

- Good afternoon. Today is Wednesday, May 20th, 2020. My name is Michelle Shoresman and thank you for watching San Luis Obispo County's COVID-19 media briefing. This afternoon we have two speakers for you. We will begin today with chief executive officer of Compass Health, Darren Smith, and he will be followed by County Health Officer Dr. Penny Borenstein. We also have a few folks here to take your questions at the end of the statements. We have County Administrative Officer and Emergency Services Director Wade Horton. We also have Karen Jones, executive director and program manager of the San Luis Obispo County Long Term Care Ombudsman, and County Budget Director Emily Jackson. Thank you once again to our American Sign Language interpreter, Shelley Lawrence. And now Compass Health CEO and, or, I'm sorry, Compass Health CEO, Darren Smith.

- Good afternoon. My name is Darren Smith, CEO for Compass Health. Compass Health operates seven skilled nursing facilities here in San Luis Obispo County and cares for 600 local community members. Compass was founded by fifth-generation San Luis Obispo resident Mark Woolpert. The Woolpert family continues to play a major role in the operations and oversight. I mention this to assure the local community. All of our dependent adults are treated like loving community members. Their care and safety is paramount at all times but especially in these difficult times. Thank you to the county for all they are doing to protect county residents and for giving me an opportunity to discuss steps to keep some of the most vulnerable in our community safe. Compass was early to adopt CDC guidelines to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. We have worked closely with state and local health officials advocating for our population. Our residents are mainly elderly or are suffering from medical conditions that make them more vulnerable to COVID-19. Understand we have been quick to push back on any factors detrimental to those under our care. Anything that could bring COVID-19 into our environment should not only be a concern for Compass Health and our residents but also the community at large. To date, our actions, reactions, and execution has resulted in keeping residents COVID-free in our facilities. Our goal is to continue this success. For our residents, we now have less family interaction, so staff has been filling in as not only caregivers but also friends and advocates. We facilitate and encourage video visits, drive-by visits, window visits, cards, letters, and email. Once the visitation moratorium is lifted, safely, we will accommodate all friends and loved ones. We understand how important a role socialization plays. For our staff, we provide appropriate PPE and instruction on proper use. We require our staff to stay home when not feeling well. We check temperatures and conduct health screenings upon arrival to work, require stringent hand-washing, and have bolstered our infection control policies. We commit to continued protection of this vulnerable population, relying on state and local officials to make good policy decisions and staff to make good life decisions. Anyone who would like more information or to report any ideas or concerns are encouraged to do so using our hotline. That number is 805-474-7631. I would like to thank all of the community members who are involved in the delivery of care to the individuals in this community. They're making the best of a very difficult situation and deserve to be thanked for their efforts. Now I will turn the microphone over to Dr. Borenstein. Thank you.

- Thank you, Darren. I just want to really reiterate what a strong and wonderful partner Compass has been with the County. The evidence is in the, the proof is the evidence, that we've had zero cases in residents in our seven skilled nursing facilities. And as you know from the past when we did have a couple of staff, individuals who tested positive by virtue of community transmission, they worked with

us very closely to get on top of that situation immediately and continue to have the excellent record we have. So thank you for that, Darren. So today we continue with good numbers across the board. We have 249 cases, which is an increase of two from yesterday. 222 individuals have recovered and that puts us at 89% of all of our cases recovered. Three individuals are in the hospital, two in intensive care. So with that good news on our metrics, as you know, we submitted to the, well, you don't know, so yesterday we went to the Board of Supervisors and got an additional letter of support. All five supervisors gave me the authority to move forward with making another attestation to the state that we are ready to move forward through the full stage two of the state's Resiliency Roadmap. That letter of support went with the attestation form and all of the accompanying documents yesterday and I am very pleased today to be able to tell you that as on noon-ish today we, this county, now have been approved by the state, and it is posted on the state's COVID-19 website, to move forward into the full range of stage two on that Roadmap. So, again, for those who need reminders, what that is for our county is the opening of in-house dining in restaurants and full retail inside stores and all of our retail businesses. So we're very excited by this development. We continue to hope and believe that with everything that we've done that we will continue our mitigation measures, we will continue to work with all the businesses to put smart measures into place as they reopen, and that we will continue to see our good numbers. We may see some increase but I'm hopeful that we have done everything that we can to manage this situation at a low level of illness across the county. So what does that mean for our businesses? I know we started to get phone calls as soon as people saw it on the website. Can we reopen right now? And the answer is maybe. But you can reopen and here are the following criteria that are necessary for reopening. So to make sure that our businesses take all of the measures that have been put into place in the way of guidance, I'm gonna list off what a business needs to do prior to reopening. So they must still meet the readiness criteria. They need to perform a detailed risk assessment that's specific to their location. They must have trained their employees on how to limit the spread of COVID-19; implement individual control measures and screenings, so that might mean temperature checks, at least illness screening for employees and possibly for users of the business; and implementing disinfecting protocols and physical distancing guidelines based on the particular business sector. So we have available to these industries on our website, ReadySLO.org, a Ready to Open toolkit. And what that toolkit has available to these business owners or managers is the following. A self-certification form. That form needs to be completed and it should be retained onsite and available to anyone who might ask for it. So that might be an employee, a consumer, a code enforcement officer, an environmental health inspector. So with that, that is evidence to all individuals that have an interest in that business operating safely that they have done this self-certification document and completed it and retain it. We also have available to these businesses now online open and safe signs. So this is something that a business can put in their window or on their wall near the front entrance that indicates that they have taken all of the measures to review the guidance, do a risk assessment, do the checklist, and they are now open and safe for business. So there is a sign available to them. And thirdly within this set of documentation is the actual specific guidance available to that business sector. In the case of restaurants, it's 12 pages. It's been available for a number of days now. We've been, over the course of recent days, been telling our businesses to get ready for this, so some may be able to pull the trigger two hours ago and some are in various processes of going through all these steps and being ready. I do wanna add one clarification on the good news that I have vis a vis restaurants. I know that this is not a win for everyone in the food and, in the food and beverage industry, but it is a step forward. So with respect to those beverage industries, this particular guidance and movement forward does not allow for

the reopening specifically of bars, brew pubs, breweries, and wineries unless they have sit-down, dine-in meal service available. However, all of those businesses can continue with curbside sales. They also can bring in at this time the opportunity for sit-down, dine-in meals through food trucks or contracts with other types of food vendors. So I just wanted to be clear on that. So once again, this is really wonderful news for our county and it is a big step forward for us today. At the same time, we continue to make sure that we keep a really close eye on what's happening in terms of infection rates in our county and so with that I want to remind the public that we do still have our two five-day-a-week testing sites at Paso Robles and Grover Beach. Those are open Monday to Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Our Paso site in particular tends to have lower numbers and so we want to reach out to our north county friends and encourage them if they meet any of the criteria for testing that they do so. The best way, again, to do that and make an appointment is to find on ReadySLO.org the appointment registration process for making an appointment and if they need to they can make an appointment for a test through telephone at 888-634-1123. But I'm told, however, that the registration process is faster than the phone. So those are two ways, however, that appointments can be made. To remind people who can make an appointment, we have not restricted it. So anyone who either is experiencing one or more symptoms of this disease or is asymptomatic but feels that they may have been exposed via someone they know that has the disease or someone who maybe they think has the disease, we're not limiting testing to those who meet clinical criteria. Just wanna remind folks, however, that a negative test at any point in time, especially if you're not symptomatic, is just that, a point in time. So we will continue to be there, we'll continue to make this large number of testing opportunities available, and people should take advantage of it. We are additionally adding, we started this week, as we told you we would, with certain higher risk settings. So we're back testing at the California Men's Colony. We'll be testing other county employees, other settings along the Route 1 corridor, Cuesta College, we're opening it to. We're opening it to county employees this week and other congregate settings in the next week. But beginning on June 1st, we will be standing up popup clinics in various communities. So our first community that we're going to is in the Cambria area and, secondly, after a couple of days we'll be moving to Los Osos, and our plan thereafter is, depending on demand, at least every couple of days or possibly longer if we see heavy demand, we'll be moving from community to community across the county in order to make testing easily available in each sector of the county by geography. We don't yet have that registration process up for our community members but we hope to later this week or early next week so that we can have that June 1st start date. This will also be by appointment and it will be through a registration process. It will capture health insurance information as well as the same process that we have for Optum clinics. So stay tuned and we'll let you know as soon as that registration process is available. And with that, I will turn it over for any questions you may have.

- [Reporter] Dr. Borenstein, in terms of these restaurants, there's so many of them. Do they need to register with you that they've completed all the certification? In terms of enforcement, will you be making sure that these restaurants are compliant?

- Yeah, so it is a self-certification checklist. They do not have to submit it to the Health Department. We just ask them, they need to do it and they need to have it available should a complaint come in or as a matter of course through our regular inspection checks that we are, you know, a permit inspection visit

or what have you, that we'll be looking that everything is according to the guidance, is being operated according to the guidance.

- [Reporter] And that's also for retail as well, right?

- Yes.

- [Reporter] And they'll need to display a sign like we see, maybe, in LA County with the health grades and all that? Will that be plainly seen in the window?

- We do ask that the businesses display that sign as an indication to their shoppers or their patrons that they have gone through the process of reviewing all of the guidance and that they have put in place all of the extra safety measures. It is, again, not a requirement that that sign be put in place but I would hope, I personally would be more comfortable going into a business that, in fact, showed evidence that they have gone through the process.

- [Reporter] What if the county slips in the metrics, either rates go up a little bit, hospitalizations go up? Does that mean everyone then has to close?

- So as we've said previously, we have metrics. We're stilling using them. They came out of our START guide. It was part of our attestation that those are the metrics we're gonna be looking to to make determinations. If our numbers are getting to such a place that we feel that we need to withdraw any sectors that are open or make additional modifications, we won't be doing that lightly and we won't be doing it on the basis of any single metric. But we will be keeping an eye ongoing as to the disease status in our county.

- [Reporter] Is there any concern about the reopening given that some other counties haven't yet and Memorial Day weekend is coming up and could be a busy time for tourism?

- Yeah, so one of the reasons that we put our lodging order into place is we don't want to right at this moment, just as we're taking our first steps into reopening, reopen it the entire world. So it's not just Central Valley, it's Southern California, Northern California, us. You know, we have some of the best metrics in the, I don't mean just the adjacent counties but surrounding us all the way down to Mexico and all the way up to the Bay. So that is the reason that we are asking that our tourists give us this opportunity to move forward without potentially bringing disease. I'm not saying that our friends and

our neighbors in other counties are all carrying disease but they are at higher risk of doing so. Therefore, we are asking for, indulging their patience as we begin to reopen, as we continue to look at the metrics and see that we are doing well. We said we'd revisit every two weeks and we will do that.

- [Reporter] To followup on that, would there be enforcement measures in regards to hotels or tourists and are there any prompts for those kinds of actions?

- We are doing spot checks with our lodging industry and we have gotten a number of requests for exceptions. We're taking those as they come. And, again, we will only, if we see egregious violations, actually cite them. We want this to be an education process. We think the word has gotten out there. We've put a letter out to every hotel in our coastal areas. But we'll continue to work with the industry as long as everything looks good.

- [Reporter] I'm just curious about wine tasting. I know some venues have outdoor seating. What's the status for those businesses to allow for customers and wine tasting?

- So as I said, at this time the allowance for in-restaurant dining is just that. If a winery has the opportunity to serve their customers with sit-down meal service then they can also participate in the reopening process. Are we good?

- Any additional questions?

- Real quick.

- Thanks.

- [Reporter] Testing at CMC, you said that is continuing. You said you'd retest. Just to clarify that again, the employees, inmates there, what's happening?

- Inmates and employees all being retested two weeks after our last case was identified, that's the length of the incubation period, to show that we don't have ongoing transmission. We have, I think, completed, if not entirely, close to completion of the inmates and we're still trying to work through getting all the staff tested. But thus far, of the retesting that we have done, we have not seen any additional positive tests. So that's good news.

- [Reporter] I think there was about 200 employees and then several hundred inmates. So those would be the--

- Yes.

- Okay.

- Yes, so it's a, it is a widespread effort to go to those lengths to retest a large number of individuals at that facility.

- [Reporter] And it doesn't look like there's been any new additional cases there in the last several days at least, right?

- We have not. Our last diagnosed case was in April.

- [Michelle] Anything else?

- [Reporter] Just a real quick one. Curbsides still, I know some of these restaurants that do have dine-in, they've been doing a lot of takeout of late. Would you still recommend they do that as much as possible over dine-in? Or is there any guideline there?

- Again, vulnerable people still may very much want to choose the curbside pickup or delivery option. For those who feel that it is time to get out for a meal now and again, they may do so, especially at those restaurants that are taking these precautions to put mitigating measures in place. But curbside is very much a welcome option to keep our disease spread as low as it is.

- [Reporter] Last question from me. Some people may be interested, we know we're under the state's stay-at-home order and the Resilience Roadmap. People might be looking ahead now that we've hit this mark. What's next? What can people look forward to--

- I thought I almost got out of here without a stage three question. So we don't have any insights as to timeline. Obviously there are a number of businesses that are still under the stay-at-home order of the

state. We continue to dialogue with them about areas that we have heard from, business owners who have put into place very detailed, rigorous, and sensible plans. We continue to dialogue with the state about being able to move forward as quickly as possible into some of those other industries but we remain under the state's order at this time and all we can do is ask them to move with as much speed as they can. Thanks.

- Thank you all for coming today and tuning in for our good news. Remember that our county's information related to COVID-19 is located on ReadySLO.org, including the information that Dr. Borenstein talked about with instructions and guidelines for reopening. Everything there is both in English and Spanish. Our Phone Assistance Center also remains open and our recorded Public Health Information Line is also available. On ReadySLO.org, you can find information about the Paso Robles and Grover Beach testing sites that Dr. Borenstein mentioned, as well as the instructions for making an appointment. And a reminder that one is not required to have symptoms for COVID-19 in order to obtain a test at one of those sites. Next Monday we will not be holding this press briefing at 3:15. We'll be taking the day off to commemorate Memorial Day. But we will be back on Wednesday the 27th. Thank you all again for tuning in today. You can find today's broadcast, I'm sorry, briefing, rebroadcast on Public Access Channel 21 at midnight, 8:00 a.m., and 5:00 p.m. until Friday, as well as watching it on San Luis Obispo County's Public Health Facebook page or the county's website. Thank you for staying engaged and be well. We'll be back here on Friday, thank you.

- I'd just like to make one clarification. The EOC will be open on Monday. We just will not be having a press conference. And if you still need to make a phone call to one of our information lines, those will be manned, thank you.