





MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members
Travis County Commissioners Court

FROM: Adrienne Sturup, Interim Director 
Desmar Walkes, MD, Health Authority/Medical Director 

DATE: June 2, 2021

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Update

This memorandum will serve as an update to Mayor, Council Members, and members of the Travis County Commissioners Court regarding staff efforts to date on the COVID-19 pandemic testing and vaccine distribution. The Austin Public Health (APH) Epidemiology and Public Health Preparedness Division continues to monitor and respond to the community's needs in the Austin, Travis County area. The following update is for the week ending May 28, 2021.

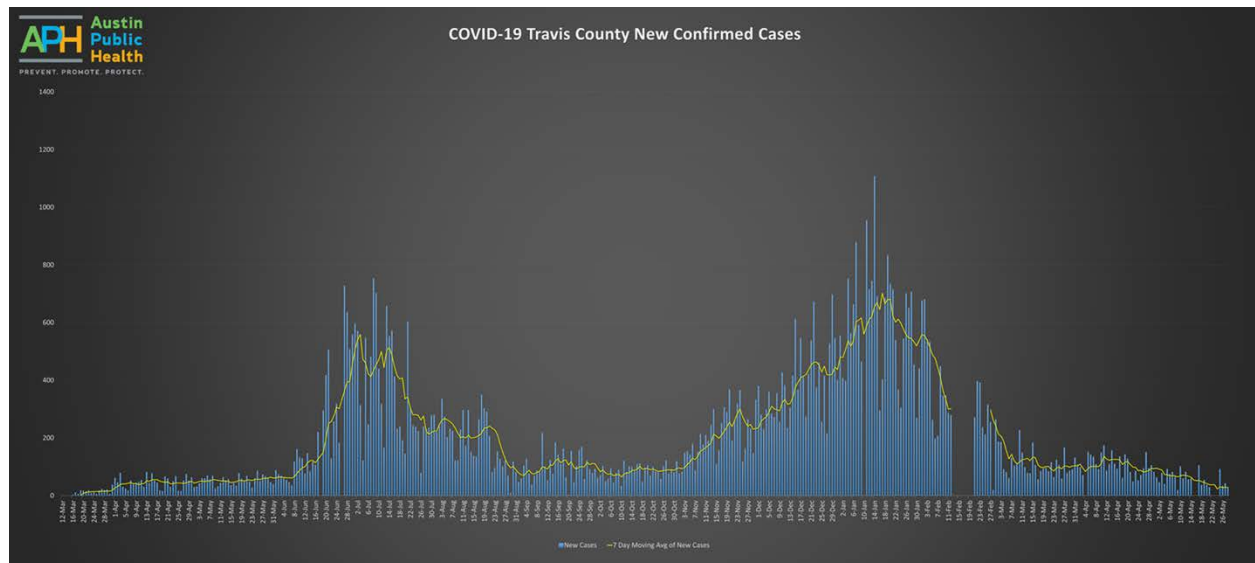
Trends in Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths

Cases:

To date, 83,722 confirmed cases in Travis County have been reported to Austin Public Health. Cases continue to decline, with the 7-day moving average case count being 28 new cases per day for the week of May 28, 2021. The decline in case counts started in early March and has continued to flatten over the past month (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Newly Confirmed COVID-19 Cases by Date, Travis County, as of May 28, 2021

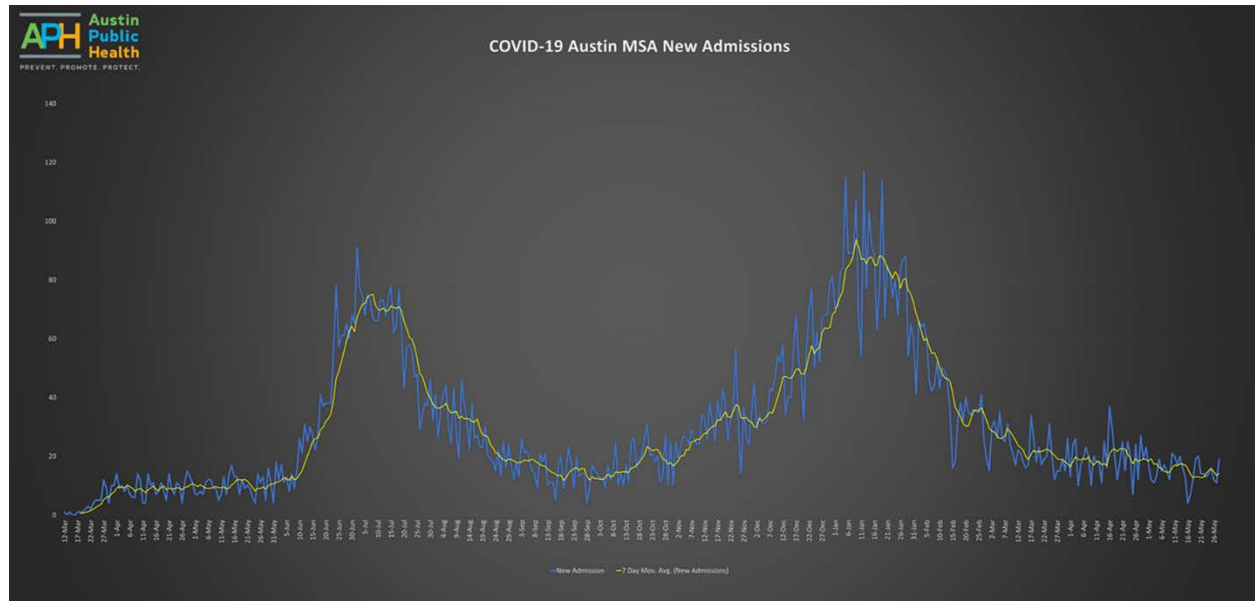


With increases in the proportion of vaccinated persons over the age of 60, there has been a decline in the number of cases in these age groups since January. However, youth age 10-19 and adults aged 20-29, which have a smaller proportion of vaccinated persons, now account for a larger number of cases.

Hospital admissions:

Since mid-March, hospital admissions also continue to decline and have flattened. The 7-day rolling average of hospital admissions decreased from about 22 cases per day on March 14, 2021, to 14.1 cases per day as of May 28, 2021 (Figure 2).

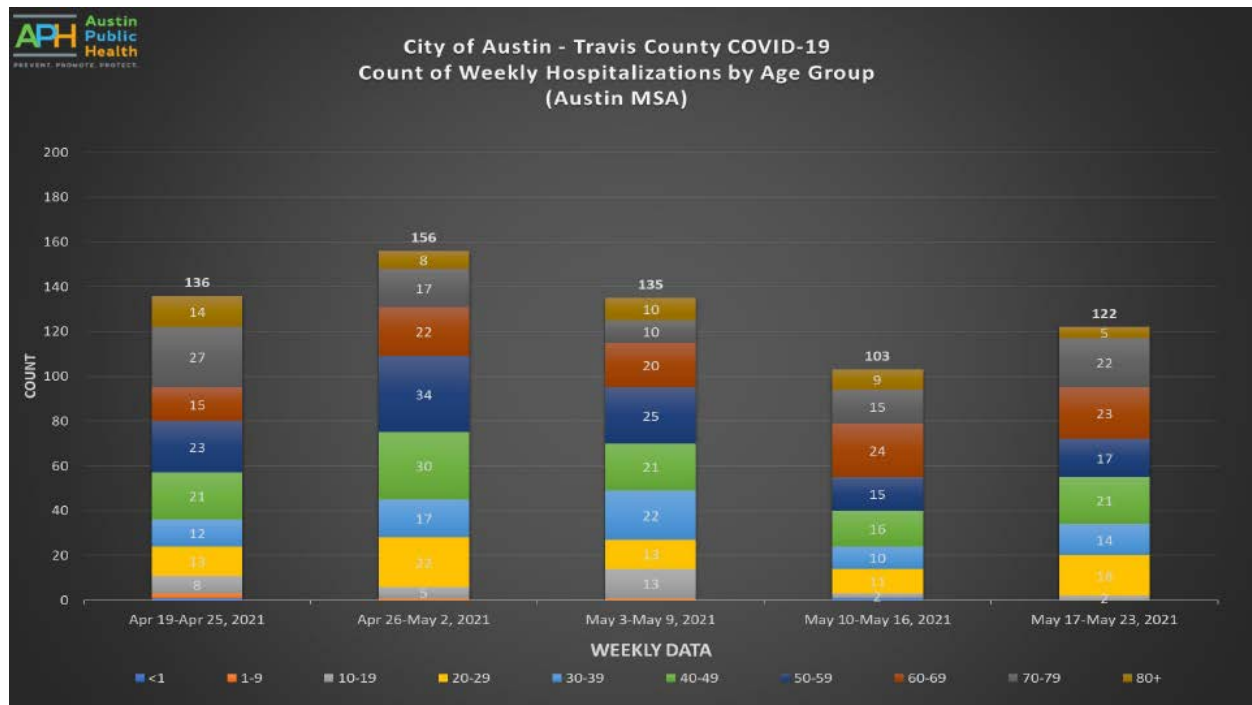
Figure 2. COVID-19 New Hospitalizations, Austin MSA, As of May 28, 2021



A filtered 7-day moving average for hospitalizations was calculated to assess the impact of hospitalizations by those who reside outside the Austin MSA. On May 25, 2021, the filtered moving average was 13.85 hospitalizations per day versus 15.17 hospitalization per day.

Figure 3 shows hospitalizations by age group. While decreases are noted in those greater than 80 years of age, there are increases in hospitalization in those within the 70-79, 40-49, 30-39, and 20-29 year age groups.

Figure 3. Hospitalization by Age Group, Austin MSA, as of May 25, 2021



Deaths: Deaths have continued to decline throughout May. There are currently 870 Travis county COVID-19-related deaths.

Positivity Rate:

Travis County positivity rate continues to decline and is below 5%. However, of concern is that the positivity rate in persons between 20-29 years of age represents the highest positivity rate among all age groups. The positivity rate among all races and ethnicities has fallen below 5%.

Variant Surveillance

APH Epidemiologists receive notification of variants from both the state and from UT-University Health Services. Cases are tracked by epidemiologists and investigated, with completed worksheets being sent to the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

The B.1.1.7, B.1.427, and B.1.429 variants currently comprise the greatest number of circulating strains within Austin and Travis County. Figure 4 represents the number of variants strains reported to APH.

Figure 4. Variant Surveillance

	Total	# Deaths	# Hospitalized ¹
Variant of Concern ²			
B.1.1.7	205	0	1
B.1.351	1	0	0
B.1.427	5	0	0
B.1.429	50	0	0
P.1	4	0	0
Total	265	0	1
Variant of Interest ²			
B.1.525	1	0	0
B.1.526	2	0	0
Total	3	0	0

Of these variants, 265 Travis County sequenced cases with a variant of concern, and 3 Travis County sequenced cases with a variant of interest. Cases range in age from 8-87 years of age with a median age of 21 years of age, and 51% (136 female/267 with known sex) are female. Four cases reported foreign travel (Mexico-2, UK-1, Dubai-1).

Vaccine Breakthroughs

Fully vaccinated cases who become ill with COVID-19, also known as vaccine breakthroughs, are tracked and investigated by APH epidemiologists. APH staff send completed investigations to the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), along with a request for sequencing. Figure 5 represents the number of vaccine breakthrough cases investigated as of May 31, 2021.

Figure 5. Vaccine Breakthroughs, Travis County, As of May 31, 2021

	Pfizer		Moderna		Janssen		Other	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
# Cases	26	50	11	35	7	17	1	1
Percentage	34%	66%	24%	76%	29%	71%	50%	50%
Total	76		46		24		2	

Of the 148 vaccine breakthroughs reported, 65% of the cases were symptomatic, 30% were asymptomatic, and 5% were unknown (i.e., refused to be interviewed). Eight cases, all over the age of 50, were hospitalized. Of the eight hospitalized cases, 3 cases received Moderna vaccine, 3 received Pfizer vaccine, and 2 received Janssen vaccine. Two of the deaths reported were in cases over 70 years of age and vaccinated with the Pfizer vaccine.



Reinfections

APH epidemiologists are currently investigating confirmed cases that meet the DSHS case definition for COVID-19 reinfection. DSHS defines reinfection as a repeat positive test for SARS-CoV-2 RNA using a molecular amplification detection test more than 90 days after the initial report. Cases that are persistently positive and asymptomatic, such as those with repeat positive tests occurring within the 90-day timeframe, are not considered reinfections.

There are currently 371 potential reinfections that are being reviewed and investigate to date. Thirteen percent (49/371) were hospitalized, and 0.01% (n=5) resulted in death. Of the 371 potential reinfections, 34% (n=126) are less than 30 years of age, 46% (n=172) are between 30-59 years of age, 15% (n=57) are between 60 and 79 years of age, and 4% (n=16).

Vaccine Updates

The COVID-19 vaccine response has evolved over the last several months. In January, APH was a designated statewide hub. APH was required to vaccinate according to state eligibility requirements and provide vaccines to all Texas residents. APH established large mass vaccination sites to support the hub designation. Sites were located throughout the community to support accessibility. APH also launched a mobile vaccine team and worked with community partners to develop community-based pop-up clinics. These pop-up clinics are responsive to residents who could not get to mass vaccine locations. APH also provided vaccines to the uninsured and underinsured patient population through the APH Immunizations Clinics and Refugee Clinic. The table below shows appointment demographics for each location. This data guides our focused outreach and vaccination strategy.



Number of Persons with COVID-19 Vaccine Appointments by Race and Ethnicity by Location
Austin Public Health, May 2021

Location	Race and Ethnicity					
	White	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	Asian	Other	Total
Delco Activity Center	93,992	10,398	41,467	21,176	10,677	177,710
Burger Activity Center	23,747	2,218	10,287	5,130	2,720	44,102
AISD Performing Arts Center	15,492	1,099	5,056	2,716	1,556	25,919
Dove Springs Recreation Center	14,862	959	6,081	1,974	1,577	25,453
Pflugerville Recreation Center	4,407	794	2,151	1,270	539	9,161
Austin Public Safety Wellness Center	3,869	476	1,819	380	592	7,136
Southeast Branch Library	2,436	239	1,896	418	431	5,420
Shots for Tots and Big Shots Clinics	1,669	497	2,426	192	572	5,356
Sacred Heart Catholic Church	427	39	3,426	84	322	4,298
APH Refugee Health Screening Clinic	578	522	846	147	132	2,225
APH Mobile Vaccine Program	873	360	460	114	236	2,043
St. James Missionary Baptist Church	26	481	51	5	37	600
Little Walnut Creek Library	149	37	227	59	30	502
Total	162,527	18,119	76,193	33,665	19,421	309,925

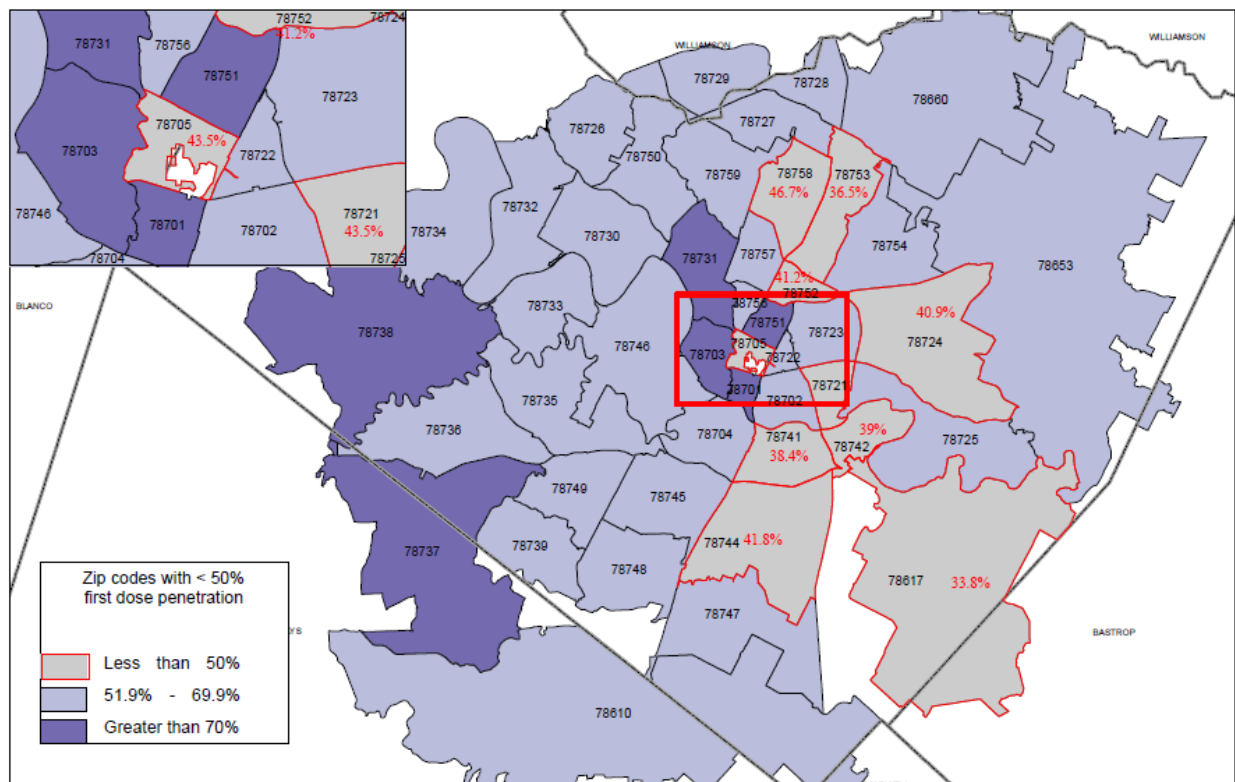
The total APH vaccine distribution effort as of the end of May was 323,883. The total vaccinated population is from the Department of State Health Services data as of 5/31/21. This data is in the table below, representing total vaccines provided to all county residents by all reporting providers by age. Note the 12-15-year-old population represents about 60,441 of the total 1,092,827 eligible population.

County Name	Age Group	Doses Administered	People Vaccinated with at least One Dose	People Fully Vaccinated
Travis	12-15 years	17,972	17,923*	51
Travis	16-49 years	752,749	432,519	351,941
Travis	50-64 years	270,104	151,889	128,915
Travis	65-79 years	164,112	90,100	78,560
Travis	80+ years	37,396	20,856	17,606
Travis	Unknown	264	239	33

* 29.7% of Travis County residents aged 12-15 have received one dose

APH also tracks vaccine uptake by zip code to inform vaccine operations and works to align with the national goal of at least one vaccine dose for 70% of adults by July 4. The map below provides a gauge for our progress toward reaching this target by zip code.

Number vaccinated 1st dose penetration by zip code—data sources: DSHS COVID-19 Vaccine by Zip Code and 2018 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates.





- C. Weekly % positivity within a zip code
- D. Priority Populations
 - I. Racial/Ethnic minorities
 - II. Limited English proficiency
 - III. Under-or uninsured people
 - IV. People in poverty
 - V. Limited access to the internet

We have seen success in reaching populations through tailoring clinics to ensure that they are linguistically and culturally appropriate. This requires us to provide clinics at churches, schools, construction sites, businesses, libraries, rec centers, apartment complexes, flea markets, naturalization ceremonies, and homes. APH coordinates with community health workers and trusted community leaders to inform the messaging and outreach to people in need. Although these clinics are smaller in nature, APH continues to return to many of the same locations based on the need to ensure equitable vaccine distribution.

The data demonstrates that the traditional APH Immunizations and Refugee Clinics, focused pop-up clinics, and neighborhood sites have the most diverse patient population.

Testing Update

As COVID19 enters a more manageable space, there has been a community-wide decrease in demand for COVID-19 testing. During the first three weeks of January 2021, 88,900 individuals were tested for COVID-19. Of these, the APH Testing Group administered 24,103 tests. However, during the first three weeks of May 2021, only 23,095 individuals were tested for COVID-19. Only 1,337 of these tests were administered by the APH Vaccine Group.

As the demand for testing has decreased, Austin Public Health has demobilized several testing sites to accommodate the needs of the community. We will continue to make COVID-19 testing available through Mobile Testing (Home/Facility) and Static Testing (Various Community Locations). Mobile operations, such as Mobile Testing and the Mobile Vaccination Program, will be a vital part of Austin Public Health's strategy to make testing and vaccination accessible to everyone in our community.

While the demand has lessened for testing provided by Austin Public Health, there is an abundance of free, accessible testing sites throughout the community. Austin Public Health will continue to evaluate the needs of the community and is prepared to stand up additional testing resources as needed.





Current Static Testing:

- Pleasant Valley will continue providing testing for First Responders- by appointment only.
- Pflugerville Testing Operations (funded by TDEM). Monday, Wednesday, Saturday 9 am-6 pm.

Mobile Testing:

- Mobile and Facility testing will continue by appointment only (Monday- Friday 8 am -4 pm).

The safety and health of our community remain a top priority for Austin Public Health. We will continue to abide by our mission to Prevent disease, Promote Health, and Protect the well-being of all.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Desmar Walkes, Health Authority at Desmar.Walkes@austintexas.gov or Interim Director, Adrienne Sturup at Adrienne.Sturup@austintexas.gov.

Cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Anne Morgan, Interim Deputy City Manager
Stephanie Hayden-Howard, Assistant City Manager
Sherri Flemming, County Executive

