

- Good afternoon, today is Friday, June 5th, 2020. My name is Michelle Shoresman. Thank you for tuning in to San Luis Obispo County's COVID-19 media briefing. This afternoon, we have two speakers for you. We will begin today with SLO Food Bank CEO, Garret Olson. He will be followed by County Health Officer Dr. Penny Borenstein. County Administrative Officer and Emergency Services Director, Wade Horton, is also here and available to take questions. Thank you to our American sign language interpreter, Robin Babb. And now SLO Food Bank, CEO, Garret Olson.

- Thank you, Michelle. And good afternoon. My name is Garret Olson. I'm the chief executive officer of the SLO Food Bank. And I'm here once again to talk about the amazing partnership between the SLO Food Bank and the County of San Luis Obispo. Over the last three months, while the shelter-at-home order has been in place, the County of San Luis Obispo and the SLO Food Bank have worked hand in hand to provide food and prescription medication for self-isolating seniors and the medically vulnerable. For those people who have conditions that don't allow them to safely leave their home to get food, and don't have friends, neighbors, caregivers, or other community organizations readily available to bring them food and medicine. In that time together, we have provided 9,820 deliveries of food. That's almost 400,000 pounds worth of food just to this one program within the SLO Food Bank. And through this program, we've also provided 100 prescription medication deliveries for those that were unable to go out and get their new prescriptions filled, or their recurring prescriptions. And finally, thanks to a donation from Lemos Feed & Pet, we've also provided over 50 household deliveries of pet food to people who are self-isolating and are unable to go out and provide for the needs of their pets. It has truly been a pleasure partnering with the SLO County, and its disaster service workers who are a vital part of our SLO Food Bank team. We have been taking care of our neighbors in need at a time when suddenly they've been unable to care for themselves. And in many cases, unable to feel like they could even safely leave their home. As we move forward, our communities will begin to slowly and carefully reopen. And I'm sure Dr. Borenstein is gonna talk about that careful reopening here in just a few minutes. And as we engage to care for our loved ones, our friends, and our neighbors, even those who we may not have known before this emergency struck, we should find this as an opportunity to build our community. With our gradual reopening in mind over the past week, the county has been working with each home delivery client to identify a transition plan, to move them from a home delivery model to a more self-sustaining model. That transition may be through accessing one of the Food Bank's 77 agency

partners throughout the County, accessing one of the Food Bank's 60 monthly distributions throughout the County, by enrolling clients in CalFresh, which allows online food ordering and home delivery, or by reaching out through a compassionate neighbor like you. The SLO Food Bank is working with the county to identify solutions for those in need to continue to get nutritious healthy food. For a small number of clients who do not have local family, friends, or other resources for food, the SLO Food Bank will be reaching out to local communities, service clubs, faith organizations, and allied agencies to help bridge that need. The SLO Food Bank will continue to serve those in need through our distributions and through our support to our agency partners throughout the county. So what can you do to help? The last time I was before you, I mentioned that traditionally, this time of year, we host a community awareness and fundraising event. And that this year we were planning something different because of the pandemic. Well, today is Hunger Awareness Day, hence the shirt. And we are pivoting the word of 2020 to take Hunger Awareness Day virtual, to help raise funds for those in need throughout our county for those seniors, children, and hardworking families. Before COVID struck, tragically, one in six SLO County residents experienced hunger every day. Since COVID, the volume of food the SLO Food Bank has been delivering throughout this community has tripled. You may be surprised to know that for a \$5 donation to the SLO Food Bank, you can feed a family of four for three days. For about the same price as a low tier bottle of wine, you can feed a hundred hungry people. And unlike that bottle of wine, you won't wake up with a headache the next day, you'll probably wake up feeling a whole lot better. The need has never been higher in SLO County. And in honor of Hunger Awareness Day, I ask that you look within yourself and see if you have the ability to help others. Please visit us at slofoodbank.org and give at a level that is comfortable to you, realizing that every dollar produces seven nutritious meals for neighbors in need. So every amount is vital to our mission. Please help us to continue to help everyone in our community to get healthy nutritious food. And if you need help, our message to you is we're here for you. To find food in our community, please visit slofoodbank.org and go to the food locator. Thank you very much. It's now my pleasure to turn it over to Dr. Penny Borenstein.

- Thank you, and good afternoon. So as always, I will start with where we stand in the number of cases in our county. In San Luis Obispo County, today, we are at 291 confirmed cases. Of those we have five individuals in the hospital and three are in intensive care. And fully 90% of those who have had the disease have recovered. I

want to remind you on a Friday afternoon that at this point, we are going forward, we'll not be posting individual case numbers on the weekend, but we will resume on Monday with updating our case counts. I do want to address the obvious of, what's going on in our community at this time. Obviously, it has been a tumultuous and very emotional week, and many people are gathering in large numbers, as part of protests or action rallies. I was asked, when I last came before you a few days back, whether this was a risk for COVID and my answer is yes, and it still is. So I want to address that from the perspective of the pandemic and many people coming together in large numbers. So, let's talk first about how COVID is spread. And just as a reminder, the very circumstances of coming together in these types of rallies put people at higher risk by virtue of the number of people who are together, but also the activities that are going on. So if people are sick, coughing, sneezing, those types of things make a big difference, but so does singing, chanting, shouting, even just talking can put people at risk. Mask, the use of face coverings or masks does help. It helps prevent the talker, or singer, or chanter from transmitting the disease. And it may have some measure of protection for the individual, but it is an imperfect solution to the activities that are going on. So let me just ask people that if you are participating in these rallies, despite these risks for COVID-19, that you consider a number of things, with respect to your involvement. First, very much so, we ask that people do wear face coverings, try to spread out as much as possible, physical distancing in the amount of space that is available is absolutely difficult, but I think especially vulnerable people should stay away. Sick people should absolutely stay away. And those who are there need to spread out as much as possible and wear masks. In addition, there is a risk of transmission. We continue to see cases in our county and we do not want this to be the leading edge of spread throughout members of our community. And so one way to address that is to ask that people who are attending rallies or gatherings, that they consider getting tested. And getting tested would not mean going from the rally to get tested, or the next day, we have to understand that there's an incubation period. So if you are exposed at an event like this, your positive result is not likely to show up for several days. In fact, five to six days out is the best time or even longer to be tested. But that would be probably the earliest recommendation for getting tested after attendance of one of these rallies. And this is true, whether or not you're wearing a mask. And the reason for that is that you might well see a negative result, even if you've been infected, if you get tested too soon. So, I just continue to ask of people that you do the right thing, spread out, wear masks, consider getting tested, or not

go at all, especially if you're in vulnerable populations or try, if you're a leader of this entity, try to keep them to smaller size gatherings. And finally, that anyone who does attend or anyone of our community can absolutely benefit from the reminder of what symptoms to look for. So again, within a week or five to seven days, or even longer of being in a situation where you're putting yourself at higher risk, the things to look for are the, most prominent symptoms are a fever, a high temperature, cough, shortness of breath, but also other types of symptoms like scratchy sore throat, achy body chills, loss of smell, or taste, are some of the most common features of this disease. I do have some good news for the community. We continue to see low numbers. Yesterday, we had a bit of an uptick, but that's not terribly unusual. We've had higher numbers on occasion in past days. It does seem like we are continuing to, with a low number of cases. So in the last 24 hours, we had three cases. And with that, and with the situation that we are in in our county, we are going to be able to move forward in a number of sectors in the very near term. And what this will look like is, you may have heard the governor today make mention of the States issuing of additional sector or industry guidances. We do anticipate that quite a number of industry sector guidances will be coming forward today this afternoon. I don't know specifically what time, but as many as a dozen will be moving forward. So the process for what happens when the state posts guidance is twofold. First, a sector cannot move forward until that state guidance is posted on their website. And we will additionally be making that information available on our [readyslo.org](https://ready.slo.org) website. So, first and foremost, is for all of the sectors that we've been talking about in stage three of the state's roadmap, resiliency roadmap, a number of those are anticipated to be open for moving forward after the state post the guidelines and after myself and our public health team have had an opportunity to review the guidance and approve the guidance for moving forward in our county. Many counties are not experiencing the good metrics that we are, and the expectation is in the state and in this county as well that we continue ongoing to look at our metrics, and that will guide our every decision as to how far and how wide we can open for business. As I've said too many times before, we have continued to have a flat curve, we are in good shape. So my expectation is that we will move forward as expeditiously as we can in all of these additional sectors. But I don't want folks to think that as soon as the guidance is posted on the state website, that you open your door in the next five minutes, there is still a process of approval by the County health officer. As I said, I'll be looking at them, spending time over the weekend and moving just as fast as we possibly can.

But we need to make sure that the conditions and the guidance is consistent with what we've been doing in other sectors and with the circumstances on the ground in our local community. In the meantime, when those guidances are posted, that would be the perfect time for, anyone in that business or that industry to read that guidance in great detail, to understand it, and to begin to put into place on the ground their implementation plan. So do a risk assessment, self-certify that you're ready, wait for the health officer's approval and then move forward with opening that business. So that's what I have to say on that score at this moment. There's a couple of other bits of news to share today related to local executive orders that we have had in place. There are two folds. So I think at our last press meeting, we talked about the two remaining orders that we have in place. One is related to lodging. So as we put that into place on May 17th, we were particularly concerned about a big surge of visitors, especially over Memorial Day weekend. We have seen quite a bit of travel into our County over many weeks, but particularly over Memorial Day weekend, we were most concerned. And the intent of this order was to address just that, to try to curtail the amount of tourism that we were seeing in our county. With us having low rates of disease, our most vulnerable issue for COVID-19 is to bring in new cases of disease from outside our county. Whereas we may only have one or two cases in any given community, there are many parts of the state and the nation, quite frankly, that are continuing to see high numbers of disease cases. And we would like to continue to keep our numbers low. And the way to do that is to try to discourage travel from other jurisdictions. So the mechanism that we used to try to do that was through this lodging order to limit occupancy. Quite frankly, we saw that we fell short of our intent. Lots of people came and we waited an incubation period to see what the impact of that was. And because we are not seeing a surge in cases due to that, and because we don't feel that the lodging order really met its intent, we are prepared to lift that today. We've continued to look at our cases, and more particularly our hospitalization rates and ICU care. So, with that, as of today, we are going to be lifting that lodging order. Another order that we have had in place almost from the beginning, it dates back to March 26th, is restrictions on visitation to our general community hospitals, as well as many congregate care settings, all manner of group living, and adult rehabilitation facilities, and intermediate care facilities, and a host of different types of congregate care living situations. With new guidance that has come out from the state health department, as well as our continued good metrics and our dialogue with the administrators of those facilities, including hospitals, and many of our

congregate living situations, we feel now that we can return that responsibility for using the guidance that's available and making smart decisions for visitation within those facilities. The one sector that we continue to be concerned about is skilled nursing facilities or nursing homes, as many of you may know it. That has been the greatest area of cases and fatalities in our country. We right now know that Santa Barbara County has a small outbreak in one of their facilities to ourself. And so we continue to keep our eye on that particular industry, working very closely with the administration and feel that we need to retain our visitation policy for that industry. So what we are doing is allowing our original order to lapse, we'll terminate it and we are putting into place a new order that is specific just to the skilled nursing facilities. And with that, that is what I wanted to say today, and I will open it up for questions. Yes.

- [Reporter] I have a few different questions about the protests and rallies that you were talking about. I know it's been a little bit over a week now, you mentioned you have an uptick. When are you able to attribute that in any way to protests or to any thing based on epidemiology, or are you anticipating to see an uptick next week?

- So the question was, given that we are now coming up on a week worth of these large gatherings of the form of protests or rallies. Have we seen additional cases that we attribute to those gatherings? And we anticipate seeing future cases related to it. So at this point we have not seen cases related to rallies that have already occurred. We are concerned and will be, as we do, every single day continue to watch where our cases are occurring, and we speak to every single person who tests positive, and get a very thorough listing of where they have been and who they've been in communication with in person. And so we'll be watching that closely.

- [Reporter] When you say you talk to people about where they've been, from an epidemiology standpoint, how can you tell, I guess, if there is an uptick? How do you connect all of that to attribute it to one thing or one event?

- So the question is, in talking to people who test positive, how do we get the information to determine that in fact, the source may have been a rally. In epidemiology and our contact tracing, this is not new to public health. people who have been experienced in this arena, have been doing this work for a very long time. We do tuberculosis tracing. We do sexually transmitted disease tracing. We do foodborne outbreak investigations. In many cases, just by virtue of talking to person after person, after person, we can actually link the chains of transmission

and determine what the likely source was, many occasions we can't. But when we have a large number of people that have a common source, we are often able to identify that the source is most likely that restaurant, that event, or things of that nature, or an air flight.

- [Reporter] As far as the protests, I've covered a few this week. And I think despite best intentions at some, physical distancing has not been happening. And there has been singing and chanting, which you described as a danger to spreading Corona virus. And then my question, as far as that goes, is there any discussion about enforcing physical distancing at rallies or protests moving forward?

- The question was, all of your recommendations haven't necessarily been complied with, especially in the realm of physical distancing. And is there an intent to enforce? With everything that we have done in this pandemic, our approach has consistently been regardless of the sector, regardless of whether it's a business, or an organization, or schools, or, or in this case, rallies, we provide guidance, we provide education, we ask of people to do their best at complying. And we continue to monitor our metrics and see if that's not good enough, and if we need to take harsher action as we go forward, but at this moment in time, we're not planning citations, but we do absolutely continue to ask that people do the right thing.

- [Reporter] Last question regarding this. As far as your recommendations for people who do want to protest or go to a rally, what do you recommend to them so that they can do that safely?

- So the question was how can people attend and do so safely. Stay on the fringes, wear a face covering, stay away from other people, absolutely do not attend if you are sick with COVID-like symptoms. That's our biggest vulnerability is having someone who is infected, doesn't know they're infected, or worse yet knows they are and thinks it's okay. Is to really try to ensure that we are not introducing the opportunity for a lot of cases to result from people gathering together. And the individuals to take their best precautions is really just try to stay outside or limit the number of people. Again, I reach out to the organizers to make that comment, more and fewer is better than, I mean, more rallies with fewer people is better than one large one.

- [Reporter] Thank you.

- [Reporter] In regards to the industries that might be reopening in the near future, is it because the state does not release those guidelines and your agency hasn't

had the chance to review that? Is it premature to inquire about what certain occupancy requirements might be for those industries?

- So the question was, do you have information yet on what the occupancy requirements are gonna be for the forthcoming industries that will have guidance released today? And I would say the answer is yes, having not seen those, yeah, I don't have enough information to really give that kind of detail. I do think that we've been preparing for this. And so even in advance of state guidance, our environmental health services division, for example, has put out a lot of business recommendations about how to create the conditions within any business setting, to do all the safety measures, be it sanitation, be it distancing, between tables or clothing racks even, or industries that have already opened have have taken the first shot at that. And others can learn from them. So there'll be a lot of similarity, but there may be unique circumstances depending on the nature of the industry. And we'll have to just wait and see how that, what is stated in the individual guidances.

- [Michelle] Any additional questions?

- Okay, thank you.

- Thank you all again for being here today and tuning in online. A few notes for today, appointments are available for COVID-19 testing on our website at ReadySlow.org. Appointment scheduling is open to the public and available for June 10th and 11th in Atascadero at the El Camino Homeless Organization. If you do not have access to the internet, you can also call the phone assistance center at 805-543-2444 to schedule an appointment. Additionally, sites remain available next week at Grover Beach, Ramona Gardens community center at our new site at the SLO veterans hall. Appointments for those sites can also be made at readyslo.org, or by calling 888-634-1123, if you don't have internet access. We will not be holding a media briefing this coming Monday afternoon, as usual at 3:15, due to County budget hearing occurring that day. Instead we will return on Friday, June 12th at 3:15 p.m. In the meantime, you can still get all our county's COVID-19 information at our website, [ReadySlow.org](https://readyslo.org), or by calling the phone assistance center or the public health information line. Thank you again for tuning in today. You will be able to reach this briefing at our county's website, between now and our next briefing next Friday. You can also tune into the live streams at KCOY or KSBY, and our County public health Facebook page. Thank you again for staying engaged. Be safe, and we will see you all here next Friday, June 12th at 3:15 p.m. Thank you again.