

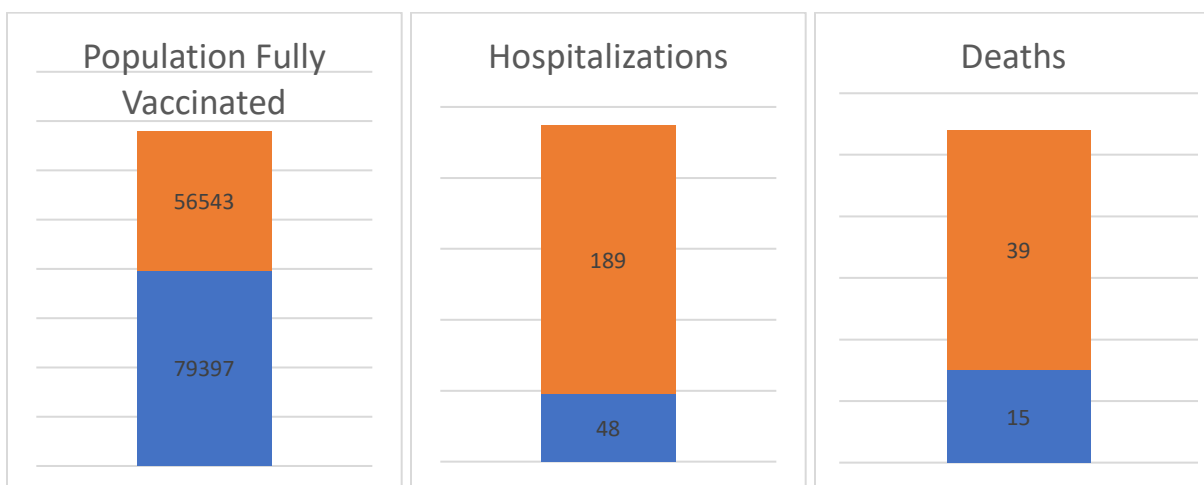


BOS COVID Update
10/28/21

COVID-19 case rates have continued to decline since your last board update 2 weeks ago. Under the CDPH “Blueprint for a Safer Economy” we would continue to be assigned “Purple Tier” as of today. Based on CDC data tracker website, Humboldt County continues to be in the “Red, High Transmission” tier. Per CDC guidance, all residents in “Red, High Transmission” tier counties are recommended to mask regardless of vaccination status, and avoid gatherings and crowded places, especially those with risk factors for severe COVID-19 illness or those who are unvaccinated or both.

Hospitalizations remain at or near where they were during the peaks of previous winter and spring surges despite the declining case rates. Our local hospitals continue to feel the impact of COVID-19 hospitalizations despite this decline due to the past several months of very high COVID-19 cases leading to delayed care for other conditions. The average age for hospitalization in the Delta surge differs among fully vaccinated and unvaccinated groups (57 years of age average for unvaccinated hospitalizations, 74 years of age average for post-vaccine infection hospitalizations). This is also true of deaths based on vaccination status (65 years of age average for unvaccinated deaths, 79 years of age average for post-vaccine infection deaths).

The graphs below illustrate that during the Delta surge the number of hospitalizations and deaths were largely in the unvaccinated despite the fully vaccinated making up a larger percentage of the population. Approximately 59% of the county is fully vaccinated at this time. Blue represents fully vaccinated; orange represents unvaccinated populations.



Monoclonal antibody clinics at Saint Joseph's Hospital in Eureka continue to help mitigate the hospital impact and reduce overall morbidity and mortality. The state has extended support for this clinic to continue through the end of November. So far none of those who have become infected with COVID-19 virus and then received monoclonal antibody treatment have been hospitalized. And while this treatment is very effective in the short term at helping protect our hospitals and the individuals who received the treatment, it does not replace vaccination in that the antibody protection afforded by this treatment lasts only a few months. Vaccine immunity is expected to last for years if not a lifetime through B cell immunity. Those who received antibody treatment are recommended to get vaccinated 90 days after the antibody treatment so they can get that B cell immunity that is not afforded by monoclonal antibodies.

Vaccines continue to be the best, safest, most cost-effective protection against COVID-19 disease for our community. Data continues to support that communities with higher vaccination rates have seen less hospital and death burden during the Delta surge despite some cases in the fully vaccinated. Post-vaccine cases are milder, less likely to spread to a close contact, and are much less likely to result in severe disease. Emerging data continues to support the decoupling of case data from hospitalization and death data in highly vaccinated communities. This is important going forward as we learn more about how to best protect our community. Vaccination rates and hospitalization rates, not case rates, will likely be the most important indicators of success against COVID-19 in the coming months.

Humboldt County Public Health vaccine clinics are providing all three boosters and additional doses for immunocompromised, and we are preparing for likely CDC emergency use authorization (EUA) of Pfizer pediatric dosage for the 5-11 age group. With the expansion of boosters by CDC approval this past week we have seen increases in number of boosters given across the county. Approximately 8000 booster shots have been given in Humboldt County based on preliminary data provided by CDPH this week, accounting for approximately 6% of the county population. These boosters help to reduce the hospital and death burden in the fully vaccinated as well as lowering the number of infections and severity of infections in those getting boosters.

Humboldt County Public Health will continue to support efforts to increase vaccination in our community as it is the best tool to end the pandemic. Meeting benchmarks of 70-80% of the total population fully vaccinated could afford us a high enough level of community immunity protection that public health measures such as masking, social distancing, avoiding gatherings could be lifted. With 65% of the current total county population with at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, we could bring our total population vaccinated much closer to those goals by getting those partially vaccinated to finish their vaccination series. CDC age eligibility expansion to 5-11-year-olds will also help to raise our total vaccination rates in the coming months. So, while those benchmarks may seem too high or too far away, we can achieve them in the near future and reduce need for public health restrictions with strong community effort and support for ongoing vaccination. Several local organizations, business, venues have taken steps



towards requiring vaccination, another step which helps increase the overall rate of vaccination in the community. While boosters will help to reduce some of the COVID-19 impact by reducing hospitalization and death in those at the highest risk, booster will not get us out of the pandemic. Only increasing first and second doses will get us out of the pandemic.

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