United States to have a majority Mexican American student population. Dr. Kirken has also actively promoted and initiated partnerships with national and international entities, regional healthcare leaders, universities and medical centers to support faculty excellence, student success, innovative inter-disciplinary programs and engaged communities. In addition to his strong commitment to students and faculty, he has an extensive track-record as a scientific leader serving as the Principal Investigator of the recently awarded \$20M grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) focused on cancer health disparities which has been competitively renewed for more than 15 years. He has also successfully secured greater than \$50M in funding from biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies, foundations, state agencies and grants from several NIH Institutes, including the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities and National Cancer Institute (NCI). He has trained and mentored many students at all levels resulting in more than 100 publications and been the recipient of multiple patents for his inventions. His current efforts are focused supporting faculty and minority undergraduate and graduate students at UTEP and 22 other Minority Serving Institutions that span Puerto Rico to Hawaii comprised of Hispanic, Asian Pacific Islanders and African Americans. Prior to his role as Dean, Dr. Kirken was the Professor and Chair of the Department of Biological Sciences at UTEP. He was also an Assistant and Associate Professor in the Department of Pharmacology and Integrative Biology with a joint appointment in the Department of Surgery at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston and held a secondary appointment in the Department of Biomunotherapy at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. Prior to his academic positions, he was a postdoctoral fellow and then staff scientist in the NCI at Fort Detrick, Frederick, Maryland. Dr. Kirken received his B.A. in Chemistry from Olivet College in Southeastern Michigan and completed his Ph.D. in Biomedical Sciences at Wright State University in Ohio.



Jon Law
University Medical Center of El Paso

Jon is the Chief Strategic Officer of the University Medical Center of El Paso. In this role, he leads the hospital strategic and business planning for the hospital system's emerging projects. Jon leads the health district's Baldrige Performance Excellence Program. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he coordinates efforts between El Paso's hospitals to prepare for possible demand for hospital beds that would exceed the community's current capacity. Jon has over twenty-five years of experience in public health and healthcare, including two years as a full-time volunteer at Annunciation House, serving at homeless shelters for migrants in Cd. Juárez and El Paso. He previously spent 12 years serving the Paso del Norte Health Foundation (PDNHF) in various roles, including Chief Operating Officer and President. While at PDNHF, he founded PHIX (El Paso's health information exchange). Jon is currently a board member of the El Paso Downtown Management District and FEMAP Foundation, non-profit philanthropy that provides funding for a hospital system and nursing school in Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua. Jon completed his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science at the University of Arizona and his Master of Public Administration at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). He is currently enrolled in the

Doctor of Science (DSc) Healthcare Administration program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB).



Linda Lawson, DNP, RN, NEA-BC
Hospitals of Providence

Dr. Linda Lawson, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, is the Chief Nursing Officer for The Hospitals of Providence Transmountain Campus and is the Group CNO for The Hospitals of Providence in El Paso, Texas. Linda is a 2012 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Executive Nurse Fellow and a member of the action learning team from the RWJF ENF 2012 cohort focused on addressing bullying and incivility in Healthcare. She is a member of the Texas Team, an action coalition of the initiative on the future of nursing to assist in actualizing the Initiative on the Future of Nursing (IFN) goals by 2020, and is co-chair of the Upper Rio Grande Region of the Texas Team. Linda is a Magnet and a Pathway to Excellence Appraiser for the American Nurses Credentialing Center's (ANCC) Magnet Recognition Program. She serves as chair of Senator Jose Rodriguez's healthcare subcommittee, and is a clinical assistant professor at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso Gayle Grieve Hunt School of Nursing. Linda is board certified as an Advanced Nurse Executive (NEA-BC). She earned her undergraduate degree in nursing from the University of Texas at El Paso, her master's degree in nursing leadership from the University of Massachusetts at Boston, and her Doctor of Nurse Practice in Executive Nurse Leadership from Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in Lubbock, Texas.



Jose Luna, MD, MBA
Centro San Vicente

Dr. Luna is currently working as a primary care provider at Centro San Vicente, focusing on patients recently released from incarceration, those with substance use disorders, and those infected with hepatitis C. He previously served as CEO of Centro San Vicente, interim CEO and Medical Director of the Thomas Cares outpatient clinics for the El Paso County Hospital District, Medical Director at Providence Primary Care Clinics, Chairman of the Department of Community Medicine, and Assistant Clinical Professor for Texas Tech School of Medicine during which he was the recipient of "Outstanding Faculty Teaching Award" presented by the Department of Family Medicine. Dr. Luna also was in the National Hispanic Medical Association's Leadership Class of 2000. In 2004, he earned his MBA from Regis University and completed his residency in Family Medicine in 1983 from the University of New Mexico. Dr. Luna has served on numerous community boards; such as, the El Paso County Hospital Board of Managers, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, El Paso Symphony, El Paso First Health Plan, Hispanic Leadership Institute, El Paso Empowerment Zone, Careers Centers of Texas, and as advisory board member of the UTEP School of nursing. Throughout his career, Dr. Luna has received numerous awards and honors for his performance and visionary leadership in the El Paso Community. Some of these awards include the Oak of Justice from Catholic Diocese of El Paso; Humanitarian of the Year from Project Amistad; Person of Vision from the El Paso Diabetes Association; Public Citizen of the Year Award from the El Paso Chapter of the Texas Association of Social Workers; Recognition for community service from the Mexican American Bar Association; Moving Forward Award, from the El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and McDonald's Hispano Triunfador. As a co-founder of the Social Justice and Equity department at Centro San Vicente, he has been leading efforts to expand access to

health care equity for various populations including minorities, those recently released from incarceration, LGBT community and those suffering from substance abuse disorders.



[Kristina Mena, MSPH, PhD](#)
[University of Texas, Houston School of Public Health](#)

Kristina D. (Crabtree) Mena, MSPH, PhD is the Dean of the El Paso Campus of University of Texas – Houston School of Public Health (UTHealth). She is Associate Professor and Program Head of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences for all campuses of UTHealth’s six-campus structure. Dr. Mena earned a BA in Biology and English at Franklin College (Indiana), a MSPH at the University of South Florida, a PhD in environmental microbiology and epidemiology at The University of Arizona, and completed a Post-Doctoral Fellowship at Kansas State University in the Food Animal Health & Management Center. Dr. Mena has over 25 years of experience addressing disease transmission through communities using risk assessment and epidemiological studies. She conducted the risk assessment that informed mitigation strategies for athletes at the 2016 Olympics in Rio. She is currently evaluating the health risks of children playing on beaches impacted by oil spills. To further NASA’s Mars exploration goals, as well as support President Trump’s launch of the United States Space Force, Dr. Mena completed the design of a health risk-based mechanism for NASA that will allow flight crew to grow food in space. Dr. Mena recently completed second terms on both the USEPA Chartered Science Advisory Board and the USEPA Drinking Water Committee, serving under both Obama and Trump presidential administrations. She is also an Expert Panelist for the National Water Research Institute. She is published in the peer-reviewed literature in addressing the assessment and mitigation of disease risk, and an invited speaker at national and international conferences. In addition, she has provided consulting throughout the United States — as well as in Germany and Australia — regarding food manufacturing, medical waste treatment technologies, and water reuse practices. Locally, Dr. Mena is Vice Chair of the El Paso Public Service Board and serves roles within other community organizations.

[Dr. Edward Michelson](#)
[Texas Tech University, El Paso](#)
Bio Forthcoming

[COL Neil Nelson](#)
[William Beaumont Army Medical Center](#)
Bio Forthcoming



[Commissioner Vincent Perez](#)
[County Government](#)

Vincent Perez has been a long time resident and active community member of the El Paso county area. Vince graduated from Bel Air High School, and then went on to earn his undergraduate degree from the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. After earning his master’s degree in Government from the Georgetown University, he began his work in public service. Prior to his current position as County Commissioner of El Paso County, Vince worked in the U.S. House of Representatives as a Communications Director for the 16th Congressional District of Texas. Vincent Perez was elected to the El Paso County Commissioners Court in November of 2012. As the County Commissioner of Precinct 3, he represents the more than 200,000 residents that live in the Lower Valley and East

El Paso County. Vince, has spearheaded a wide variety of initiatives and policy reforms in the areas of criminal justice, budget management, quality of life improvement, transportation and historic preservation. In 2016 Vince Perez was named the 2016 National County Leader of the Year for his work and success in passing critical reforms to the local criminal justice system. He is the current chair of El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization's Transportation Policy Board as well as the current chair of the Board of Directors for the El Paso Central Appraisal District (Chair). He is also a member of the Secretary of State's Texas Border Trade Advisory Committee, and the El Paso County Purchasing Board.



Mario Rascon, MD, MHCM
El Paso County Office of the Medical Examiner

Dr. Rascon has been the Chief Medical Examiner for El Paso County, TX since 2014, overseeing the medicolegal death investigation agency trusted with of scrutinizing sudden, unexpected, unexplained, or violent deaths in El Paso. Dr. Rascon is an Assistant Professor of pathology at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) El Paso and teaches students from the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine (PLFSOM). He received his MD degree from the Autonomous University of Chihuahua, and he completed post-graduate training in pathology at Northwell Health System in New York, followed by a fellowship in forensic pathology at the University of New Mexico. He obtained his Master in Health Care Management from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public

Health, and is a fellow of the College of American Pathologists and of the National Association of Medical Examiners.

Representative Claudia Rodriguez
City Government
Bio Forthcoming



Jeff Schuster, MD
El Paso Children's Hospital

Jeffrey D. Schuster, MD is a fourth-generation physician from El Paso. He is a pediatric cardiologist in private practice. Dr. Schuster is the Chief Medical Officer at El Paso Children's Hospital. Dr. Schuster graduated with a MD from the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. His pediatric training was at the University Medical Branch in Galveston and cardiology fellowships were at the University of Florida, and Northwestern University in Chicago. Dr. Schuster practices at every hospital in El Paso. He has a clinical appointment in the Department of Pediatrics at Texas Tech-El Paso.



Emma Schwartz, MPH
Medical Center of the Americas Foundation

Emma Wollschlager Schwartz is President of the Medical Center of the Americas (MCA) Foundation. The MCA developed the region's first biomedical incubator: the Cardwell Collaborative (60,000 sf) and the first free-standing mental health clinic for the VA (33,000 sf). The MCA also works to harness a Life Sciences industry for the region through its Innovation Center; BIO El Paso-Juarez, representing the bi-national medical device manufacturing industry; MCA Clinical Trials Consortium; MCA Health Care Think Tank; and STEM camps. Before the MCA, Ms. Schwartz worked in healthcare management, revenue cycle improvement, strategic planning and regulatory compliance for a variety of healthcare companies in Texas, Hawaii, Oregon and California. Ms. Schwartz's is on the boards of WestStar Bank, Progress321, Workforce Solutions Borderplex and Borderplex Alliance, as well as on the CPRIT Product Development Advisory Committee (PDAC) and co-chair of El Paso's chapter of Stanford OVAL. Formerly, she served on the board of the PDN Center of Hope and the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas' Emerging Leaders Council. In 2016, Ms. Schwartz was inducted into the El Paso Business Hall of Fame, and she was named 2017's El Pasoan of the Year. In October 2019, Governor Greg Abbott appointed Ms. Schwartz to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) for a term that expires in August 2025. Ms. Schwartz received her BA in Human Biology concentrating in Comparative Health Policy from Stanford University and her MPH in Health Services Management from UCLA, where she was a Foley & Lardner Fellow.



Michael Woods, PhD
Burrell College

Michael E. Woods, PhD is an Associate Professor in the Department of Physiology & Pathology at the Burrell College of Osteopathic Medicine in Las Cruces, New Mexico where he also serves as the Director of Research Laboratories in the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs. Dr. Woods earned a B.S. in Microbiology from Texas A&M University and a Ph.D. in Experimental Pathology from the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston. He was an Association of Public Health Labs Emerging Infectious Disease Post-Doctoral Research Fellow in the Division of Vector-borne Infectious Diseases at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Prior to joining Burrell College, Dr. Woods was a scientific staff member in the Chemical and Biological Threat Awareness Program, Global Security Principal Directorate at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory where he worked on issues relevant to biodefense. Dr. Woods also earned a Certificate in National Security Affairs from the Bush School of Government & Public Service at Texas A&M University in 2015. Dr. Woods grew up in Las Cruces and is honored to have had the opportunity to return and contribute to the region's future.

Support Team

Nicole Ferrini, Chief Resilience Officer, Director of Community and Human Development, City of El Paso

Betsy Keller, Chief Administrator, County Administration, El Paso County

Joaquin Rodriguez, Senior Policy Adviser, Commissioner Vince Perez, El Paso County Precinct 3

Karla Mack, Principal Research Scientist, Battelle Memorial Institute

Tanya Maslak, Principal Research Scientist, Battelle Memorial Institute

Jessica Ruble, Principal Research Scientist, Battelle Memorial Institute

DRAFT

Executive Summary

Insights and leadership from regional experts who understand the public health threat, as well as unique characteristics of El Paso, are essential to formulate recommendations for reopening El Paso in a way that reduces health risk for everyone and prepares for the next public health crisis. As such, the El Paso United COVID-19 Transition Task Force resolution was set forth and passed on May 17, 2020 by the County of El Paso, Texas. The mission of the COVID-19 Task Force is to recommend strategies that decision-makers may consider as they work to protect population health and well-being of the Paso del Norte Region from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Task Force members synthesized city and county information to create evidence-based, data-driven, and actionable recommendations for government officials to reopen El Paso, respond to the COVID-19 crisis, and prepare for future public health threats. As a result, the members put forth these recommendations for consideration. Table i summarizes 18 short-term recommendations that should be implemented within 30 days of issuing this report. Mid- and long-term recommendations are forthcoming; these recommendations should be implemented within 6 and 18 months, respectively, of issuing this report.

Table i. Summary of Recommendations and Required Capabilities

THEME	RECOMMENDATIONS	TIMEFRAME		
		Short	Mid	Long
Overarching	Create a COVID-specific scorecard using available data			
	Implement recommendations in a regional, cross-sector, public-private, collaborative way using available resources			
Preparedness	Develop and disseminate school reopening plans			
	Provide performance improvement reports			
	Integrate and strengthen communication across border health agencies			
	Initiate a process to develop a model and strategic plan to address future public health organization, funding, resources, and staffing			
Data	Increase accessibility and quality of data			
	Implement surveillance studies to assess community transmission and prevalence of COVID-19, as well as create a predictive tool			
Testing and Contact Tracing	Expand testing resources to ensure accessibility, quick turnaround times, and demand			
	Support testing strategy development for private businesses and schools			
	Expand contact tracing capabilities by leveraging partnerships			
	Coordinate community members' ability to access testing resources using a patient navigation model			
	Incorporate other pathogen testing at current testing sites			
Communication	Institute a cross-sector collaborative partnership to create a communication strategy			
	Centralize and coordinate COVID-19 information and health communication resources			

THEME	RECOMMENDATIONS	TIMEFRAME		
		Short	Mid	Long
	Partner with community health workers to create a communication outreach strategy			
	Promote modelling of public health behaviors by various community leaders			
	Establish a process for residents and stakeholders to provide input on pandemic response and for the government to take under advisement			
Timeframe Key:				
Short-Term: Recommendation should be implemented within the next 30 days of issuing report.		Mid-Term: Recommendation should be implemented within 6 months of issuing report.		Long-Term: Recommendation should be implemented within 18 months of issuing report.

DRAFT

1. Introduction

1.1 Paso del Norte Region

The Paso del Norte region is an intersection of resources, capital, labor, and culture, serving over 2.5 million people and spanning two countries—the United States (U.S.) and Mexico—and three states—Texas, New Mexico, and Chihuahua. The region has six international points of entry and connection between the U.S. and Mexico, including the Bridge of the Americas, the Ysleta International (Zaragoza) Bridge, the Paso del Norte (Santa Fe Street) Bridge, and the Stanton Street Bridge, the Marcelino Serna Bridge, and the Santa Teresa port of entry. In 2018, El Paso point of entry reported over 800,000 trucks, more than 12 million cars, more than 22 million passengers, and 7 million pedestrians crossing the borders. The region is a major center for manufacturing, including automobiles and automobile components, electronics, textiles, and medical equipment. The region plays an important role in international trade, serving as the largest port of entry on the U.S.-Mexico border, with over \$79 billion in trade occurring in this region in 2019. The U.S. region includes areas in Texas (El Paso and Hudspeth Counties) and New Mexico (Dona Ana, Luna, and Otero Counties), and the Mexican state of Chihuahua is home to Ciudad Juárez. The El Paso-Juárez surrounding area is the second largest bi-national metropolitan areas on the Mexico-U.S. border (second to San Diego and Tijuana), with El Paso county serving as home to 839,238 individuals as of July 1, 2019 and Juárez having an estimated population of 1.5 million reported in 2019.

1.2 SARS-CoV-2

In late 2019, a novel coronavirus, causing severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV-2) emerged, eventually spreading to over 117 countries, and causing a global pandemic. On March 4, 2020, the first locally acquired presumptive positive case in Texas was identified and laboratory confirmed as positive on March 9, 2020. On March 19, 2020, Texas Governor Greg Abbott declared a statewide public health disaster as the virus spread, authorizing use of all resources necessary to respond to the disease known as COVID-19. In response to the emerging crisis, the Governor of Texas, the Texas Department of Health and Human Services, and El Paso city and county government issued a series of orders to slow the spread of the disease, minimize impact to the healthcare system, and ensure safety and health of El Pasoans. These orders included physical distancing measures, limiting non-essential travel, and closing businesses and schools. Furthermore, on March 21, 2020, the U.S. and Mexico entered a joint initiative to restrict non-essential travel along the U.S.-Mexico border, which has been most recently extended through at least July 21. Travelers may be subject to health screenings, including temperature checks and may be denied admission if the purpose of their visit is determined to be non-essential.

Timeline	
March 11	World Health Organization classifies COVID-19 as pandemic.
March 13	US declares federal emergency. El Paso declares local emergency.
March 19	Texas declares statewide public health disaster.

1.3 SARS-CoV-2 Impact on El Paso

The first presumptive case in El Paso was identified on March 13, 2020. As of July 14, 2020, over 9,357 positive cases have been identified and 157 deaths have occurred, with over 4,000 of those cases identified during the first two weeks of July 2020. In general, cases occur at an equal rate between males and females. And, while those aged 20–60 years have the highest

case incidence, most COVID-related deaths occurred in individuals aged 60–90. Many individuals that died from COVID-19 also had underlying conditions, such as hypertension (61%), diabetes (46%), and oncology (6%).

1.4 SARS-CoV-2 Impact on Doña Ana County

The first confirmed case in Doña Ana County in southern New Mexico was reported on March 20, 2020. As of July 13, 2020, the New Mexico Department of Health reported 1,487 confirmed cases and 11 deaths in Doña Ana County. Cases in Doña Ana County have been slightly more skewed towards females (53%, vs. 47% male). Almost one quarter of cases (24%) are age 20–29 years, but the majority of deaths have occurred in those in older age groups. Among the zip codes in southern New Mexico that border El Paso County, there have been a total of 603 documented cases.

1.5 SARS-CoV-2 Impact on Ciudad Juárez

The first confirmed case in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico was reported by Chihuahua public health officials on March 17, 2020. As of July 14, 2020, the Mexican government reported 3,235 confirmed cases and 566 deaths in Juárez. Cases in Juárez have been slightly skewed more towards males (56%, vs. 44% female). The majority of cases in Juárez span an age range of 25–64 years, but the majority of deaths occur in those aged 40–79 and are primarily male (63%). Co-morbidities among those that have died from SARS-CoV-2 in Juárez include hypertension (49%), diabetes (38%), and obesity (30%). It is important to note that testing and reporting may be ongoing challenges that impact the potential accuracy of the situation across many communities in Mexico and the U.S.

1.6 Potential for Additional Public Health Stressors During COVID-19 Response

It is important to consider additional public health impacts the community may be facing during COVID-19 response. For example, additional anxieties and stressors due to COVID-19 (e.g., from unemployment, social distancing, or health of loved-ones) may result in increased mental and behavioral health impacts. Data are also indicating that historically underserved populations (e.g., people of color, lower socio-economic status) are at higher risk for negative health outcomes from SARS-CoV-2 in many communities across the U.S. Furthermore, local and regional response to SARS-CoV-2, as well as building longer-term preparedness against potential future waves, can also be impacted by a number of other socio-environmental factors. For example, planning and response to extreme weather events, such as extreme heat, or other regionally-relevant natural hazards could be impacted by ongoing SARS-CoV-2 response. More specifically, typical public health strategies for extreme heat (e.g., cooling centers, public pools and water parks) may need to be re-examined while trying to promote social distancing and use of masks. Lastly, additional stress on healthcare capacity, including equipment, resources, and personal protective equipment (PPE), may need to be planned for as El Paso enters influenza season if subsequent waves of SARS-CoV-2 are still occurring.

1.7 Origins of Task Force

In order for El Paso health officials and government leaders to slow and reduce transmission, it is necessary to understand and contain real-time spread of COVID-19 in the community through surveillance, testing, contact tracing, isolation of cases, and quarantine of contacts. This is especially important to protect high-risk groups, which include individuals that have certain medical conditions, live in congregate housing, provide care to COVID-19 patients, and work in essential or public-facing businesses.

Insights and leadership of local experts who understand the medical and public health threats, as well as unique characteristics of El Paso, is essential to formulate recommendations on responding to the crisis, for reopening El Paso in a safe, equitable way, and to prepare for the next public health crisis. As such, the El Paso United COVID-19 Transition Task Force resolution was set forth and passed on May 17, 2020 by El Paso County Commissioners Court.

1.8 Task Force Mission

The mission of the Task Force is to recommend strategies that decision-makers may consider as they work to protect population health and well-being of residents in the Paso del Norte Region during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.9 Task Force Guiding Principles

Recommendations from the Task Force are based on guiding principles centered around evidence-based decision-making, equity, preparedness, resilience, and transparency. The Task Force created its recommendations based on these principles.

Evidence-Based Decision-Making

The Task Force will rely on evidence-based decision-making, drawing upon best practices and the guidance of subject matter experts in recommending strategies that are responsive to new information.

Equity

The Task Force will recommend strategies that are inclusive of all populations in the Paso del Norte region and be mindful of people that are at high risk of infection or more vulnerable to adverse outcomes.

Preparedness

The Task Force will recommend approaches in anticipation of subsequent waves of the virus and future phases of the pandemic.

Resilience

The Task Force will consider recommendations that will increase the region's capacity to survive and thrive as future public health challenges present themselves.

Transparency

The Task Force will strive for transparency in presenting meaningful and informative data to the public and will present its conclusions openly.

1.10 Task Force Priorities

Keeping in mind the intent of the Task Force and the overall objectives of understanding and containing the spread of COVID-19, while enhancing the public health system for future emergencies, the Task Force is comprised of four subcommittees — Communication, Data, Preparedness, and Testing and Contact Tracing. These subcommittees meet weekly to identify evidence-based, data-driven, and actionable recommendations in their respective areas. A series of appendices serves to delve into each recommendation in more detail, as well as highlight the importance of each topic area.

2. Methodology

The Task Force consists of medical and public health experts, city and county government officials, academia, and non-governmental organizations. The Task Force members meet weekly to listen to presentations on relevant topics, including employment and labor law, data collection and analysis, and testing resources, as well as in smaller subcommittees to formulate recommendations, which are then discussed among and approved by the larger Task Force.

The Task Force members met with a subset of community stakeholders (public schools, private business operators) and disseminated a survey to collect information that informed some of its recommendations. In addition, the members synthesized information from multiple sources — city and county data requests, peer-reviewed and open-source literature, research on COVID-19, and experts — to create evidence-based, data-driven recommendations for government officials to reopen El Paso, respond to the current COVID-19 crisis, and prepare for future public health threats. The members reviewed the recommendations and formed consensus before putting forth these recommendations to the city and county.

The Task Force will submit recommendations with suggested timeframes in which to implement these recommendations. The implementation timeframe is based on urgency of the topic and the resources required to effectively execute the recommendation. These timeframes include:

- Short-term recommendations, which should be implemented within 30 days of issuing the report
- Mid-term recommendations, which should be implemented within 6 months of issuing the report
- Long-term recommendations, which should be implemented within 18 months of issuing the report

3. Recommendations

3.1 Overarching

A summary of overarching recommendations discussed across all key areas is outlined in Table 1. Appendix A contains detailed information on how to implement the recommendations.

Table 1. Summary of Overarching Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS		TIMEFRAME		
		Short	Mid	Long
1.	Create a COVID-specific scorecard using available data			
2.	Implement recommendations in a regional, cross-sector, public-private, collaborative way using available resources			

3.1.1 Recommendation #1: Create a COVID-specific scorecard using available data

Existing COVID-19 data requires context so leaders can assess the current COVID-19 response impacts, identify existing risks, prioritize high-impact mitigation strategies, and guide the reopening strategy. Harvard Global Institute led a collaboration of top scientists to create a unified set of metrics, with defined risk levels, to help communities assess their current response efforts and facilitate data-driven decision-making. These metrics are framed within a [scorecard](#), which can be modified for El Paso by tailoring the existing metrics and redefining

parameters based on factors specific to El Paso. The Task Force will provide an initial draft of the El Paso-specific metrics. These adopted metrics are forthcoming.

Consider creating two scorecards — a public-facing scorecard that provides a high-level summary of the data, and a more detailed scorecard for decision-makers. The scorecard should be updated regularly (on a daily or weekly basis), leverage existing health impact assessments of the border region, and align to reopening phases based on key progress indicators. The scorecard indicators serve as progression/regression markers and, when aligned with phases of the reopening strategy, can indicate whether El Paso is ready to move onto the next phase of reopening or whether additional public health measures are required. The scorecard can be used in conjunction with the Texas Medical Association [risk levels](#). The scorecard’s data source should be consistent and reliant. Currently, COVID-19 data differs between state and city/county numbers. This difference should be reviewed for discrepancies and reconciled.

The scorecard could transition as a public health (Healthy Community) scorecard, measuring community health and assessing future health goals. It could also help set the framework for addressing community resiliency and be used to build/track public health outcomes beyond the pandemic.

3.1.2 Recommendation #2: Implement recommendations in a regional, cross-sector, public-private, collaborative way using available resources

The recommendations within this report require a multifaceted approach to successfully implement. This approach should leverage regional, cross-sector, and public-private partners to ensure all available resources and expertise are leveraged, and that recommendations are implemented in a comprehensive, timely, and cost-effective manner with optimal buy-in from key stakeholders.

3.2 Preparedness

A summary of the recommendations related to preparedness is outlined in Table 2. Appendix B contains detailed information on how to implement the recommendations.

Table 2. Summary of Preparedness Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS		TIMEFRAME		
		Short	Mid	Long
1.	Develop and disseminate school reopening plans			
2.	Provide performance improvement reports			
3.	Integrate and strengthen communication across border health agencies			
4.	Initiate a process to develop a model and strategic plan to address future public health organization, funding, resources, and staffing			

3.2.1 Recommendation #1: Develop and disseminate school reopening plans

Public and private schools need assistance in developing their health and safety reopening plans, including modifications to class size, physical plant, and food services; alternatives to extracurricular activities; and policies on quarantine, isolation, testing, and masking. Current recommendations continue to be broad, with limited harmonization between regional public, private, and charter school districts, which can cause confusion and non-compliance with families who work at and/or attend different schools across the region. Much of the federal and state guidance addresses curriculum delivery options but does not comprehensively address

health and safety measures. The community is unsure of next steps due to lack of guidance from federal, state, and local authorities, and absence of a communication plan that conveys the notification process if there are positive cases within a school.

The objective is to harmonize a mechanism for school preparedness across the region, tailoring state and national guidance for local needs. Showing alignment and success with short-term recommendations will build public trust and can then convey to long-term solutions. Implementation of this recommendation would require city/county public health and Task Force coordination with school officials, parents, and students to tailor the reopening plans. The plan should include educational-based guidelines underpinned by health safeguards.

School officials and community members need specific health and safety recommendations for school reopening plans. A Task Force subcommittee comprised of public health professionals, community stakeholders, and public, private, and charter schools should be assembled to coordinate a process that leads to specific recommendations, tied to measurable triggers and allows for review of safeguards against public health evidence.

Additionally, the Task Force will seek to align public/private/charter school systems by harmonizing a process for unified messages and common themes. Surveillance should be established within schools to determine transmission rates. Tailored training/education aimed at teachers, students, and parents should be considered prior to reopening and in-person instruction.

3.2.2 Recommendation #2: Provide performance improvement reports

Use an independent entity to prepare a progress report to identify and address fundamental issues faced during the pandemic and lessons learned during the first four months of the pandemic. Follow-up with additional reports as needed and/or at defined intervals (e.g., at each transition phase). Consider after-action and performance reporting strategies that integrate input from stakeholders.

3.2.3 Recommendation #3: Integrate and strengthen communication across border health agencies

Communication between public health and medical providers across borders is informal and inconsistent. El Paso must consider creating stronger, formal ties with Juarez by institutionalizing a structure for information exchange. This structure will facilitate an understanding of public health activities across borders, identify best practices (local, national, international) and lessons learned, and current health risks.

3.2.4 Recommendation #4: Initiate a process to develop a model and strategic plan to address future public health organization, funding, resources, and staffing

Public health organizations have varying priorities and must often execute their broad mission with limited resources, including funding and staffing. Oftentimes, more-immediate issues take precedence over long-term planning and preparedness, consuming what little resources are available. As a result, preparedness and response planning efforts may be pushed to the future, when the budget and resources can accommodate these initiatives. In the next 30 days, the city/county should begin to plan for a robust benchmarking and strategic planning process that will ensure a strong, regionally coordinated, and comprehensive public/private response to future public health crises. Begin identifying key partners and resources to develop the strategic plan and model. Preparedness starts with having a strong organizational structure (to include

testing capacity, hospital surge capacity, and public health communications) and adequate funding for public health roles. This planning should consider partnerships and laboratory/epidemiology expansion and scalability. Consider examining benchmarks in cities with similar demographics (e.g., San Antonio, Brownsville, San Diego) to develop preparedness recommendations specific to El Paso.

3.3 Data

A summary of the recommendations related to data is outlined in Table 3. Appendix C contains detailed information on how to implement the recommendations.

Table 3. Summary of Data Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS		TIMEFRAME		
		Short	Mid	Long
1.	Increase accessibility and quality of data			
2.	Implement surveillance studies to assess community transmission and prevalence of COVID-19, as well as create a predictive tool			

3.3.1 Recommendation #1: Increase accessibility and quality of data

Ensure partners within the healthcare industry and medical sector have access to the data they need to effectively treat patients, make decisions, and understand the current state of the COVID-19 outbreak. In addition, ensure public and private testing entities provide high quality data that reflects true numbers of tests performed, positive and negative test results, and certain performance metrics as outlined below and in the scorecard (Table D1 in Appendix D).

Increase accessibility of information to healthcare providers and decision-makers. Enhance information coming back from private testing to obtain and better understand the true number of tests conducted, and to track data changes over time. Methods to increase data accessibility include the following:

- Utilize third-party resources to understand how testing data can be collated and shared
- Monitor data surrounding demand for testing at the site level
 - Collect and provide data surrounding appointment vs walk-up clinics
 - Track time of request and wait time for testing appointments, per geographical area, along with other demographics (e.g., high-risk and vulnerable populations)
- Utilize a health information exchange, specifically, the Paso del Norte Health Information Exchange (PHIX), to allow for transparency of test results across different health agencies
- Leverage central hubs of testing information and ensure private providers can access data
- Clearly identify and report on a set of standard and universal data points that can be used as COVID progress indicators, including test rate positivity on a rolling 7-day period
- Ensure that historical testing data (current and cumulative), delineated by CDC weeks, can be reviewed by public health officials and decision-makers
- Make data publicly available and provide free online tools for analysis (e.g., Tableau, Power BI)

3.3.2 Recommendation #2: Implement surveillance studies to assess community transmission and prevalence of COVID-19, as well as create a predictive tool

Strongly recommend creation of a surveillance program within the Health Department, or with existing community partners (e.g., UT Houston School of Public Health in El Paso, UTEP, TTUHSC, Texas A&M) to execute surveillance studies that assess community transmission rate and prevalence of SARS-CoV-2. Use the data to create a predictive tool. First, use antibody testing to determine prevalence of COVID-19 in the community and evaluate the utility of serological surveillance based on current scientific evidence. Second, conduct a random sampling study using a community grid system to assess COVID-19 prevalence and identify communities requiring additional public health resources (i.e., testing and tracing). Third, work with partners collecting wastewater for surveillance of zip codes that appear to have low incidence of COVID-19 cases and determine background levels of COVID-19 and any increases in these levels to serve as an early indicator of spread. And fourth, develop surveillance of school-aged students and determine transmission rate.

3.4 Testing and Contact Tracing

A summary of the recommendations related to testing and contact tracing is outlined in Table 4. Appendix D contains detailed information on how to implement the recommendations.

Table 4. Summary of Testing and Contact Tracing Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS		TIMEFRAME		
		Short	Mid	Long
1.	Expand testing resources to ensure accessibility, quick turnaround times, and demand			
2.	Support testing strategy development for private businesses and schools			
3.	Expand contact tracing capabilities by leveraging partnerships			
4.	Coordinate community members' ability to access testing resources using a patient navigation model			
5.	Incorporate other pathogen testing at current testing sites			

3.4.1 Recommendation #1: Expand testing resources to ensure accessibility, quick turnaround times, and demand

Expand availability and accessibility of current private/city/county testing resources (e.g., hours and location) to ensure symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals can receive testing appointments within 24 hours of initial request and results within 24–48 hours of specimen collection (see scorecard for testing metrics by phase, Appendix D). Ensure testing capabilities accommodate rural areas, high incidence areas, and vulnerable populations, including undocumented workers. Arrangements with additional private testing partners may be required to ensure testing scalability in high-demand situations, when testing supplies and capacity of individual labs may become constrained.

3.4.2 Recommendation #2: Support testing strategy development for private businesses and schools

In a resource-constrained environment, prioritize testing by vulnerable population and job function per reopening phase. Support private business owners with their testing needs by coordinating a testing strategy based on business size and function. Also support regional pre-K through higher education schools with their testing needs based on size and situation.

Coordinate with employers and schools to ensure adequate and timely data sharing and reporting of test results. Include guidance on how to interpret test results and subsequent response actions.

3.4.3 Recommendation #3: Expand contact tracing capabilities by leveraging partnerships

Work with public health partners across the state (e.g., UT Houston School of Public Health in El Paso, UTEP, TTUHSC, Texas A&M) to coordinate contact tracing initiatives and resources (see scorecard in Appendix D for contact tracing metrics by phase).

3.4.4 Recommendation #4: Coordinate community members’ ability to access testing and treatment resources using a patient navigation model

Create a centralized capability to improve communication of testing resource options to the community and coordinate community members’ ability to access these testing resources in an efficient and timely manner. Symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals should have access to specimen collection within 24 hours of their initial request and results within 24–48 hours of specimen collection at testing centers. Individuals should be able to get tested at locations that are closest to them and on days and times that accommodate individual needs (see scorecard in Appendix D for metrics by phase). Patients should also be given information on which medical facilities and providers are treating COVID-19 patients.

3.4.5 Recommendation #5: Incorporate other pathogen testing at current testing sites

Expand city/county testing center capabilities to accommodate influenza, *Haemophilus influenzae*, *streptococcus*, *meningococcus*, pertussis, and other seasonal infectious diseases. COVID-19 symptomology is similar to these common infectious diseases. As seasonal transmission of common infectious diseases begins, symptomatic patients will require a means of seeking care and treatment. However, many physicians are not allowing symptomatic patients in their offices, utilizing telemedicine instead. In order to accurately diagnose these patients and provide them with appropriate treatments (and to avoid an increase in defensive medicine and over treatment), testing for these other seasonal infectious diseases will be of paramount importance.

3.5 Communication

A summary of the recommendations related to communication is outlined in Table 5. Appendix E contains detailed information on how to implement the recommendations.

Table 5. Summary of Communication Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS		TIMEFRAME		
		Short	Mid	Long
1.	Institute a cross-sector collaborative partnership to create a communication strategy			
2.	Centralize and coordinate COVID-19 information and health communication resources			
3.	Partner with community health workers to create a communication outreach strategy			
4.	Promote modelling of public health behaviors by various community leaders			

5.	Establish a process for residents and stakeholders to provide input on pandemic response and for the government to take under advisement			
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3.5.1 Recommendation #1: Institute a cross-sector collaborative partnership to create a communication strategy

Commission and fund a trusted neutral community organization to manage a cross-sector collaborative partnership that will develop a high-level communication strategy that results in a comprehensive Health Communication effort.

Promoting and protecting the health of El Pasoans requires science-based methods to develop an effective communication strategy. Public health communication is grounded in multiple disciplines, including health education, marketing, public relations, psychology, informatics, and epidemiology. As such, a cross-sector collaborative is needed to develop a communication strategy to promote health communication efforts across El Paso and the Paso del Norte region. The collaborative should meet regularly, share information, and adjust the communication strategy based on new information. In the short-term, the partisanship should:

1. Inventory existing regional communication resources and conduct a nation-wide rapid scan of other communication resources and strategies.
2. Agree on an effective COVID-19 health communication strategy for community health benefit. This includes strategy that promotes wearing masks, social distancing, and other behaviors that reduce the risk of virus transmission, target audiences with relevant messages, and address children as potential asymptomatic carriers. Identify target population and behavior that needs to be addressed through messaging campaigns and then identify appropriate dissemination methods.
3. Agree on effective COVID-19 communication resources, such as a common symbol for wearing masks and social distancing, creating training videos on COVID-19 preventive measures as part of businesses onboarding process for new hires, and what it means to quarantine and how to do so effectively given various living and working situations.
4. Agree and advise on an effective COVID-19 information communication strategy. This includes providing advice about communicating factual public updates related to schools; transportation; retail environments; and government facilities. Also include factual COVID-19 information such as: updated government orders, testing locations and recommended procedures, contact tracing, outbreak locations, and epidemiological metrics. Coordinate the development of a data dashboard that can be disseminated to the community. Communicate data using rates versus only raw numbers; use a 7-day rolling average graphs for infection and hospitalization.

3.5.2 Recommendation #2: Centralize and coordinate COVID-19 information and health communication resources

The public requires a centralized, coordinated platform for accessing updated information relevant to COVID-19, including protective health measures, local ordinances, and resources. The site should contain links to community resources, like mental health counseling and rental assistance, which may be in high need during the pandemic. In addition, the site should have the ability to accept public recommendations and have personnel support to update the site regularly. The site should be promoted widely throughout the community. It may be possible to use existing websites (EPStrong.org and EPCOVID19.org), but ensure information is coordinated, messaging is consistent, and information is hyperlinked between the two sites, as well as any ancillary sites.

3.5.3 Recommendation #3: Partner with community health workers to create a communication outreach strategy

Create and implement a dynamic health communication outreach strategy in collaboration with home healthcare workers, promotoras, and medical providers benefiting those most at risk for COVID-19 complications, such as individuals with underlying health conditions.

Community health workers (CHWs) have access to populations that typical government channels may lack and have a unique ability to disseminate important public health information in an easily accessible way. CHWs share culture, ethnicity, language, and life experiences with the individuals they serve and are essential for providing culturally appropriate health education and information. The CHWs impact on community members they serve has shown to improve access to health services, foster a better understanding of the health and social service systems, enhance communication with health providers, and improve adherence to health recommendations. The cross-sector collaborative should incorporate CHWs into the communication strategy planning to ensure key messages are developed for community members served by CHWs, as well as strategize dissemination methods that meet the needs of this community.

3.5.4 Recommendation #4: Promote modelling of public health behaviors by various community leaders

Community leaders (e.g., elected, faith-based, business) should continue to model protective health behaviors essential for the safety of residents. For example, leadership should wear masks and social distance at public events to align with city orders.

Community leaders often model behavior for their constituents, whether those constituents are voters, members of a congregation, school, or business.

- Provide training to community leaders (e.g., government, faith-based, teachers, business operators, athletes) on COVID transmission and the importance of public health measures, such as masking and social distancing
- Create mutual compacts (e.g., “I took the pledge”) for leaders to sign and publish on social media
- Develop a PSA on wearing masks (model how and when to wear) and have different community leaders demonstrate these techniques
- Develop a PSA on testing/sample collection
- Understand the motivations driving certain behaviors and tailor messaging to address these motivations
- Identify leaders among youth (e.g., high profile musicians, athletes, chefs/restaurant owners) that can participate in messaging campaigns

3.5.5 Recommendation #5: Establish a process for residents and stakeholders to provide input on pandemic response and for the government to take under advisement

Understanding the concerns and needs of the community is important prior to governmental action. The cross-sector collaborative, identified in Recommendation #1, can work with elected officials and community leaders to hear from El Pasoans, clients, voters, students, and the medical community, among others, on their COVID-19 concerns and recommendations. Beyond

input for messaging campaigns, citizens need to be heard by decision-makers before orders are issued. Tasks to implement this recommendation includes:

- Create a citizen feedback form on the EPStrong.org website; make public aware of feedback opportunities
- Establish a medical and population health advisory group for the Health Authority
- Establish or continue to host virtual townhall meetings to listen
- Create and disseminate a survey

4. Partnerships and Key Stakeholders

Most of the Task Force recommendations require partnering with various organizations in order to ensure successful, timely, and efficient implementation. These stakeholders may include academia, non-governmental and non-profit organizations, Paso del Norte residents, and business operators or other private sector entities. The partnerships are highlighted in Table 6 below and described in greater detail in each appendix.

Table 6. Partner Responsibilities

RECOMMENDATION	PARTNER				
	City & County Government	Academia	NGOs & Non-Profit	Private Sector	Residents
Overarching #1					
Overarching #2					
Data #1					
Data #2					
Preparedness #1					
Preparedness #2					
Preparedness #3					
Preparedness #4					
Testing and Contact Tracing #1					
Testing and Contact Tracing #2					
Testing and Contact Tracing #3					
Testing and Contact Tracing #4					
Testing and Contact Tracing #5					
Communication #1					
Communication #2					
Communication #3					
Communication #4					
Communication #5					

Appendix A: Overarching Recommendations

Introduction

There were two recommendations that crosscut all other topic areas — the scorecard for monitoring progress of the pandemic as it relates to a phased reopening strategy and implementing recommendations in the report using a cross-collaborative approach.

Recommendations — Short-Term

Scorecard

There is a large amount of data concerning COVID-19 in El Paso, including case and death counts by age, race, gender, and pre-existing conditions, as well as hospitalization and testing rates. However, context around this data — how COVID-19 is impacting the community, over time — is needed to ensure the data is interpreted appropriately, risk is understood, and leaders can make informed decisions in a rapidly changing environment. A scorecard, consisting of key indicators and metrics, estimates risk of disease spread within a community and can provide context around existing data. Scorecards provides a framework to guide evidence-based decision-making and help leadership assess the current COVID-19 response impacts, identify existing risks, prioritize high-impact mitigation strategies, and guide the reopening strategy.

Indicators and Metrics

Scorecards use a series of indicators and metrics that help leaders interpret risk and make proactive decisions. Indicators and metrics provide a method for quantifying performance or, with regard to COVID-19, providing an indication of current risk and the ability to move to next phase of reopening. Ultimately, the scorecard acts as a self-assessment tool for leaders to monitor the community's progress across all metrics in each phase and provide data-driven, transparent decisions on reopening.

A collaborative group of top scientists across the U.S. created a unified set of metrics, with defined risk levels, to help communities assess their current response efforts and facilitate data-driven decision-making. These metrics are framed within a [scorecard](#), which can serve as a model for the El Paso scorecard and be modified based on factors specific to El Paso (Figure 1). A recommended scorecard, with metrics specific to the El Paso community and Paso del Norte region, is forthcoming.

There are a number of metrics to consider, including:

- Infection rate, diagnostic test positivity rate, overall case count
- Community diagnostic testing rate, availability, timeliness
- Contact investigation effectiveness, rapidity, and workforce, as well as case management
- Isolation and quarantine facility availability
- Healthcare system and hospital readiness, ICU bed availability, use of crisis standards of care
- Availability of PPE in healthcare settings, as well as for emergency management agencies and essential service providers

The scorecard uses metrics, as outlined above, to assess a region’s ability to move to the next phase of their reopening strategy. The metrics are provided in a checklist format and the city/county can assess whether each metric is met or incomplete. As each metric is met/completed, the city/county can then consider moving to the next phase of its reopening strategy.

Recommendation #1: Create a COVID-specific scorecard using available data

Overarching	
Recommendation: Create a COVID-specific scorecard using available data.	
<p>Description: <i>Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</i></p> <p>Existing COVID-19 data requires context so leaders can assess the current COVID-19 response impacts, identify existing risks, prioritize high-impact mitigation strategies, and guide the reopening strategy. Harvard Global Institute led a collaboration of top scientists to create a unified set of metrics, with defined risk levels, to help communities assess their current response efforts and facilitate data-driven decision-making. These metrics are framed within a scorecard, which can be modified for El Paso by tailoring the existing metrics and redefining parameters based on factors specific to El Paso. The Task Force will provide an initial draft of the El Paso-specific metrics. These adopted metrics are forthcoming.</p> <p>Consider creating two scorecards — a public-facing scorecard that provides a high-level summary of the data, and a more detailed scorecard for decision-makers. The scorecard should be updated regularly (on a daily or weekly basis), leverage existing health impact assessments of the border region, and align to reopening phases based on key progress indicators. The scorecard indicators serve as progression/regression markers and, when aligned with phases of the reopening strategy, can indicate whether El Paso is ready to move onto the next phase of reopening or whether additional public health measures are required. The scorecard can be used in conjunction with the Texas Medical Association risk levels. The scorecard’s data source should be consistent and reliant. Currently, COVID-19 data differs between state and city/county numbers. This difference should be reviewed for discrepancies and reconciled.</p> <p>The scorecard could transition as a public health (Healthy Community) scorecard, measuring community health and assessing future health goals. It could also help set the framework for addressing community resiliency and be used to build/track public health outcomes beyond the pandemic.</p>	
<p>Assumptions: <i>Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data will be made available to the public • In the absence of data, recommendations will be made based on best practices, expertise, and known information • ICU capacity will not be used as a metric • Elected official willing to adopt and stick to the scorecard for making decisions on transitioning from one phase to another of the reopening strategy. 	
<p>Lead: <i>Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</i></p> <p>TBD</p>	<p>Partners: <i>Identify organizations that should support these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BorderRAC • Emergency Operations Center • City/county

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospitals • Testing sites • UT Houston • UTEP • Paso del Norte Health Foundation
<p>Required Capabilities: <i>Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data from city and county public health agencies • Data from Juarez and southern New Mexico • A stepwise approach should be identified to allow a fluid back-and-forth shift in recommendations • PPE and other necessary medical equipment and supplies (e.g., face coverings/masks) should be identified as a readiness factor; identify an algorithm to determine how much PPE is needed each week • A risk/benefit ratio to show level of risk and how activities are affected 	
<p>Data Indicators: <i>Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Infection/infection rate 7. Death counts 8. Hospitalization counts (admits, ICU, ventilators, capacity) 9. Testing 10. Contact tracing 11. https://www.covidlocal.org/guide/ 12. https://www.covidlocal.org/metrics/ 	
<p>Timeliness: <i>Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term</i></p> <p>Short-term</p>	

KEY METRICS	Phase 1	Thresholds To Enter Phase 2	Thresholds To Enter Phase 3	Thresholds To Enter Phase 4
Infection Rate	Maximum social-distancing	Sustained decline in daily cases for 21 consecutive days, as reflected in the 5-day rolling average < 10% of tests conducted are positive Current estimate of <25 cases per 100,000 population per day	Continued decline in daily cases < 3% of tests conducted are positive Current estimate of < 10 cases per 100,000 population per day	< 1% of tests conducted are positive Current estimate of < 1 case per 100,000 population per week
Diagnostic Testing & Surveillance	Maximum social-distancing	All symptomatic people, all asymptomatic high-risk individuals or contacts can access testing Tests are readily available for all essential personnel Majority of test results are returned within 48 hours Increasing number of tests per day	All symptomatic people, all asymptomatic high-risk individuals or contacts can access testing Tests are readily available for all essential personnel Majority of test results are returned within 24 hours Increasing number of tests per day, nearing sufficiency	All symptomatic people, all asymptomatic high-risk individuals or contacts, and anyone who requests a test/any physician who orders a test can access testing Tests are readily available for all essential personnel Majority of test results are returned within 24 hours Sufficient number of tests per day
Case & Contact Investigations	Maximum social-distancing	75% of close contacts are elicited and located within 48 hours At least 30 contact tracers per 100,000, as well as case managers, care resource coordinators, community health workers > 80% of new cases from identified contacts	90% of close contacts are elicited, located, tested within 24 hours At least 30 contact tracers per 100,000, as well as case managers, care resource coordinators, community health workers > 80% of new cases from identified contacts	95% of close contacts are elicited, located, tested within 24 hours At least 30 contact tracers per 100,000, as well as case managers, care resource coordinators, community health workers > 90% of new cases from identified contacts
Healthcare Readiness	Maximum social-distancing	At least 15% of existing ICU capacity is available to accommodate a surge in COVID-19 patients without resorting to crisis standards of care Sufficient PPE for majority healthcare facilities, at-risk facilities, essential personnel	At least 30% of existing ICU capacity is available to accommodate a surge in COVID-19 patients without resorting to crisis standards of care Sufficient PPE for majority healthcare facilities, at-risk facilities, essential personnel PPE reserve of at least 2-4 weeks	At least 30% of existing ICU capacity is available to accommodate a surge in COVID-19 patients without resorting to crisis standards of care Sufficient PPE for majority healthcare facilities, at-risk facilities, essential personnel PPE reserve of at least 90 days
Protecting At-Risk Populations	Maximum social-distancing	Sufficient testing, quarantine, isolation in long-term care facilities % of cases reported from long-term care facilities < 20% over last 28 days Local rapid response teams are available to respond to outbreak hotspots within 24 hours with sufficient PPE	Sufficient testing, quarantine, isolation in long-term care facilities % of cases reported from long-term care facilities < 10% over last 28 days Local rapid response teams are available to respond to outbreak hotspots within 24 hours with sufficient PPE	Sufficient testing, quarantine, isolation in long-term care facilities % of cases reported from long-term care facilities < 5% over last 28 days Local rapid response teams are available to respond to outbreak hotspots within 24 hours with sufficient PPE

Figure 1. Example of COVID-19 Scorecard Template with Adoptable Metrics

Cross-Collaborative Partnerships

A large effort will be required to implement the set of recommendations within this report. Leveraging a cross-sector team of individuals with different expertise will ensure the recommendations are implemented in a comprehensive, timely, and cost-effective manner while lessening the burden on overtaxed government officials. Each partner will apply their own resources, skills, and expertise, making up a collaborative of diverse points of view and facilitate buy-in from key stakeholders and end-users.

Recommendation #2: Implement recommendations in a regional, cross-sector, public-private, collaborative way using available resources

Overarching
Recommendation: Recommendations should be implemented in a regional, cross-sector, collaborative way using available resources, including public-private partnerships.
Description: <i>Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</i>
The recommendations within this report require a multifaceted approach to successfully implement. This approach should leverage regional, cross-sector, and public-private partners to ensure all available resources and expertise are leveraged, and that recommendations are implemented in a comprehensive, timely, and cost-effective manner with optimal buy-in from key stakeholders.
Assumptions: <i>Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners are willing to work together to implement recommendations • Partners will have time to participate in cross-sector collaborative • Cross-sector collaborative will be supported by government partners • Funding is available to implement recommendations 	
<p>Lead: <i>Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City/county 	<p>Partners: <i>Identify organizations that should support these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public/private testing entities • Academic partners • Foundations and other non-governmental organizations • Medical and health industry partners • Various public entities
<p>Required Capabilities: <i>Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD 	
<p>Data Indicators: <i>Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD 	
<p>Timeliness: <i>Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term</i></p> <p>Short-term, mid-term, and long-term</p>	

Appendix B: Preparedness Recommendations

Introduction

Preparedness

Preparedness is an important phase in emergency management and facilitates effective response and coordination of information and activities during an incident. Preparedness activities include planning, educating, training, and evaluating, all of which promote resiliency.

Preparedness Objectives and Recommendation Process

The objective of the Task Force was to create recommendations for preparedness activities that ensure an informed, comprehensive, coordinated, and effective response among all stakeholders within the El Paso community. Task Force members met weekly to discuss regional challenges and ongoing efforts to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, as well as future public health preparedness initiatives that would foster resiliency. Based on available data, best practices, and expertise from local, state, federal, and international public health entities, these recommendations are presented as short-term achievable outcomes over a 30-day period.

Recommendations — Short-Term

Recommendation #1: Develop and disseminate school reopening plans

Preparedness
<p>Recommendation: Develop and disseminate school reopening plans.</p>
<p>Description: <i>Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</i></p> <p>Public and private schools need assistance in developing their health and safety reopening plans, including modifications to class size, physical plant, and food services; alternatives to extracurricular activities; and policies on quarantine, isolation, testing, and masking. Current recommendations continue to be broad, with limited harmonization between regional public, private, and charter school districts, which can cause confusion and non-compliance with families who work at and/or attend different schools across the region. Much of the federal and state guidance addresses curriculum delivery options, but does not comprehensively address health and safety measures. The community is unsure of next steps due to lack of guidance from federal, state, and local authorities, and absence of a communication plan that conveys the notification process if there are positive cases within a school.</p> <p>The objective is to harmonize a mechanism for school preparedness across the region, tailoring state and national guidance for local needs. Showing alignment and success with short-term recommendations will build public trust and can then convey to long-term solutions. Implementation of this recommendation would require city/county public health and Task Force coordination with school officials, parents, and students to tailor the reopening plans. The plan should include educational-based guidelines underpinned by health safeguards.</p> <p>School officials and community members need specific health and safety recommendations for school reopening plans. A Task Force subcommittee comprised of public health professionals, community stakeholders, and public, private, and charter schools should be assembled to coordinate a process that leads to specific recommendations, tied to measurable triggers and allows for review of safeguards against public health evidence.</p>

<p>Additionally, the Task Force will seek to align public/private/charter school systems by harmonizing a process for unified messages and common themes. Surveillance should be established within schools to determine transmission rates. Tailored training/education aimed at teachers, students, and parents should be considered prior to reopening and in-person instruction.</p>	
<p>Assumptions: <i>Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools have PPE available for students/teachers/staff • Schools have access to funding to implement the necessary changes to the physical plant (e.g., hepafilter installation), classrooms (e.g., expansion of room size, installing plexiglass barriers) and other rooms, as well as the appropriate guidance to plan for these changes. • Schools have funding to increase staffing required for in-person teaching to account for symptomatic teachers to be quickly taken out of classes, to increase sanitation frequency, to limit class sizes, etc. • School nurses have resources (e.g., PPE, symptomatic isolation rooms) and telemedicine capabilities to connect with pediatricians. • Schools are academically ready (including ability to deliver hybrid or distance learning) • Schools have access to mental and emotional support needed for reopening during and after a pandemic. 	
<p>Lead: <i>Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</i></p> <p>Co-leads: Task force subcommittee and school officials</p>	<p>Partners: <i>Identify organizations that should support these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School officials, teachers • Community stakeholders • YWCA • El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence • TEA
<p>Required Capabilities: <i>Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication from schools • Equitable access to resources • Understanding of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Positivity rates and impact on school closure ○ Efficacy of temperature checks ○ Associated actions that are affected when schools close (e.g., meals) ○ Facility capacity in different response phases ○ Compliance with wearing masks • Schools should have PPE and masks/face coverings available for students/teachers/staff in the event replacement PPE is needed during the school day • Schools modify the physical infrastructure of the schools to accommodate for social distancing and barriers • Schools have sufficient school supplies and activity equipment (e.g., basketballs) to prevent sharing • Schools have adequate funding for personnel, PPE, construction and other physical modifications needed • Plans for school-related sports/events, to include physical education 	
<p>Data Indicators: <i>Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented</i></p>	

TBD
<p>Timeliness: <i>Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term</i></p> <p>Short-term</p>

Recommendation #2: Provide performance improvement reports

Preparedness	
<p>Recommendation: Provide performance improvement reports.</p>	
<p>Description: <i>Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</i></p> <p>Use an independent entity to prepare a progress report to identify and address fundamental issues faced during the pandemic and lessons learned during the first four months of the pandemic. Follow-up with additional reports as needed and/or at defined intervals (e.g., at each transition phase). Consider after-action and performance reporting strategies that integrate input from stakeholders.</p>	
<p>Assumptions: <i>Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City and county reporting mechanisms will align with efforts to collect information 	
<p>Lead: <i>Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task Force 	<p>Partners: <i>Identify organizations that should support these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Operations Center • Public Health Stakeholders
<p>Required Capabilities: <i>Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need accountability for input and production • Cross-functional team • Established frequency for reporting • Participation of all stakeholders, including elected officials 	
<p>Data Indicators: <i>Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented.</i></p> <p>TBD</p>	
<p>Timeliness: <i>Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term</i></p> <p>Short-term</p>	

Recommendation #3: Integrate and strengthen communication across border health agencies

Preparedness	
Recommendation: Integrate and strengthen communication across border health agencies	
<p>Description: <i>Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</i></p> <p>Communication between public health and medical providers across borders is informal and inconsistent. El Paso must consider creating stronger, formal ties with Juarez by institutionalizing a structure for information exchange. This structure will facilitate an understanding of public health activities across borders, identify best practices (local, national, international) and lessons learned, and current health risks.</p>	
<p>Assumptions: <i>Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epidemiology will inform decisions 	
<p>Lead: <i>Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</i></p> <p>TBD</p>	<p>Partners: <i>Identify organizations that should support these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BorderRAC • City/county public health agencies • Hospitals • Additional public health groups • Nonprofits (e.g., Medical Center of the Americas Foundation; Paso del Norte Health Foundation)
<p>Required Capabilities: <i>Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective bi-directional communication between El Paso and Juarez • Understanding of unique populations (e.g., workers crossing borders) • Understanding of different health systems in the US and Mexico • Binational response 	
<p>Data Indicators: <i>Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented.</i></p> <p>TBD</p>	
<p>Timeliness: <i>Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term</i></p> <p>Short-term</p>	

Recommendation #4: Initiate a process to develop a model and strategic plan to address future public health organization, funding, resources, and staffing

Preparedness	
<p>Recommendation: Begin the planning process to develop a model and strategic plan to address future public health organization, funding, resources, and staffing.</p>	
<p>Description: <i>Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</i></p> <p>Public health organizations have varying priorities and must often execute their broad mission with limited resources, including funding and staffing. Oftentimes, more-immediate issues take precedence over long-term planning and preparedness, consuming what little resources are available. As a result, preparedness and response planning efforts may be pushed to the future, when the budget and resources can accommodate these initiatives. In the next 30 days, the city/county should begin to plan for a robust benchmarking and strategic planning process that will ensure a strong, regionally coordinated, and comprehensive public/private response to future public health crises. Begin identifying key partners and resources to develop the strategic plan and model. Preparedness starts with having a strong organizational structure (to include testing capacity, hospital surge capacity, and public health communications) and adequate funding for public health roles. This planning should consider partnerships and laboratory/epidemiology expansion and scalability. Consider examining benchmarks in cities with similar demographics (e.g., San Antonio, Brownsville, San Diego) to develop preparedness recommendations specific to El Paso.</p>	
<p>Assumptions: <i>Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City/county public health will share organization and budget information, and task force members have authority to review and make recommendations • The model will allow decisions to be made in an efficient manner 	
<p>Lead: <i>Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</i></p> <p>TBD</p>	<p>Partners: <i>Identify organizations that should support these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BorderRAC • City/county public health agencies • UTHouston and UTEP Schools of Public Health • Hospitals, clinics, FQHCs • Medical Center of the Americas Foundation • Paso del Norte Health Foundation • Additional public health groups • National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) • Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) • American Public Health Association (APHA) • Juarez and southern New Mexico public health authorities
<p>Required Capabilities: <i>Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing public health budgets, organization charts and roles/responsibilities (as well as dependencies on external organizations such as BorderRAC, hospitals and other committees/task forces) are required in order to make a recommendation 	

- Benchmarks specific to El Paso (similar size communities, preferably along the border and/or with large minority populations)
- Scalability of public health functions for pandemic and non-pandemic periods
- Binational public health coordination (outside of pandemic)
- Understanding of financial stability of county
- Regular public health updates will be made available to the community and stakeholders

Data Indicators:

Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented.

TBD

Timeliness:

Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term

Short-term

DRAFT

Appendix C: Data Recommendations

Introduction

Data

Systematic application and interpretation of data in emergency response situations drives credible decision-making by providing a unified metric by which to facilitate public health recommendations. Data analytics supports the advancement of information to increase response times and provides the opportunity for equitable mitigation of local, state, federal, and international challenges.

Data Objectives and Recommendation Process

The objective of the Task Force was to create recommendations for a data-centric strategy that ensures relevant, accurate, accessible, and understandable data on COVID-19 is provided to all El Pasoans. Task Force members met weekly to discuss regional challenges and ongoing efforts to communicate COVID-19 public health information to the wider Paso del Norte community. Based on available data, best practices, and expertise from local, state, federal, and international public health entities, these recommendations are presented as short-term achievable outcomes over a 30-day period.

Recommendations — Short-Term

Recommendation #1: Increase accessibility and quality of data

Data
<p>Recommendation: Ensure partners within the healthcare industry and medical sector have access to the data they need to effectively treat patients, make decisions, and understand the current state of the COVID-19 outbreak. In addition, ensure public and private testing entities provide high quality data that reflects true numbers of tests performed, positive and negative test results, and certain performance metrics as outlined below and in the scorecard (Table D1 in Appendix D).</p>
<p>Description: <i>Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</i></p> <p>Increase accessibility of information to healthcare providers and decision-makers. Enhance information coming back from private testing to obtain and better understand the true number of tests conducted, and to track data changes over time. Methods to increase data accessibility include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize third-party resources to understand how testing data can be collated and shared • Monitor data surrounding demand for testing at the site level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collect and provide data surrounding appointment vs walk-up clinics ○ Track time of request and wait time for testing appointments, per geographical area, along with other demographics (e.g., high-risk and vulnerable populations) • Utilize a health information exchange, specifically, the Paso del Norte Health Information Exchange (PHIX), to allow for transparency of test results across different health agencies • Leverage central hubs of testing information and ensure private providers can access data • Clearly identify and report on a set of standard and universal data points that can be used as COVID progress indicators, including test rate positivity on a rolling 7-day period • Ensure that historical testing data (current and cumulative), delineated by CDC weeks, can be reviewed by public health officials and decision-makers • Make data publicly available and provide free online tools for analysis (e.g., Tableau, Power BI)

<p>Assumptions: <i>Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic and current data will be made available to the public in a useable format 	
<p>Lead: <i>Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</i></p> <p>Department of Public Health</p>	<p>Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Mexico public health agencies (for understanding of negative tests) • San Antonio (as model city) • Paso del Norte Health Information Exchange (PHIX) • Juarez public health officials
<p>Required Capabilities: <i>Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to and agreement on data sources • Methods to unify data • Centralized and direct data resources for units of local government • All El Paso hospitals should submit data to PHIX • Ideally, southern New Mexico hospitals would submit data to PHIX 	
<p>Data Indicators: <i>Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented.</i></p> <p>TBD</p>	
<p>Timeliness: <i>Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term</i></p> <p>Short-term</p>	

Recommendation #2: Implement surveillance studies to assess community transmission and prevalence of COVID-19, as well as create a predictive tool

<p>Data</p> <p>Recommendation: Strongly recommend creation of a surveillance program within the Health Department, or with existing community partners (e.g., UT Houston School of Public Health in El Paso, UTEP, TTUHSC, Texas A&M) to execute surveillance studies that assess community transmission rate and prevalence of SARS-CoV-2. Use the data to create a predictive tool. First, use antibody testing to determine prevalence of COVID-19 in the community and evaluate the utility of serological surveillance based on current scientific evidence. Second, conduct a random sampling study using a community grid system to assess COVID-19 prevalence and identify communities requiring additional public health resources (i.e., testing and tracing). Third, work with partners collecting wastewater for surveillance of zip codes that appear to have low incidence of COVID-19 cases and determine background levels of COVID-19 and any increases in these levels to serve as an early indicator of spread. And fourth, develop surveillance of school-aged students and determine transmission rate.</p>
<p>Description: <i>Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</i></p> <p>Surveillance is important to monitor the spread of disease, understand the disease severity, risk factors, and monitor changes in the behavior of SARS-CoV-2. Surveillance can guide decision-makers</p>

<p>on implementation of control measures and targeting public health resources for vulnerable populations. Random sampling studies aid in approximating an entire population’s prevalence rate of COVID-19, without expending the resources to test everyone. Results of this sampling can target areas where additional testing is needed or where risk mitigation strategies can be implemented, as well as other public health resources. Similarly, environmental sampling can help detect background levels of infectious disease and serve as an early warning system for rising levels of disease prevalence, helping to guide early intervention strategies that reduce transmission. And, SARS-CoV-2 transmission rates among children are not well understood. Conducting sampling studies of school-aged children will help identify asymptomatic prevalence and transmission rates of the disease. To implement this recommendation, the city/county should work with foundations that provide financial support for surveillance of vulnerable/marginalized populations and with academic partners that have the capabilities and resources to implement such studies.</p>	
<p>Assumptions: <i>Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for sample collection • City/County government support for collection and surveillance 	
<p>Lead: <i>Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City/County 	<p>Partners: <i>Identify organizations that should support these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UTEP, UT Houston, TTUHSC • Collection sites • Community health workers • Water utilities
<p>Required Capabilities: <i>Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Principal investigators • Personnel for sample collection • Understanding of testing data, including sample collection and processing capacity (to include distribution, collection, and analysis) • Health informatics/network platform 	
<p>Data Indicators: <i>Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented.</i></p> <p>TBD</p>	
<p>Timeliness: <i>Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term</i></p> <p>Short-term</p>	

Appendix D: Testing and Contact Tracing Recommendations

Introduction

Testing and Contact Tracing

Understanding the dynamics of disease transmission within a community is essential to slowing and stopping the spread of disease. Understanding transmission requires continuous surveillance, contact tracing, and testing of suspected COVID-19 cases. Surveillance is essential to understanding where cases are occurring, who the disease is impacting, and the rate at which disease is occurring in the community. Understanding these epidemiological components of COVID-19 allows for public health officials to target testing resources where they are most needed and implement contact tracing to identify potential new cases.

Testing and Contact Tracing Objectives and Recommendation Process

The objective of the Task Force was to create data-driven, evidence-based recommendations on testing and contact tracing to slow, contain, and stop the spread of COVID-19 in the El Paso region. Task Force members met weekly to discuss regional challenges to achieve widespread diagnostic testing and contact tracing, and form recommendations to address these challenges and create the foundation for strong public health response for future surges of COVID-19 and other public health emergencies. These recommendations included short-term achievable outcomes over a 30-day period.

In order to identify and form these recommendations, the Task Force developed a series of requests for information that focused on current capabilities, invited guest subject matter experts to speak to the subcommittee and Task Force on a range of topics, including employment and labor law relevant to COVID-19, as well as city and county testing and surveillance practices. In addition, Task Force members spoke with public school leaders and business operators to understand their needs and challenges in preparing to open their classrooms and workplaces during the ongoing pandemic. These efforts ensured recommendations were data-driven and evidence-based.

Scorecard Indicators

Progress and Warning Indicators

Testing

It is important to assess whether public health surveillance efforts and diagnostic testing capability and capacity can rapidly identify all new cases of COVID-19. Testing facilitates identification of positive cases and, subsequently, contacts so isolation and quarantine measures can be implemented, respectively, and contain disease transmission. Indicators that surveillance and testing efforts are meeting community needs include:

- Availability of diagnostic testing
- Coordination of diagnostic testing strategies
- Timeliness of testing
- Availability of diagnostic testing for healthcare workers and others at risk

- Community syndromic surveillance and diagnostic testing
- Diagnostic testing rate

Contact Tracing

It is important to assess whether current case management efforts can rapidly and efficiently isolate confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19, as well as identify and quarantine their close contacts to contain disease transmission. Indicators that case management and contact tracing efforts are effective, include:

- Workforce availability
- Rapidity of isolation of confirmed cases
- Effectiveness of contact tracing
- Rapidity of testing contacts of confirmed cases and people with influenza-like- or COVID-19-like-illness
- Availability of safe isolation and quarantine facilities
- Case management

Metrics

In the tables below, each indicator is defined by a metric, which is a quantitative or qualitative method for measuring the indicator and assessing the community’s health and public health response to shifting circumstances.

Testing

In order to measure how each testing indicator is progressing, so that city and county officials can assess the likelihood of safely shifting between phases, the following metrics should be met.

Indicator	Phase II Metric	Phase III Metric	Phase IV Metric
Availability of diagnostic testing	All symptomatic people, regardless of severity, and all asymptomatic high-risk individuals or contacts , regardless of severity, can access testing and obtain results within 48 hours of request.	All symptomatic people, regardless of severity, and all asymptomatic high-risk individuals or contacts can access testing and obtain results within 24 hours of request.	All symptomatic people regardless of severity, all asymptomatic high-risk individuals or contacts, and anyone who requests/orders a test can access testing and obtain a result within 24 hours of request.
Coordination of diagnostic testing strategies	Private business operators can consult with public health officials on testing strategies for current workplace outbreaks.	Private business operators can consult with public health officials on testing strategies for all employees.	
Timeliness of testing	Majority of tests results at each testing site, county-wide, are	Majority of tests results, at each testing site, county-wide are	Majority of tests results, at each testing site, county-wide are

	returned within 48 hours .	returned within 24–48 hours .	returned within 24 hours .
Availability of diagnostic testing for healthcare personnel, essential workers, and others at risk	Majority of healthcare personnel, first responders, essential workers, and others at greater risk can access testing once per week , regardless of symptomology.	Majority of healthcare personnel, first responders, essential workers, and others at greater risk can be tested once per week , regardless of symptomology.	of healthcare personnel, first responders, essential workers, and others at greater risk can be tested every 2–3 days , regardless of symptomology.
Community syndromic surveillance and diagnostic testing	The community is conducting syndromic surveillance for increases in influenza-like illnesses or COVID-19-like illnesses .	Sentinel surveillance through widespread testing is underway in long-term care facilities, prisons, detection centers, shelters, high-risk workplaces, and other high-risk settings.	Testing supplies (swabs, vital transport media), reagents, equipment, staffing, and laboratory processing capability are sufficient to meet the above metrics , without rationing.
Diagnostic testing rate	Increase number of tests per day to meet Priority I–II (TBD tests per 100,000 population).	Increase number of tests per day to sufficiently test Priority I–III (TBD tests per 100,000).	Increase number of tests per day to sufficiently test Priority I–IV (TBD tests per 100,000).

Others at risk and testing priority categories are defined in Table D1.

Contact Tracing

In order to measure how each contact tracing indicator is progressing, so that city and county officials can assess the likelihood of safely shifting between phases, the following metrics should be met.

Indicator	Phase II Metric	Phase III Metric	Phase IV Metric
Workforce availability	At least 30 contact tracers per 100,000 , as well as case managers, care resource coordinators, community health workers.		
Rapidity of isolation of confirmed cases	Confirmed cases are isolated within 24 hours of a positive test result .		
Effectiveness of contact tracing	>60% of new cases are coming from among identified contacts.	>80% of new cases are coming from among identified contacts.	>90% of new cases are coming from among identified contacts.
Rapidity of testing contacts of confirmed cases and people with	75% of close contacts are elicited, located, quarantine, and tested within 48 hours of case identification.	90% of close contacts are elicited, located, quarantined, and tested within 24 hours of case identification.	95% of close contacts are elicited, located, quarantined, and tested within 24 hours of case identification.

influenza-like- or COVID-19- like-illness			
Availability of safe isolation and quarantine facilities	Isolation and quarantine facilities , as well as support services, are available for confirmed cases and contacts, if needed.	Isolation and quarantine facilities , as well as support services, are available for confirmed cases and contacts, if needed. 25–33% of isolation and quarantine stays are successfully completed.	Isolation and quarantine facilities , as well as support services, are available for confirmed cases and contacts, if needed. 50–60% of isolation and quarantine stays are successfully completed.
Case management	100% of contact tracers are using a unified system for case management , which securely logs and reports contacts to the health department in real-time. Outbreaks of non-household members are epidemiologically linked within 14 days of the initial report.		

Recommendations — Short-Term

Recommendation #1: Expand testing resources to ensure accessibility, quick turnaround times, and demand

Testing and Contact Tracing
<p>Recommendation: Expand availability and accessibility of current private/city/county testing resources (e.g., hours and location) to ensure symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals can receive testing appointments within 24 hours of initial request and results within 24–48 hours of specimen collection (see scorecard for testing metrics by phase, Appendix D). Ensure testing capabilities accommodate rural areas, high incidence areas, and vulnerable populations, including undocumented workers. Arrangements with additional private testing partners may be required to ensure testing scalability in high-demand situations, when testing supplies and capacity of individual labs may become constrained.</p>
<p>Description: <i>Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</i></p> <p>Although reports indicate sufficient capacity at El Paso testing sites, incidents are reported in which individuals have struggled to obtain testing appointments within 24 hours of their request due to appointment availability, were turned away for being asymptomatic or not have a doctor’s order, or appointments were only available at locations distant from the person seeking testing. There are several tasks that should be considered to implement this recommendation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish mobile testing units to facilitate cross-regional capability that can be used for current and future public health incidents. • Adjust testing capacity to meet symptomatic and asymptomatic needs within the recommended timeframe (based on phases in the scorecard) for specimen collection and testing result turnaround time at convenient locations (see scorecard for testing metrics by phase). • Expand testing to include children under two years old at city/county testing sites. • Establish a testing site located on El Paso/Stanton Street for individuals crossing the border. • Establish confidential testing sites for undocumented employees working in El Paso (e.g., FQHCs — Project Vida, La Fe, San Vincent).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance testing capacity to prepare for second wave of COVID-19 cases in the autumn by ensuring current laboratory partners, whether state-based or private sector, have the resources for sample collection (e.g., swabs, vials, PPE) and sample processing (e.g., reagents). Identify additional testing partners to supplement current capacity. 	
<p>Assumptions: <i>Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City/county will have enough tests to accommodate the priority populations outlined in Table D1 and the ability to perform at least 3,434 test per day (based on recommendation for a population of 850,000) for mitigative purposes. 	
<p>Lead: <i>Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City/County 	<p>Partners: <i>Identify organizations that should support these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current Partners: Texas Military, CVS, Walmart, GynPath, Quest, LabCorp, Curative, TMD, PHIX Additional Partners: UTEP
<p>Required Capabilities: <i>Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test collection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supplies (swabs, PPE), personnel, and location (to facilitate appointment times within 24 hours) Supplies/kits to collect samples for other illnesses/pathogens Specialty supplies and training for testing for children ages 2 and under Test processing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supplies (reagents), equipment, local laboratory facilities (to facilitate turnaround of results within 24 hours) Panels/platforms to process additional pathogens Communicating results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personnel Secure, electronic platform for data collection/consolidation of tests Secure, electronic platform for sharing results with patients 	
<p>Data Indicators: <i>Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented.</i></p> <p>See scorecard</p>	
<p>Timeliness: <i>Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term</i></p> <p>Short-Term</p>	

Recommendation #2: Support testing strategy development for private businesses and schools

Testing and Contact Tracing	
<p>Recommendation: In a resource-constrained environment, prioritize testing by vulnerable population and job function per reopening phase. Support private business owners with their testing needs by coordinating a testing strategy based on business size and function. Also support regional pre-K through higher education schools with their testing needs based on size and situation. Coordinate with employers and schools to ensure adequate and timely data sharing and reporting of test results. Include guidance on how to interpret test results and subsequent response actions.</p>	
<p>Description: <i>Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</i></p> <p>Provide employers with informational resources to coordinate their testing options, including a list of validated tests, reliable commercial testing services, broad physician orders from the DPH to cover testing needs for El Paso business operators, and consultation on interpreting test results and next steps. Provide guidance to employers on workplace policy centered on testing (e.g., isolation of laboratory confirmed cases, quarantine of close contacts/non-laboratory confirmed cases, return-to-work) and notification to other employees, vendors, contractors, and customers. Use a prioritization matrix for testing vulnerable populations (Table D1). The prioritization should consider risk of infection and risk of spread to others by job function (i.e., based on level of interaction with other people). The prioritization should account for different reopening phases and additional risks to certain jobs. Consider the following tasks to implement the recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete prioritization matrix, estimating the number of individuals in each group • Request data from commercial testing vendors on key information; validate and certify third party vendors • Create central repository of information (i.e., toolkit listed below) for business operators and schools and map hotspots • Work with state public health to have COVID-19 listed as reportable disease and/or amend contracts with third-party laboratories to ensure negative results are reported 	
<p>Assumptions: <i>Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued state support of testing capabilities • City/county fully or partially fund testing for certain, qualifying essential infrastructure personnel, such as utilities, transportation, food services • Willing partnership with private sector employer testing resources 	
<p>Lead: <i>Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City/County 	<p>Partners: <i>Identify organizations that should support these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better Business Bureau • Chambers of Commerce • Other associations that represent employers • Schools • PHIX
<p>Required Capabilities: <i>Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistician to complete the testing prioritization matrix 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficient, clear, and updated communication strategy on testing resources available to the public • Online platform to provide a toolkit for employers that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Physician orders ○ HIPAA compliance training and methods for storing confidential information (e.g., test results) ○ Templates for consent, authorization to release test results to employers ○ Methods to notify employees, contractors, vendors, and, in some instances, customers with close contact to an employee that tested positive ○ Guidance on quarantine and return-to-work policies as it relates to current labor law ○ Other labor law guidance ○ Validated, reliable tests ○ Reputable commercial testing services ○ Interpretation of test results
<p>Data Indicators: <i>Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented.</i></p> <p>See scorecard</p>
<p>Timeliness: <i>Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term</i></p> <p>Short-Term</p>

Table D1 provides a list of prioritized testing populations and was adopted from the Resolve to Save Lives group, headed by former CDC Director Tom Frieden. The prioritization table served as a model for the Task Force and was modified to include additional groups relevant to the Paso del Norte region. The estimated tests will need to be identified; methods for completing this are listed in Recommendation #2 above.

Table D1. Testing Prioritization by Group

Group	Priority for Testing	Risk of Infection	Risk of Spread to Others	Estimated Tests per 10,000 per day
Hospitalized patients (symptomatic)	I	High	Medium	TBD
Non-COVID-19, hospitalized patients	I	Medium	High	TBD
High-risk groups (symptomatic)	I	High	Low (if quarantined)	TBD
Congregate facility members (symptomatic)	I	High	High	TBD
Healthcare workers (symptomatic)	I	High	High	TBD
Contacts (symptomatic)	I	High	Low (if quarantined)	TBD
Public safety (EMS, Police, Fire) (symptomatic)	I	High	Medium	TBD
Congregate facility members (asymptomatic)	II	Low	High	TBD

Healthcare workers (asymptomatic)	II	Medium	High	TBD
Contacts (asymptomatic)	II	Medium	Low (if quarantined)	TBD
Presumptive cases, not high-risk (symptomatic)	II	High	Low (if isolating)	TBD
High-risk groups (asymptomatic)	II	High	Medium	TBD
Other essential workers (mass transit, grocery, sanitation) (symptomatic)	II	High	Medium	TBD
Other, public-facing employees (retail, hospitality, restaurant) (symptomatic)	II	High	Medium	TBD
Public safety (asymptomatic)	III	Medium	Medium	TBD
Other essential workers (asymptomatic)	III	Medium	Medium	TBD
Other public-facing employees (asymptomatic)	III	Medium	Medium	TBD
Non-essential employees	IV	Low	Low	TBD
Others in community	IV	Low	Low	TBD
Where, essential workers are those supporting the following industries: Healthcare operations; critical infrastructure; essential government functions; grocery and other essential supplies; food cultivation; service providers to economically disadvantaged populations; media; gas stations and transportation; financial institutions; hardware and supply; critical trades; education; mail and delivery services; laundry; restaurants and food delivery; business supplies; home-based care and services; residential facilities and shelters; professional services (legal, accounting, insurance, real estate); information technology; childcare; animal shelters; clothing and PPE manufacturing/supplying; vector and pest control; and funeral and post-mortem services.				

Recommendation #3: Expand contact tracing capabilities by leveraging partnerships

Testing and Contact Tracing
<p>Recommendation: Work with public health partners across the state (e.g., UT Houston School of Public Health in El Paso, UTEP, TTUHSC, Texas A&M) to coordinate contact tracing initiatives and resources (see scorecard in Appendix D for contact tracing metrics by phase).</p>
<p>Description: <i>Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</i></p> <p>Contact tracing helps prevent further transmission of the virus by quickly identifying individuals that may have encountered an infected individual and taking precautions so that further transmission does not occur. For contact tracing to be effective, these contacts must be identified and contacted in a timely manner (e.g., within 24 hours of a positive test result). There are several universities in Texas that received grant or federal funding to expand the contact tracing workforce. Work with state public health partners to coordinate contact tracing with these entities of all El Pasoans exposed to positive COVID-19 cases. To implement this recommendation, the city/county should evaluate applications and other technology for assisting contact tracing efforts in some environments, e.g., schools, workplaces.</p>
<p>Assumptions: <i>Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient funding for and coordination of contact tracers to meet contact tracing requirements in scorecard 	
<p>Lead: <i>Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City/County 	<p>Partners: <i>Identify organizations that should support these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UTEP, UT Houston, Texas A&M, TTUHSC, EPCC, Western Tech and Southwestern University (vocational institutes) • El Paso County Medical Society • Employers/business operators • Schools
<p>Required Capabilities: <i>Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic platform for integrated information sharing/data gathering among all entities • Personnel • Training • Scripts for tracers 	
<p>Data Indicators: <i>Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented.</i></p> <p>See scorecard</p>	
<p>Timeliness: <i>Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term</i></p> <p>Short-term</p>	

Recommendation #4: Coordinate community members' ability to access testing and treatment resources using a patient navigation model

Testing and Contact Tracing
<p>Recommendation: Create a centralized capability to improve communication of testing resource options to the community and coordinate community members' ability to access these testing resources in an efficient and timely manner. Symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals should have access to specimen collection within 24 hours of their initial request and results within 24–48 hours of specimen collection at testing centers. Individuals should be able to get tested at locations that are closest to them and on days and times that accommodate individual needs (see scorecard in Appendix D for metrics by phase). Patients should also be given information on which medical facilities and providers are treating COVID-19 patients.</p>
<p>Description: <i>Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</i></p> <p>Current information sharing platforms do not list all testing options and may not be easy for individuals seeking care to navigate. The city/county should use resources to hire and train dedicated personnel (i.e., COVID Navigators) to coordinate testing resources and appointments for individuals seeking COVID testing. Build a simple, tree-style navigation capability using various platforms (e.g., applications, call-in system, website) for individuals to determine best testing option and requirements</p>

<p>for that option based on personal need (e.g., symptomatic vs asymptomatic, geographical location, young children). During these consultations, information should be provided to the individual on testing procedures, timeframes, and interpretation of results. Information sharing platforms should be updates regularly and provide information on testing site capacity and turnaround times. The COVID Navigators can help to keep COVID patients away from other populations that may get exposed to the virus as they are seeking testing (e.g., hospitals).</p>	
<p>Assumptions: <i>Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding is available to hire COVID Navigators. • Data on testing and treatment options are current and the decision algorithm used by the navigators is accurate and updated. 	
<p>Lead: <i>Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOC/City/County 	<p>Partners: <i>Identify organizations that should support these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing sites • Medical providers • UTH, UTEP to help develop the algorithms • Workforce Solutions Borderplex to help with hiring and training COVID Navigators
<p>Required Capabilities: <i>Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel • Training • Funding 	
<p>Data Indicators: <i>Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented.</i></p> <p>TBD</p>	
<p>Timeliness: <i>Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term</i></p> <p>Short-term</p>	

Recommendation #5: Incorporate other pathogen testing at current testing sites

<p>Testing and Contact Tracing</p>
<p>Recommendation: Expand city/county testing center capabilities to accommodate influenza, <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i>, <i>streptococcus</i>, <i>meningococcus</i>, pertussis, and other seasonal infectious diseases, which share symptomology with COVID-19.</p>
<p>Description: <i>Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</i></p> <p>Transmission of seasonal infectious diseases, such as influenza, <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i>, <i>streptococcus</i>, <i>meningococcus</i>, pertussis, and other seasonal infectious diseases is imminent. The symptomology of these illnesses may be similar to COVID-19. As seasonal transmission of common infectious diseases begins, symptomatic patients will require a means of seeking care and treatment.</p>

<p>However, many physicians are not allowing symptomatic patients in their offices, utilizing telemedicine instead. In order to accurately diagnose these patients and provide them with appropriate treatments (and to avoid an increase in defensive medicine and over treatment), testing for these other seasonal infectious diseases will be of paramount importance. As such, multi-purpose testing capabilities at current testing sites should be instituted. The city/county should leverage medical expertise within the community to develop a strategy for testing COVID-19 and other seasonal illnesses.</p>	
<p>Assumptions: <i>Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD 	
<p>Lead: <i>Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City/County 	<p>Partners: <i>Identify organizations that should support these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary care physicians • FQHCs • El Paso County Medical Society • Urgent care centers • Test sites
<p>Required Capabilities: <i>Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test kits for seasonal infectious diseases • Training on specimen collection for different pathogens 	
<p>Data Indicators: <i>Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented.</i></p> <p>TBD</p>	
<p>Timeliness: <i>Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term</i></p> <p>Short-term</p>	

Appendix E: Communication Recommendations

Introduction

Communication

Communication is essential to any emergency response. People need to understand the risks and preventive actions required to protect their health and lives. Consistent, transparent, and clear communication provided early and often is essential during a crisis to ensure people feel safe and build resilience. Accurate and accessible information guides individuals in making informed choices and taking protective actions that help them adopt and cope to the situation.

Individuals perceive risk and risk-reduction behaviors based on a number of variables, including social, economic, political, and cultural factors. It is important that any messaging campaign considers environmental, social, and psychological influences on behavior and health to ensure effective and meaningful communications. Messaging should account for perceptions, social norms, and emotions.

Above all else, trust is an essential component for communicating information to the public. Despite well-developed communication strategies, if the public does not trust the source from which the information comes, then crucial public health interventions run the risk of failure. To build trust, communication should be transparent, timely, easily understood, acknowledge uncertainty, address affected populations, and be disseminated using multiple platforms to reach the largest audience.

Communication Objectives and Recommendation Process

The objective of the Task Force was to create recommendations for a public health communications strategy that ensures relevant, accurate, accessible, and understandable information on disease prevention, health promotion, and well-being is provided to all El Pasoans.

Task Force members met weekly to discuss regional challenges and ongoing efforts to communicate COVID-19 public health information to the wider Paso del Norte community. These recommendations included short-term achievable outcomes over a 30-day period. These recommendations included creating a cross-sector collaborative partnership to develop and implement a communications strategy, centralizing community-wide COVID-19 information, collaborating with community health workers to create a dynamic communications outreach strategy, and ensuring leadership models protective health behaviors, among others. These recommendations are based on best practices and guidance from federal and international public health entities.

Recommendations — Short-Term

Recommendation #1: Institute a cross-sector collaborative partnership to create a communication strategy

Communication	
<p>Recommendation: Commission and fund a trusted neutral community organization to manage a cross-sector collaborative partnership that will develop a high-level communication strategy that results in a comprehensive Health Communication effort.</p>	
<p>Description: <i>Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</i></p> <p>Promoting and protecting the health of El Pasoans requires science-based methods to develop an effective communication strategy. Public health communication is grounded in multiple disciplines, including health education, marketing, public relations, psychology, informatics, and epidemiology. As such, a cross-sector collaborative is needed to develop a communication strategy to promote health communication efforts across El Paso and the Paso del Norte region. The collaborative should meet regularly, share information, and adjust the communication strategy based on new information. In the short-term, the partisanship should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory existing regional communication resources and conduct a nation-wide rapid scan of other communication resources and strategies. • Agree on an effective COVID-19 health communication strategy for community health benefit. This includes strategy that promotes wearing masks, social distancing, and other behaviors that reduce the risk of virus transmission, target audiences with relevant messages, and address children as potential asymptomatic carriers. Identify target population and behavior that needs to be addressed through messaging campaigns and then identify appropriate dissemination methods. • Agree on effective COVID-19 communication resources, such as a common symbol for wearing masks and social distancing, creating training videos on COVID-19 preventive measures as part of businesses onboarding process for new hires, and what it means to quarantine and how to do so effectively given various living and working situations. • Agree and advise on an effective COVID-19 information communication strategy. This includes providing advice about communicating factual public updates related to schools; transportation; retail environments; and government facilities. Also include factual COVID-19 information such as: updated government orders, testing locations and recommended procedures, contact tracing, outbreak locations, and epidemiological metrics. Coordinate the development of a data dashboard that can be disseminated to the community. Communicate data using rates versus only raw numbers; use a 7-day rolling average graphs for infection and hospitalization. Provide free access to all data maintained by the city/county and provide tools to analyze the data, including an interactive dashboard. 	
<p>Assumptions: <i>Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of collaborative partnership will be representative of all El Pasoans. • Messages will be provided in culturally appropriate manner. • Messaging should be tested for target population to maximize efficacy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Messaging should consider demographic factors, such as socioeconomic and educational levels. ○ Strategy should include targeting youth. 	
<p>Lead: <i>Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</i></p>	<p>Partners: <i>Identify organizations that should support these efforts.</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD (trusted community organization accountable to city/county government) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-sector collaborative members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Medical, behavioral, and public health experts ○ City/county officials ○ Consultant/vendor • Focus group members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schools (primary through higher education) ○ Business sector ○ Faith-based leaders ○ Non-profit organizations
<p>Required Capabilities: <i>Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication strategy • Wi-fi and broadband access • Print capabilities • Messaging platforms (radio, TV, web, social media) • Text messaging systems • Medical, behavioral health, and public health expertise to inform and develop messaging 	
<p>Data Indicators: <i>Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented.</i></p> <p>TBD</p>	
<p>Timeliness: <i>Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term</i></p> <p>Short-term</p>	

Recommendation #2: Centralize and coordinate COVID-19 information and health communication resources

<p>Communication</p>
<p>Recommendation: Centralize and coordinate community-wide COVID-19 information, health communication, and health communication resources on a single website for public access.</p>
<p>Description: <i>Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</i></p> <p>The public requires a centralized, coordinated platform for accessing updated information relevant to COVID-19, including protective health measures, local ordinances, and resources. The site should contain links to community resources, like mental health counseling and rental assistance, which may be in high need during the pandemic. In addition, the site should have the ability to accept public recommendations and have personnel support to update the site regularly. The site should be promoted widely throughout the community. It may be possible to use existing websites (EPStrong.org and EPCOVID19.org), but ensure information is coordinated, messaging is consistent, and information is hyperlinked between the two sites, as well as any ancillary sites.</p>
<p>Assumptions: <i>Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD 	
<p>Lead: <i>Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City/county government 	<p>Partners: <i>Identify organizations that should support these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government unemployment assistance • Workforce organizations (e.g., Workforce Solutions, Job Corps) • Mental health professional group • NGOs • Non-profits
<p>Required Capabilities: <i>Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing to update information and manage technical system • 212 telephone system • Web-hosting capabilities • Existing EPStrong.org and EPCOVID19.org websites • Mental health professional group and emergence health • Scorecard • Activities and related risks list (e.g., TMA tool) 	
<p>Data Indicators: <i>Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented.</i></p> <p>TBD</p>	
<p>Timeliness: <i>Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term</i></p> <p>Short-term</p>	

Recommendation #3: Partner with community health workers to create a communication outreach strategy

Communication
<p>Recommendation: Create and implement a dynamic health communication outreach strategy in collaboration with home healthcare workers, promotoras, and medical providers benefiting those most at risk for COVID-19 complications, such as individuals with underlying health conditions.</p>
<p>Description: <i>Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</i></p> <p>Community health workers (CHWs) have access to populations that typical government channels may lack and have a unique ability to disseminate important public health information in an easily accessible way. CHWs share culture, ethnicity, language, and life experiences with the individuals they serve and are essential for providing culturally appropriate health education and information. The CHWs impact on community members they serve has shown to improve access to health services, foster a better understanding of the health and social service systems, enhance communication with health providers, and improve adherence to health recommendations. The cross-sector collaborative should incorporate CHWs into the communication strategy planning to ensure key messages are developed for community members served by CHWs, as well as strategize dissemination methods that meet the needs of this community.</p>

<p>Assumptions: Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD 	
<p>Lead: Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</p> <p>TBD</p>	<p>Partners: Identify organizations that should support these efforts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher education programs that work on social mobilization (e.g., EPCC, Texas A&M, UTEP, Texas Tech) El Paso Medical Society Home healthcare providers Project Vida, San Vincent, La Fe
<p>Required Capabilities: Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher education programs Existing messaging resources 	
<p>Data Indicators: Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented.</p> <p>TBD</p>	
<p>Timeliness: Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term</p> <p>Short-term</p>	

Recommendation #4: Promote modelling of public health behaviors by various community leaders

<p>Communication</p>
<p>Recommendation: Community leaders (e.g., elected, faith-based, business) should continue to model protective health behaviors essential for the safety of residents. For example, leadership should wear masks and social distance at public events to align with city/county government orders.</p>
<p>Description: Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</p> <p>Community leaders often model behavior for their constituents, whether those constituents are voters, members of a congregation, school, or business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training to community leaders (e.g., government, faith-based, teachers, business operators, athletes) on COVID transmission and the importance of public health measures, such as masking and social distancing Create mutual compacts (e.g., “I took the pledge”) for leaders to sign and publish on social media Develop a PSA on wearing masks (model how and when to wear) and have different community leaders demonstrate these techniques Develop a PSA on testing/sample collection

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the motivations driving certain behaviors and tailor messaging to address these motivations • Identify leaders among youth (e.g., high profile musicians, athletes, chefs/restaurant owners) that can participate in messaging campaigns 	
<p>Assumptions: <i>Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD 	
<p>Lead: <i>Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</i></p> <p>City/county</p>	<p>Partners: <i>Identify organizations that should support these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor • County judge • Superintendent • Representatives • Bishop • Higher education deans/presidents • Highly visible individuals
<p>Required Capabilities: <i>Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD 	
<p>Data Indicators: <i>Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented.</i></p> <p>TBD</p>	
<p>Timeliness: <i>Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term</i></p> <p>Short-term</p>	

Recommendation #5: Establish a process for residents and stakeholders to provide input on pandemic response and for the government to take under advisement

Communication
<p>Recommendation: Government officials should establish a process in which residents and stakeholder groups can be notified of new executive orders and policy on mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic before these policies/orders are enacted. In addition, this mechanism should allow for residents/stakeholders to provide input on mitigative responses for the government to take under advisement.</p>
<p>Description: <i>Describe recommendation, importance/impact, and tasks to plan for/implement recommendation.</i></p> <p>Understanding the concerns and needs of the community is important prior to governmental action. Elected officials should create a process to hear from El Pasoans, students, business operators, and the medical community, among others, on their COVID-19 concerns and recommendations. Beyond</p>

<p>input for messaging campaigns, citizens need to be heard by decision-makers before orders are issued. Tasks to implement this recommendation includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a citizen feedback form on the EPStrong.org website; make public aware of feedback opportunities • Establish a medical and population health advisory group for the Health Authority • Establish or continue to host virtual townhall meetings to listen • Create and disseminate a survey 	
<p>Assumptions: <i>Describe assumptions for implementing recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD 	
<p>Lead: <i>Identify the organization that should lead these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected officials • City/county 	<p>Partners: <i>Identify organizations that should support these efforts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community
<p>Required Capabilities: <i>Identify resources needed to implement this recommendation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback mechanisms, such as those on EPStrong.org website and the 212-phone line for COVID questions and concerns • Two-way communication between elected officials and constituents, such as listening sessions • Survey mechanisms 	
<p>Data Indicators: <i>Identify data and metrics needed to track the progress of this recommendation once implemented.</i></p> <p>TBD</p>	
<p>Timeliness: <i>Short-Term vs. Mid-Term vs. Long-Term</i></p> <p>Short-term</p>	

Dr. Ogechika Alozie
Del Sol Medical Center
Co-Chair

Dr. Hector Ocaranza
City-County Public Health
Co-Chair

El Paso United COVID-19 Transition Task Force Short-Term Recommendations

July 21, 2020

Agenda

- Task Force Introduction
 - Members
 - Mission, Objective, Guiding Principles
 - Recommendation Process
- Recommendations (Short-Term)
 - Preparedness
 - Data
 - Testing and Contact Tracing
 - Communication
- Next Steps

Task Force Members

- Ogechika Alozie, MD, MPH, FACP, AAHIVS — Del Sol Medical Center
- Hector Ocaranza, MD — City-County Public Health
- Nicole Brennan, MPH, DrPH — Battelle
- Rogelio Covarrubias, MD — Juarez Public Health
- Alison Days, MD, MPH — El Paso County Medical Society
- Joel Hendryx, MD — University Medical Center of El Paso
- Michael Kelly, PhD — Paso del Norte Health Foundation
- Robert Kirken, PhD — University of Texas, El Paso
- Jon Law — University Medical Center of El Paso
- Linda Lawson, DNP, RN, NEA-BC — Hospitals of Providence
- Jose Luna, MD — Centro san Vincente
- Kristina Mena, MSPH, PhD — University of Texas, Houston School of Public Health
- Edward Michelson, MD — Texas Tech University, El Paso
- COL Neil Nelson — William Beaumont Army Medical Center
- Commissioner Vincent Perez — County Government
- Mario Rascon, MD, MHCM — El Paso County Office of the Medical Examiner
- Representative Claudia Rodriguez — City Government
- Jeff Schuster, MD — El Paso Children's Hospital
- Emma Schwartz, MPH — Medical Centers of the Americas Foundation
- Michael Woods, PhD — Burrell College

Task Force Mission and Guiding Principles

- Mission: Recommend strategies that decision-makers may consider as they work to protect population health and well-being
- Objective: To create evidence-based, data-driven, actionable recommendations to inform leadership's considerations on 1) reopening El Paso, 2) responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and 3) preparing for future public health threats
- Guiding Principles:
 - Evidence-based recommendations
 - Equity
 - Preparedness
 - Resilience
 - Transparency



Recommendation Process

- Met weekly as large committee and in smaller subcommittees (4)
 - Communication, Data, Preparedness, Testing and Contact Tracing
- Synthesized information from multiple sources (peer-reviewed and open-source literature city/county data requests)
- Met with subset of community stakeholders (public schools, private business operators, employment/labor law) and disseminated survey to collect information
- Leveraged multifaceted backgrounds in medical and public health, academia, government, non-government
- Created recommendations to be implemented in three different timeframes:
 - Within 30 days of report (short-term)
 - Within 6 months of report (mid-term)
 - Within 18 months of report (long-term)






Data Requests

- The Task Force requested the following data (aligned with the recommendation)

#	Request	Recommendation
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Testing collection site data (collection provider, location, operation timeframes, reservation requirements, testing type, collection capacity, turnaround times, data reporting, billing) Contact tracers 	Data #1 Testing #1, 3
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Syndromic surveillance methods and platforms 	Data #1, 2
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private testing partner data reporting and frequency 	Data #1
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Testing of incarcerated population and detainees 	Testing #1, 2
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact tracing initiatives across Texas using grant and federal funding 	Testing #3
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational charts and budgets for city/county public health department, EOC, BorderRAC, labs, clinics, etc. 	Preparedness #4
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobile testing sites (location, samples processed #, types of platforms used, # of personnel, turnaround time) 	Data #1 Testing #1, 2, 3, 4

Overarching

- Recommendation #1: Create a COVID-specific scorecard using available data
- Background:
 - Scorecards leverage indicators and metrics to provide context around existing data
 - Provides quantifiable method to assess goals for reopening
- Recommendation:
 - Adapt Harvard Global Institute [scorecard](#) for El Paso by redefining metrics
 - Develop a public-facing scorecard with high-level summary data
 - Develop a more detailed scorecard for decision-makers
 - Transition scorecard to focus on “healthy community” and resilience metrics for public health initiatives beyond the pandemic

KEY METRICS		Phase 1	Thresholds To Enter Phase 2	Thresholds To Enter Phase 3	Thresholds To Enter Phase 4
 Infection Rate	Maximum social-distancing		Sustained decline in daily cases for 21 consecutive days, as reflected in the 5-day rolling average	Continued decline in daily cases	< 1% of tests conducted are positive
			< 10% of tests conducted are positive	< 3% of tests conducted are positive	
			Current estimate of <25 cases per 100,000 population per day	Current estimate of < 10 cases per 100,000 population per day	Current estimate of < 1 case per 100,000 population per week
 Diagnostic Testing & Surveillance	Maximum social-distancing		All symptomatic people, all asymptomatic high-risk individuals or contacts can access testing	All symptomatic people, all asymptomatic high-risk individuals or contacts can access testing	All symptomatic people, all asymptomatic high-risk individuals or contacts, and anyone who requests a test/any physician who orders a test can access testing
			Tests are readily available for all essential personnel	Tests are readily available for all essential personnel	Tests are readily available for all essential personnel
			Majority of test results are returned within 48 hours	Majority of test results are returned within 24 hours	Majority of test results are returned within 24 hours
			Increasing number of tests per day	Increasing number of tests per day; nearing sufficiency	Sufficient number of tests per day
 Case & Contact Investigations	Maximum social-distancing		75% of close contacts are elicited and located within 48 hours	90% of close contacts are elicited, located, tested within 24 hours	95% of close contacts are elicited, located, tested within 24 hours
			At least 30 contact tracers per 100,000, as well as case managers, care resource coordinators, community health workers	At least 30 contact tracers per 100,000, as well as case managers, care resource coordinators, community health workers	At least 30 contact tracers per 100,000, as well as case managers, care resource coordinators, community health workers
			> 80% of new cases from identified contacts	> 80% of new cases from identified contacts	> 90% of new cases from identified contacts
 Healthcare Readiness	Maximum social-distancing		At least 15% of existing ICU capacity is available to accommodate a surge in COVID-19 patients without resorting to crisis standards of care	At least 30% of existing ICU capacity is available to accommodate a surge in COVID-19 patients without resorting to crisis standards of care	At least 30% of existing ICU capacity is available to accommodate a surge in COVID-19 patients without resorting to crisis standards of care
			Sufficient PPE for majority healthcare facilities, at-risk facilities, essential personnel	Sufficient PPE for majority healthcare facilities, at-risk facilities, essential personnel	Sufficient PPE for majority healthcare facilities, at-risk facilities, essential personnel
				PPE reserve of at least 2-4 weeks	PPE reserve of at least 90 days
 Protecting At-Risk Populations	Maximum social-distancing		Sufficient testing, quarantine, isolation in long-term care facilities	Sufficient testing, quarantine, isolation in long-term care facilities	Sufficient testing, quarantine, isolation in long-term care facilities
			% of cases reported from long-term care facilities < 20% over last 28 days	% of cases reported from long-term care facilities < 10% over last 28 days	% of cases reported from long-term care facilities < 5% over last 28 days
			Local rapid response teams are available to respond to outbreak hotspots within 24 hours with sufficient PPE	Local rapid response teams are available to respond to outbreak hotspots within 24 hours with sufficient PPE	Local rapid response teams are available to respond to outbreak hotspots within 24 hours with sufficient PPE

Overarching

- Recommendation #2: Implement recommendations in a regional, cross-sector, public-private, collaborative way using available resources
- Background:
 - The recommendations require a multifaceted approach to successfully implement in a comprehensive, timely, and cost-effective manner with optimal buy-in from key stakeholders
- Recommendation:
 - Ensure regional public-private partners from multiple sectors are incorporated into the recommendation implementation process

Preparedness

- Recommendation #1: Develop and disseminate school reopening plans
- Background:
 - Public and private schools need assistance in developing their health and safety reopening plans
 - Current recommendations are broad, focusing on curriculum delivery rather than public health preventive measures
- Recommendation:
 - Harmonize process for schools to reopen across the region
 - Tailor state and national guidance for local needs
 - Provide specific health and safety recommendations to schools
 - Provide unified messaging for all regional public, private, and charter schools

Preparedness

- Recommendation #2: Provide performance improvement reports
- Background:
 - After-action reports are data driven and can identify key areas of concern for leaders to prioritize for future planning efforts
- Recommendation:
 - Use an independent entity to prepare a progress report that identifies and addresses fundamental issues faced during the pandemic and lessons learned
 - Consider after-action and performance reporting strategies that integrate input from stakeholders

“By reviewing the [After Action Reports], we believe that public health and emergency management leaders can develop data-driven support system for identifying key areas of concern when prioritizing planning efforts. Although knowledge management approaches are known to work when all members of the target community have the same technical goals, are motivated by a common interest, are organized on a flat hierarchy, and are receptive to innovation .” [Int J Environ Res Public Health](#). 2012 Aug; 9(8): 2949–2963.



Preparedness

- Recommendation #3: Integrate and strengthen communication across border health agencies
- Background:
 - Current communication between public health and medical providers across borders is informal and sporadic
 - There is a need for structured, institutionalized information sharing
- Recommendation:
 - Create stronger, formal ties with Juarez and facilitate an understanding of public health activities across borders
 - Identify best practices and lessons learned

Preparedness

- Recommendation #4: Initiate a process to develop a model and strategic plan to address future public health organization, funding, resources, and staffing
- Background:
 - Public health organizations have varying priorities and limited resources to execute these broad missions
 - As a result, more immediate issues take precedence over long-term planning and preparedness
- Recommendation:
 - Begin to plan for a robust benchmarking and strategic planning process to ensure strong public health response to future crises
 - Identify key partners and resources required to develop the strategic plan and model

Data

- Recommendation #1: Increase accessibility and quality of data
- Background:
 - Healthcare providers and decision-makers need relevant, timely, accurate information to guide their decisions
- Recommendation:
 - Increase accessibility of information to healthcare providers and decision makers
 - Enhance private testing reporting to obtain true number of tests conducted and track data changes over time
 - Utilize third-party resources to understand methods to collate and share data
 - Monitor data on demand for testing at the site-level
 - Utilize health information exchanges (PHIX) to facilitate transparency of test results
 - Leverage central hubs of testing information to ensure providers can access data
 - Identify and report standard and universal data points that can be used as COVID progress indicators, including test rate positivity on a rolling 7-day period
 - Make data publicly available and provide free online tools for analyses (Tableau, Power BI)
 - Ensure historical testing data, by CDC week, can be viewed by public health officials and decision-makers

Data

- Recommendation #2: Implement surveillance studies to assess community transmission and prevalence, as well as create a predictive tool
- Background:
 - Surveillance is important to monitor spread of disease, understand severity, and monitor changes in behavior of virus
 - Surveillance outcomes can guide decision-makers on targeted control measures
 - Random and environmental sampling aid in approximately population prevalence and detect background prevalence, serving as early warning system, while using little resources
- Recommendation:
 - Work with academic partners to execute surveillance studies that assess community transmission and prevalence of SARS-CoV-2
 - Antibody testing to determine prevalence of COVID-19 in community and evaluate utility of serological surveillance
 - Conduct random sampling study using grid system to assess COVID-19 prevalence and identify communities requiring additional public health resources
 - Work with partners to collect wastewater for surveillance to determine background levels and spikes in COVID-19
 - Develop surveillance of school-aged children to determine transmission rate
 - Use data to create predictive tool

Testing and Contact Tracing

- Recommendation #1: Expand testing resources to ensure accessibility, quick turnaround times, and demand
- Background:
 - Reported incidents of individuals having difficulty obtaining appointments within 24 hours, testing sites that are over an hour away, being turned away because they are asymptomatic or do not have a doctor's order
- Recommendation:
 - Expand private/city/county testing resources to ensure symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals receive testing appointments within 24 hours of request and results within 24–48 hours of collection
 - Ensure testing sites accommodate rural areas, high incidence areas, vulnerable populations
 - Make arrangements with additional private testing partners to ensure scalability during high-demand situations
 - Establish mobile testing sites
 - Expand testing to accommodate children 2 years old and younger

Testing and Contact Tracing

- Recommendation #2: Support testing strategy development for private businesses and schools
- Background:
 - Business operators and schools want to open in a safe, responsible way and don't know how testing plays a role in these efforts, including the testing options, how often tests should be administered, interpretation of results, and follow-on procedures for positive test results
- Recommendation:
 - Support business owners and schools with their testing needs by coordinating a testing strategy based on size and function/location
 - Create online toolkit for these entities that includes lists of validated, reliable tests and reputable commercial testing services, broad physician orders, HIPAA compliance training, templates for consent/authorization to release medical records, guidance on employment/labor law issues, guidance on isolation/quarantine and contact tracing
 - Ensure accurate and timely data sharing and reporting
 - Include guidance on how to interpret test results and subsequent response

Testing and Contact Tracing

- Recommendation #3: Expand contact tracing capabilities by leveraging partnerships
- Background:
 - Contact tracing prevents further transmission by quickly identifying individuals at-risk of developing disease
 - To be effective, contacts must be identified in timely manner
- Recommendation:
 - Work with universities in Texas to coordinate contact tracing initiatives and resources
 - Consider technologies that can assist contact tracing efforts and coordination

Testing and Contact Tracing

- Recommendation #4: Coordinate community members' ability to access testing and treatment resources using a patient navigation model
- Background:
 - Current information resources lack comprehensive information and may not be easy to navigate
- Recommendation:
 - Create a centralized capability to improve communication of testing resource options
 - Hire and train dedicated personnel to coordinate testing resources and appointments (COVID Navigator)
 - Build simple, tree-style navigation capability using various platforms to determine best testing options based on an individual's needs

Testing and Contact Tracing

- Recommendation #5: Incorporate other pathogen testing at current testing sites
- Background:
 - Seasonal infectious disease spread begins in autumn; symptomology may be similar to COVID-19
 - Many physicians are not seeing COVID-19 symptomatic patients in their office
 - Testing of these patients, accurate diagnosis, and targeted treatment will be paramount as COVID-19 continues
- Recommendation:
 - Expand city/county testing center capabilities to accommodate influenza, *Haemophilus influenzae*, *streptococcus*, *meningococcus*, pertussis, and other seasonal infectious disease testing

Communication

- Recommendation #1: Institute cross-sector collaborative partnership to create a communication strategy
- Background:
 - Public health communication is grounded in multiple disciplines (health education, marketing, public relations, psychology, informatics)
 - Consistent, transparent, and clear communication, provided early and often is essential
- Recommendation:
 - Commission and fund a trusted, neutral community organization to manage a cross-collaborative partnership
 - Instruct the collaborative to develop a communication strategy that includes:
 - Inventorying existing regional and nation-wide communications resources/strategies
 - Agree on effective COVID-19 health communications strategy that reduces risk of virus transmission
 - Agree on effective communications resource materials (e.g., symbols, videos, educational materials)
 - Agree on information communication strategy, including communicating pending/new government orders, testing locations, contact tracing resources, outbreak locations, and epidemiological data (7-day rolling average for infections/hospitalizations); make data publicly available and provide free tools to analyze data

Communication

- Recommendation #2: Centralize and coordinate COVID-19 information and health communication resources
- Background:
 - The public requires a centralized, coordinated platform to easily access updated information
- Recommendation:
 - Develop a platform that centralizes and coordinates community-wide COVID-19 information, health communication, and health communication resources
 - Use a single website (combine existing sites; provide links to ancillary sites)
 - Provide links to community resources (mental health, rental assistance)
 - Have feedback mechanisms so users can provide input
 - Promote site widely throughout community

Communication

- Recommendation #3: Partner with community health workers to create a community outreach strategy
- Background:
 - Community health workers (CHW) have access to populations that typical government channels may lack and have unique ability to disseminate important information
 - CHWs share culture, ethnicity, language and life experiences with those they serve
 - CHWs are essential for providing culturally appropriate health education and have shown to improve access and outcomes
- Recommendation:
 - The cross-sector collaborative should incorporate community health workers into the communication strategy planning to ensure key messages are developed for all community members and a dynamic outreach strategy is implemented

Communication

- Recommendation #4: Promote modelling of public health behaviors by various community leaders
- Background:
 - Constituents often look to community leaders (e.g., elected, faith-based, business, athletes) to model behaviors
- Recommendation:
 - Community leaders should continue to model protective health behaviors essential for citizen's safety during the pandemic
 - Provide training to community leaders on COVID transmission and prevention
 - Develop pledges for community leaders to sign (“I took the pledge”)
 - Identify leaders among youth and engage them

Communication

- Recommendation #5: Establish a process for residents and stakeholders to provide input on pandemic response for the government to take under advisement
- Background:
 - Understanding the concerns and needs of the community is important prior to taking governmental action
- Recommendation:
 - Create a process in which residents/stakeholders are notified of pending/new governmental orders and policy and a mechanisms for individuals to provide feedback for the government to take under advisement

Next Steps

- Develop and refine mid- and long-term recommendations

An aerial night view of a city skyline, featuring various skyscrapers and buildings illuminated against a dark sky. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal color. The word "Questions" is centered in white text.

Questions