

COVID-19 Huddle Notes for December 21, 2021

Government Relations

Final Week of Statewide Redistricting Meetings

This week, the California Redistricting Commission will host its final meetings on the statewide redistricting process. Next week, on Dec. 27, they will submit the final Congressional, State Senate and Assembly maps that would be in effect for the next 10 years to the California Secretary of State. If you would like to participate or tune into these online meetings, you can view them at <https://www.wedrawthelinesca.org/meetings>.

We encourage you and your staff to participate and have your voices heard in this final week of redistricting. The Civic Engagement Team will provide an update on all the new redistricting maps in the next coming weeks once they are finalized.

If you have questions regarding redistricting, please contact Jonathan Flores, Civic Engagement Specialist, at jonaflores@altamed.org

Top News Lines

Federal

- The omicron variant now makes up a majority of COVID-19 cases in the United States, at 73.2 percent, per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in updated figures released on Monday. The statistics are for the week ending Dec. 18 and show the rapid spread of the variant in the U.S. That spike is a significant increase from just 12.6 percent of cases one week earlier.
<https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/586670-cdc-omicron-now-a-majority-of-us-covid-19-cases-73-percent?userid=854574&rl=1>
- The CDC's vaccine advisory committee voted unanimously to recommend Pfizer and Moderna COVID vaccines over the single dose Johnson & Johnsons shot because of increasing evidence that the company's shots can trigger a rare blood clot disorder.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/16/health/johnson-and-johnson-vaccine-blood-clots.html>
- The CDC endorsed the "test-to stay: policies that allow close contacts of students infected with the coronavirus to remain in classroom if they test negative. The CDC decided to more firmly embrace the approach after school districts in Chicago and Los Angeles found that COVID-19 infections did not increase under such policies.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/17/health/unvaccinated-children-covid-testing-cdc.html>

State

- Last Wednesday, California began its statewide mask mandate for indoor public spaces due to the rising COVID cases and concerns of the omicron variant. The order impacts roughly half the state's population, including San Diego and Orange counties, the Inland Empire, the Central Valley and rural Northern California – since other counties, such as Los Angeles, already have an indoor mask mandate with no end date. The statewide mask mandate order is set to expire Jan. 15.
https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-12-13/california-orders-statewide-mask-order-starting-wednesday?utm_id=44491&sfmc_id=493740

Medical Director of Infection Prevention

Omicron is exploding in the United States. It is now at 73% of the cases and in Southern California it is about 59% of cases which is incredibly high. Dr. Brown will be talking more about Omicron at the 12:15pm Grand Rounds.

Dr. Brown's key elements to practice and stay safe over the holidays at work and at home are as follows with the new addition of testing prior to gatherings.

Screening ourselves, making sure all of our guests screened themselves, masking, distancing/ventilation. Distancing is important but the ventilation is incredibly important as well. Cleaning, which includes hand hygiene, and vaccination for everybody that is eligible including 5-11 year olds, plus boosters if you are eligible for a booster. If you haven't gotten your booster please do so. For those of you that have not been able to get fully vaccinated, you are not as protected as everyone else. It is very important that you protect yourself as much as you can because you don't have that extra layer of protection with the vaccine.

We are fortunate that we have access to a lot of rapid testing in the United States. AltaMed and HRSA are making it easier for people. There are rapid antigen tests that are in a kit of two for about \$25 that people can buy at pharmacies. Emails were sent to leaders across the organization to let them know that AltaMed is able to send additional rapid test kits that can be handed out to staff. We will also be receiving test kits through HRSA to hand out to patients in the community. Dr. Brown will also be talking more about that at Grand Rounds.

To start with screening. All guests should screen themselves before they leave the house or come to a gathering. If someone has new symptoms that could be a respiratory illness (new sniffling, sore throat, cough, headache) they should not leave the house and should not come to the event.

On the day of the event, everyone takes a rapid covid test. If any of the rapid tests are positive, that person should definitely stay home. They can also go and get a confirmatory test with a PCR but they should miss the event. If the rapid test is negative then you move on to the next step.

The next step is masking. We understand that masking is really hard especially when we are around our friends and family. It is very important that you wear a mask when you are indoors because there is not good ventilation. If you would like to take your mask off it is better to be outside. Plan to have your gatherings outside so that there is good ventilation



for everyone. Dr. Brown would personally recommend either having a surgical mask with a cloth mask over it, a really good fitting surgical mask or a KN-95.

The next step is distancing and ventilation. It is not as cold here as it is in other parts of the country. You can wear your scarves, your mittens or your cute hat, a nice warm sweater or jacket. Make sure you dress warm so that you are comfortable and willing to stay outside. Hand out blankets if you need to.

Cleaning and hand hygiene. Make sure that everybody has good access to wash their hands before and after they touch any shared surfaces. Try to minimize shared utensils, and clean off the tables as often as possible.

The final step is asking everyone to get vaccinated and to get their booster before the holiday event. We need to protect those that can't get vaccinated and/or may have a medical condition and can't be fully vaccinated. It is not worth it to have a holiday gathering where 3-4 weeks down the line you have a loved one that is in the hospital or on a ventilator or god forbid dies because we let down our guard. We need to protect everyone and everyone that is eligible should get vaccinated.

Human Resources

The IRS has released the new retirement plan contributions limits for 2022. Employees will be able to contribute up to \$20,500 dollars towards their 403b retirement plan. Employees that will be of age 50 or more by 2022 will have the ability to contribute an additional \$6,500 dollars for a total of \$27,000. We remind all employees that AltaMed offers an employer match after the completion of 1 year of service. The match is dollar for dollar up to 4% of your bi-weekly earnings. Participation in the 403b plan is voluntary and is open all year long for employees who wish to begin their contributions or for existing participants to make changes to their deferral amounts. Employees have access to TIAA's around the clock financial consultants and wealth managers by simply calling TIAA directly. Employees that wish to learn more can visit our Benefits page in Town Square.

We would like to thank all of our leaders for encouraging employees to complete their self-reviews, as it is beneficial in the efforts of determining employee merit increases and bonuses. Yesterday evening, a memorandum was sent by our Talent Management team, informing all leaders that the merit and bonus tool is now available. This tool is designed to assist you, as a leader, in completing the merit and bonus worksheets, as well as begin your planning for performance discussions with employees. The window to complete this process is now through Friday, December 31st. We ask that you please reference the memorandum as it contains additional guidance on where and how to access this tool. Should there be any questions, please contact performancemanagement@altamed.org.