

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and Council Members  
Travis County Commissioners Court

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

**DATE:** January 19, 2022

**SUBJECT:** COVID-19 Update

This memorandum serves as an update to the Mayor, Council Members, and the Travis County Commissioners Court members regarding staff efforts to date on the COVID-19 pandemic testing and vaccine distribution. The Austin Public Health (APH) Epidemiology and Public Health Preparedness (PHEP) 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 January 14, 2022.

## Trends in Cases, Hospitalizations, and Deaths

### Cases

As of January 13, 2022, a total of 142,348 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Travis County have been reported to Austin Public Health. Cases continue to increase, with the total new case count of 6344 for the past seven days. There is a decline in the percent change in the number of cases per 100,000 compared to the previous week, down to +16.48% change compared to 145% change this time last week. (Figure 1).

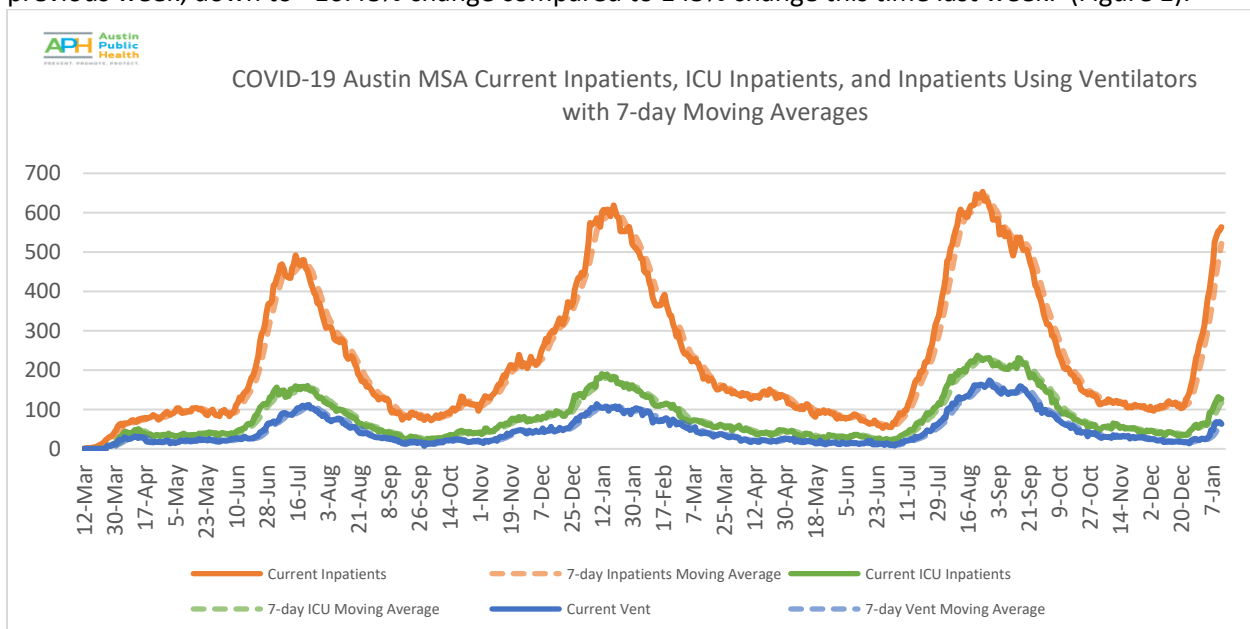


Figure 1. Newly Confirmed COVID-19 Cases by Date, Travis County, as of January 13, 2022

Today 1299 new cases have been recorded by APH, and we have surpassed the previous high peak from last January's surge. The peak of new cases in the Beta surge last January was on January 11, 2021, with 714 new cases. The rapid spread of Omicron reminds us how the virus can quickly infect unvaccinated populations and medically vulnerable populations.

Those who are not vaccinated or have not received their boosters should continue to use masks when they are outside of their household. The unprotected should avoid travel and limit themselves to essential activities only in Stage five. Everyone is encouraged to get their vaccinations up to date to protect themselves against COVID-19 and its variants. The primary series of the mRNA vaccines Moderna and Pfizer are thought to provide 45% protection against mild disease after the primary series and 75% protection against mild disease. After booster, the data shows 90% protection against severe disease, hospitalizations, and death.

Fully vaccinated or boosted people should continue to practice social distancing, mask indoors and in outdoor places where distancing is not possible in light of the rapid spread of Omicron. Increases in masking are effective in reducing community transmission. Good News: Facebook survey tracking of masking in our community shows that there has been a 16% increase in masking in our community.

### Hospital Admissions

The seven-day rolling average of hospital admissions decreased from 114 on January 13, 2022 (Figure 2). The staffed ICU bed census is 127, and 63 are on ventilators. Almost all of the patients requiring ICU care for COVID-19 are unvaccinated. Many people admitted to the hospital are medically vulnerable and have comorbidities.

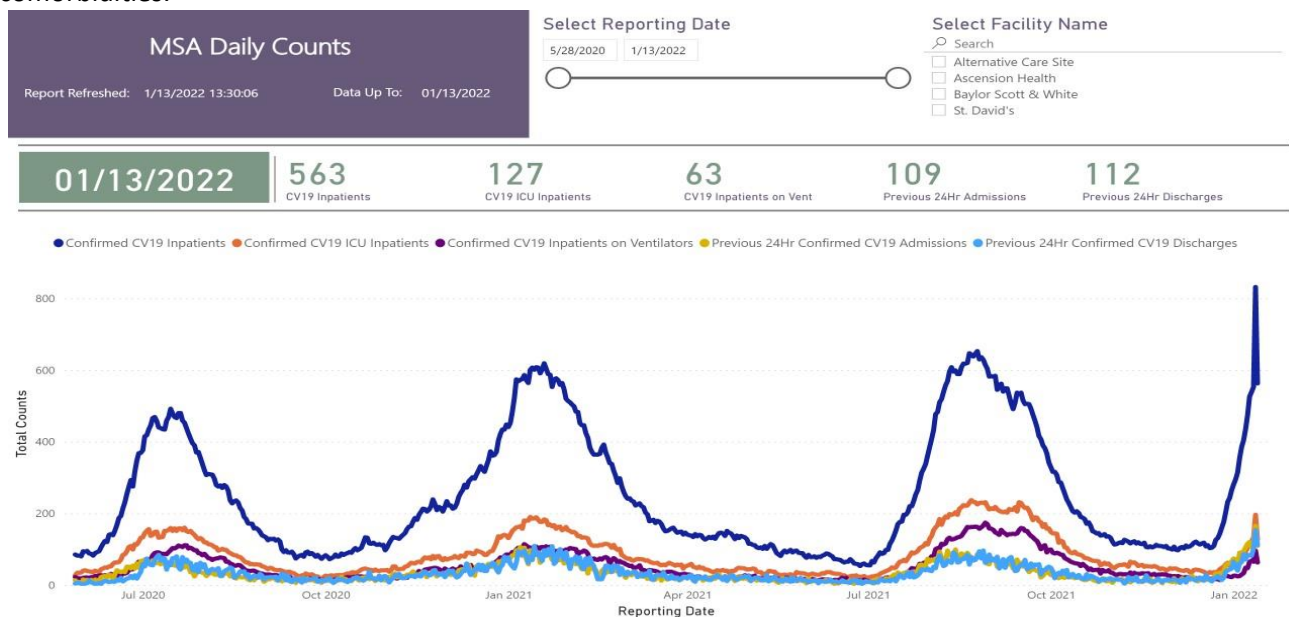


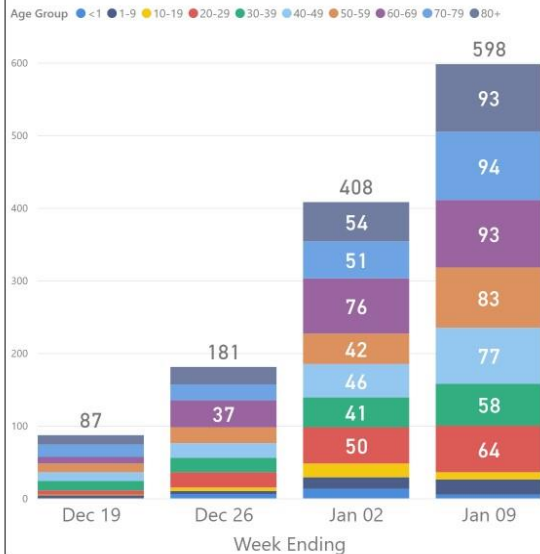
Figure 2. COVID-19 Hospitalizations, ICU Admissions and Ventilator Use, Austin MSA, as of September 4, 2021

Austin MSA COVID-19 Hospitalizations  
Ascension Health, Baylor Scott & White, HCA St. David's

Week Ending  
12/13/2021 1/9/2022



Count of Weekly COVID-19 Hospital Admissi...



Austin MSA COVID-19 Patients Under 18 Years of Age

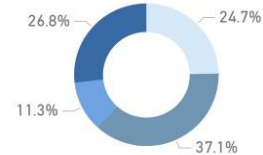
Count of Patients Under 18 for Selected Reporting Period  
**97**

Count of Patients Under 18 Admitted to ICU During Stay  
**17**

Count of Patients Under 18 on Ventilator During Stay  
**(Blank)**

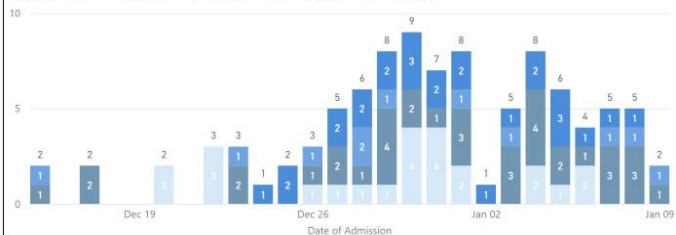
Percentage of Austin MSA COVID-19 Patients Under 18 Years of Age

Age Group <1 years 1-4 years 5-11 years 12-17 years



Austin MSA COVID-19 Patients Under 18 Years of Age by Date of Admission

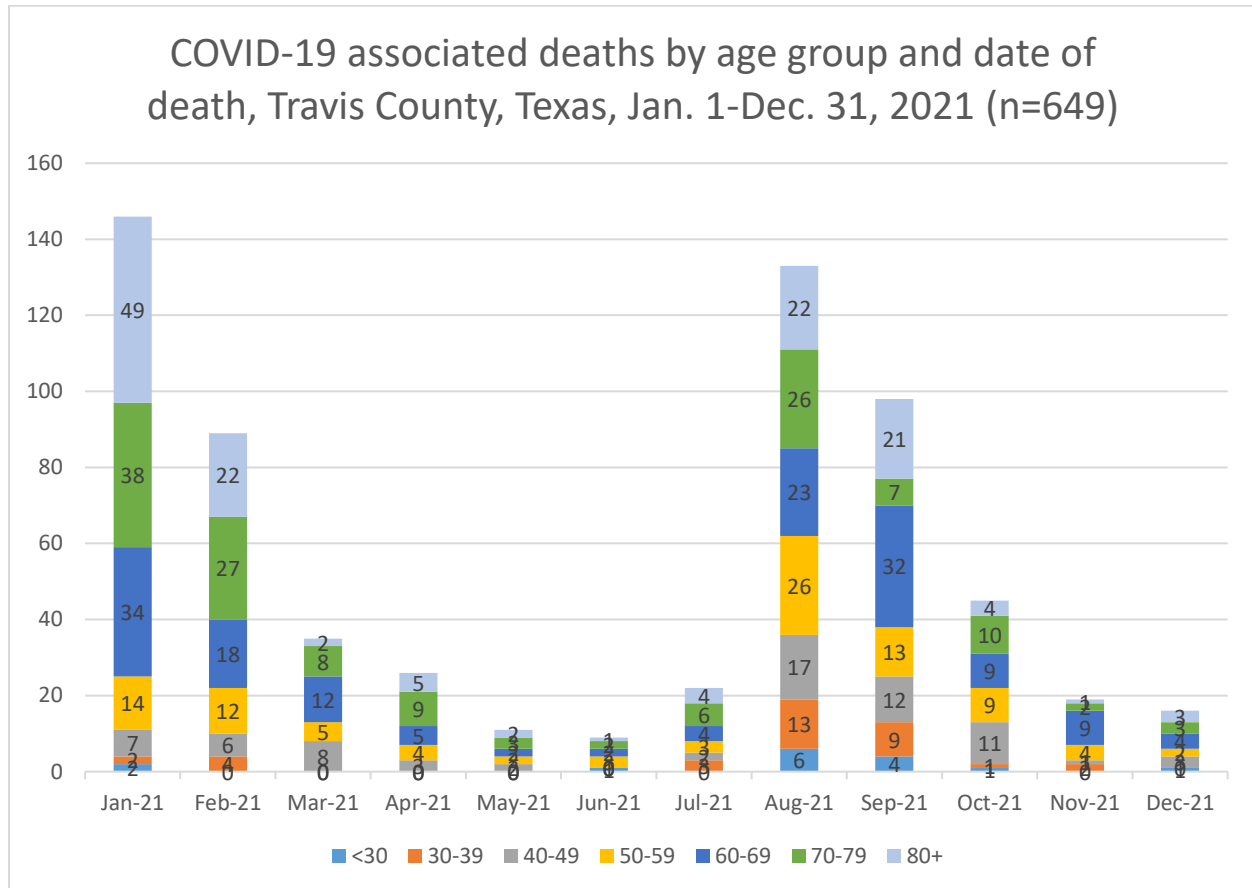
Age Group <1 years 1-4 years 5-11 years 12-17 years



Week over week, there has been an increase in cases in all age groups. Pediatric cases rose to 97 from 47, representing a 106% increase as of January 10, 2022.

## Deaths

As of January 13, 2022, there have been 1227 deaths due to Covid-19 since the beginning of the pandemic. The number of people who have died since Covid-19 vaccinations were available is 649 (from January 1, 2021, to the present). Of those that died, 57 were fully vaccinated, and all but one of these individuals had comorbidity.



**TABLE 2: COVID-19 vaccine breakthrough deaths and associated comorbidities** *(Updated 01/07/2022)*

Comorbidity	Number	Percentage
Cardiac disease	17	11.41
Chronic kidney disease	10	6.71
Chronic pulmonary disease	7	4.70
Dementia	1	.67
Diabetes	20	13.42
Hypertension	37	24.83
Immunocompromised	12	8.05
None	1	.67
Obesity	10	6.71
Other	33	22.54
Unknown	1	.67
TOTAL	149	100.0%

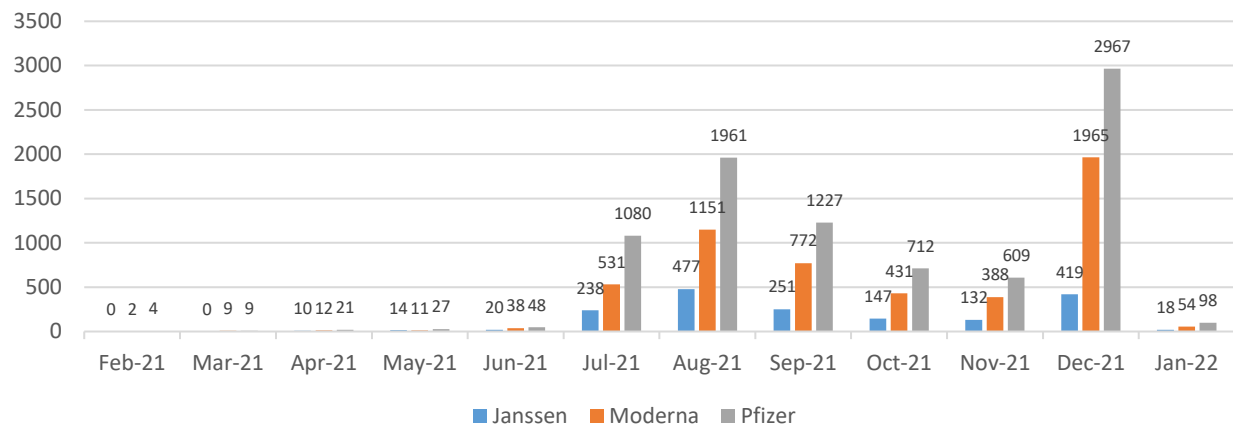
### Positivity Rate

Travis County's positivity rate continues to increase and is 33.1% as of January 13, 2022.

### Vaccine Breakthrough Cases

Fully vaccinated cases are tracked and investigated. Sequencing of specimens is coordinated for those cases that meet DSHS laboratory criteria, and subsequent results are entered in the APH database.

## COVID-19 vaccine breakthrough cases by manufacturer reported to Austin Public Health, Travis County, Texas, 1/1/2021 - 1/7/2022 (n=15,854)



Of 15,854 confirmed breakthrough cases, symptom status was known for 3,936 case patients. Of those, 90% were symptomatic.

- 111 patients were hospitalized for COVID-related reasons:
  - 53 females, 57 males
  - Age range 21-101 years old, median 69 years old
  - 50 received Pfizer, 35 received Moderna, and 26 received Janssen.

*Of note: Healthcare providers and nursing home residents were vaccinated with Pfizer starting December 2020. Nursing home residents and staff are frequently tested even if asymptomatic. This report only includes breakthrough cases reported to APH.*

*\*Date is collection date for positive laboratory specimen*

### Reinfections

Reinfections refer to confirmed cases that meet the DSHS case definition for COVID-19 reinfection - 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.)

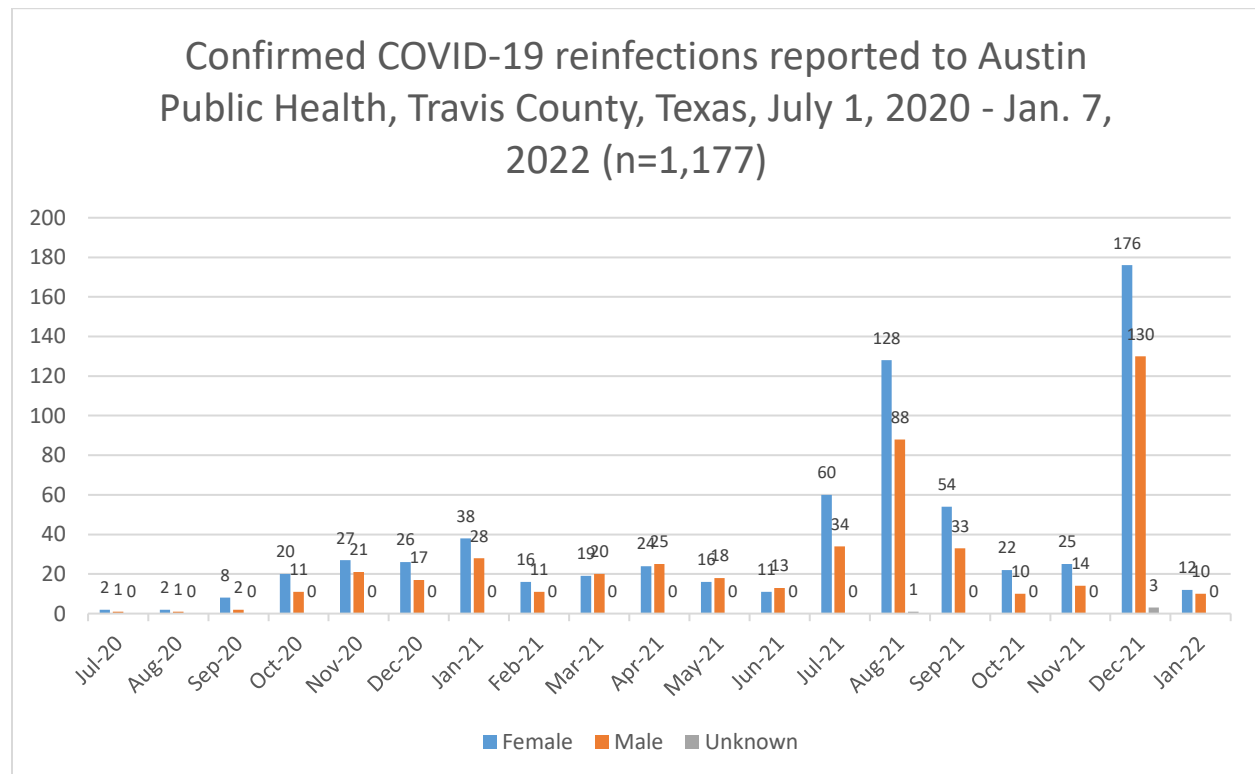
The beginning of the Omicron surge was marked by a 685% increase in reinfections reported between November and December. An increase in reinfections was also seen in South Africa, where this variant was first discovered.

Vaccinations still are the best form of protection against Covid-19, along with masking, distancing, and hand washing.

## COVID-19 Confirmed Reinfections

<b>Table 1: COVID-19 Reinfections, confirmed cases only (n=1,177)</b>				
	Female	Male	Unknown	Total
Hospitalized, COVID-related	5	1	-	6
Deaths, COVID-related	1	2	-	3
Age group				
< 30	279	195	3	477
30-39	168	115	-	283
40-49	103	69	-	172
50-59	77	55	1	133
60-69	29	29	-	58
70-79	16	14	-	30
80+	14	10	-	24
ALL	686	487	4	1,177

*\*Month refers to date of laboratory specimen collection for second (reinfection) confirmed case*



## Vaccine Updates

The COVID-19 vaccine response has evolved over the last several months. In January 2021, APH was designated a statewide hub. According to state eligibility requirements, APH was required to vaccinate and provide vaccines to all Texas residents. As vaccines have become more widely available, operations have changed from mass vaccination sites to support the hub designation to additional community-based sites throughout Travis County to support accessibility in historically marginalized communities.

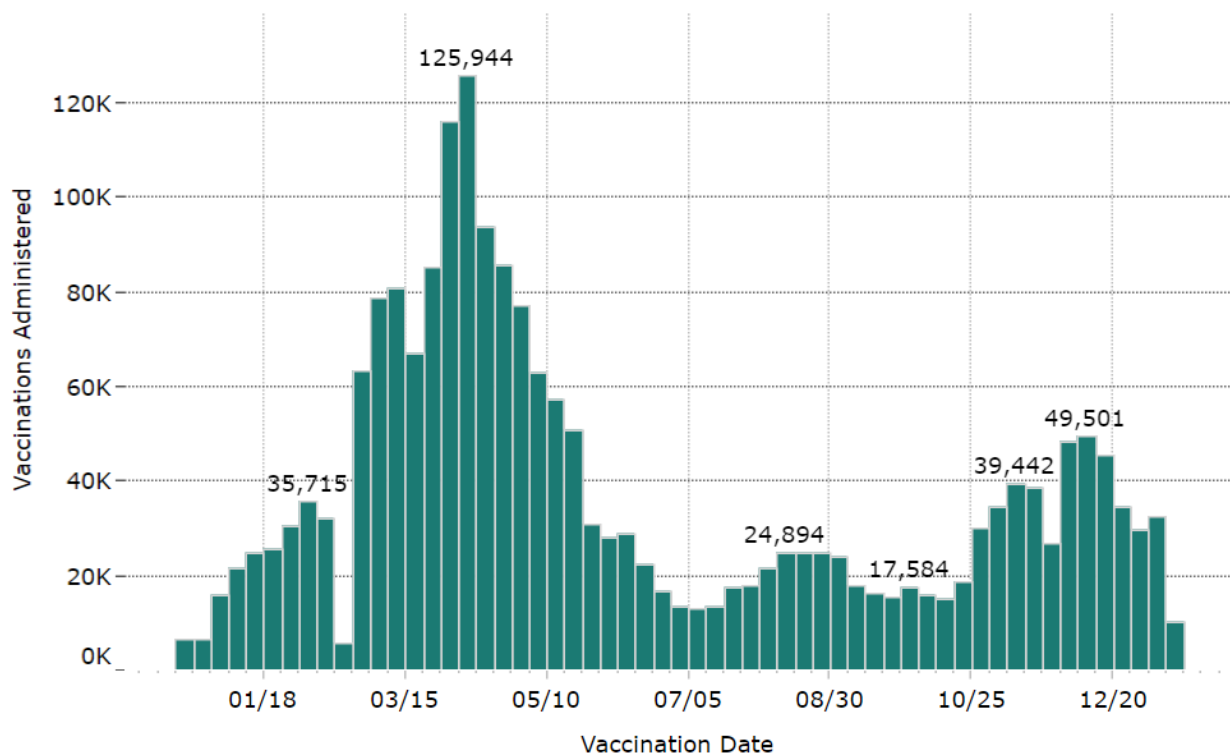
APH also launched a mobile vaccine team and worked with community partners to develop community-based pop-up clinics. These pop-up clinics are responsive to residents who could not get to other vaccine locations and make vaccines more accessible in community-based settings such as schools, worksites, affordable housing complexes, and marketplaces. APH also provides vaccines to the uninsured and underinsured patient population through the APH Immunizations Clinics and Refugee Clinic.

APH operations continue to have the flexibility to expand and adjust to meet changing Centers for Disease Control recommendations and new vaccine-eligible populations.

- 2,105,138 vaccines have been administered in Travis County as of January 13, 2022
- 70.59% of the eligible Travis County population five (5) and older are fully vaccinated.
- 61.806% of the Statewide eligible population is fully vaccinated.

The table below shows all provider vaccine distribution in Travis County over time according to DSHS.

### Vaccinations by Week in Travis County





APH is one of many Travis County vaccine providers. According to DSHS, as of January 13, 2021, most of the vaccines distributed have been through pharmacy outlets, as depicted in the graph below, including HEB, Walgreens, CVS, Wal-Mart, Sam's Club, etc.

#### Doses Administered by Organization Type

Emergency Services	54,241
Health Center (Community, Federally Qualified, Migrant, Rural)	137,792
Hospital	274,996
Long-Term Care	784
Medical Clinic/Doctor's Office	213,881
Public Health/Government	338,121
Pharmacy	1,033,379
Other	52,344

The table below shows vaccine distribution by race/ethnicity in Travis County, updated as of 9/6/2021.

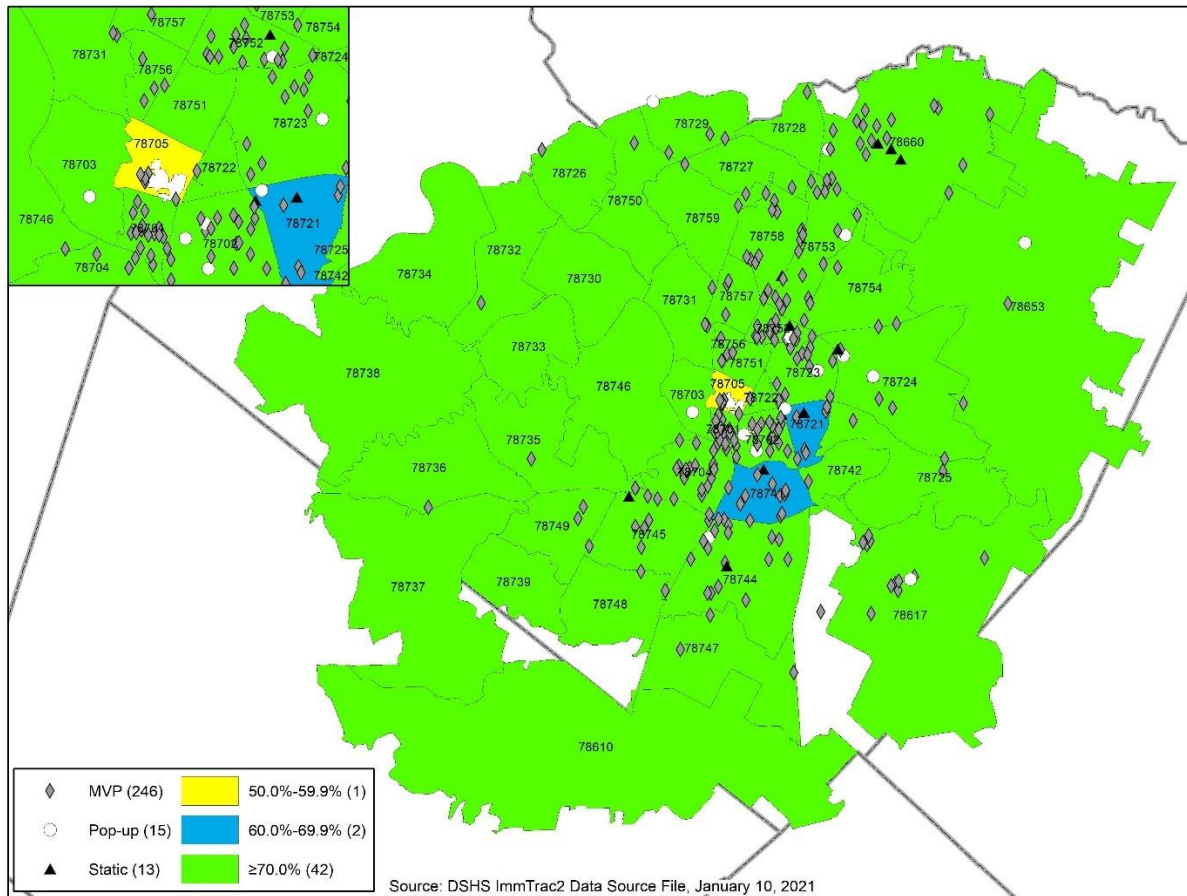
Race	Total Census Population	Estimated Eligible Population (12+)	People Vaccinated with at Least One Dose (Texas DSHS) as of 9/06/2021	People Vaccinated with at Least One Dose Percent	Percent Increase Since 8/29	People Fully Vaccinated (Texas DSHS) of 9/06/2021	People Fully Vaccinated Percent	Percent Increase Since 8/29
Asian	83,467	71,782	63,228	88.08%	0.09% (66)	57,048	79.47%	0.30% (212)
Black or African American	104,003	88,403	35,089	39.69%	0.43% (382)	28,964	32.76%	0.70% (616)
Hispanic or Latino	442,687	349,723	194,398	55.59%	1.10% (3,836)	158,664	45.37%	1.38% (4,814)
White	608,874	541,898	372,830	68.80%	0.16% (848)	334,002	61.64%	0.37% (2,029)
Other	34,523	24,857	133,440	*		112,775 *		
Unknown			63,879			52,053		
Total	1,273,554	1,076,661	862,864	80.14%	0.70% (7,570)	743,506	69.06%	1.01% (10,896)

The total vaccinated population is from the DSHS data as of January 13, 2022. This data is in the table below, representing total vaccines provided to all county residents by all reporting providers by age.

Age Group	Doses Administered	People Vaccinated with at least One Dose	People Fully Vaccinated
05-11	69,849	41,243	28,557
12-15	92,052	49,034	40,869
16-49	1,223,357	588,190	506,169
50-64	413,495	183,038	163,341
65-79	250,140	102,445	92,517
80+	56,257	23,419	20,817
Unknown	388	302	94

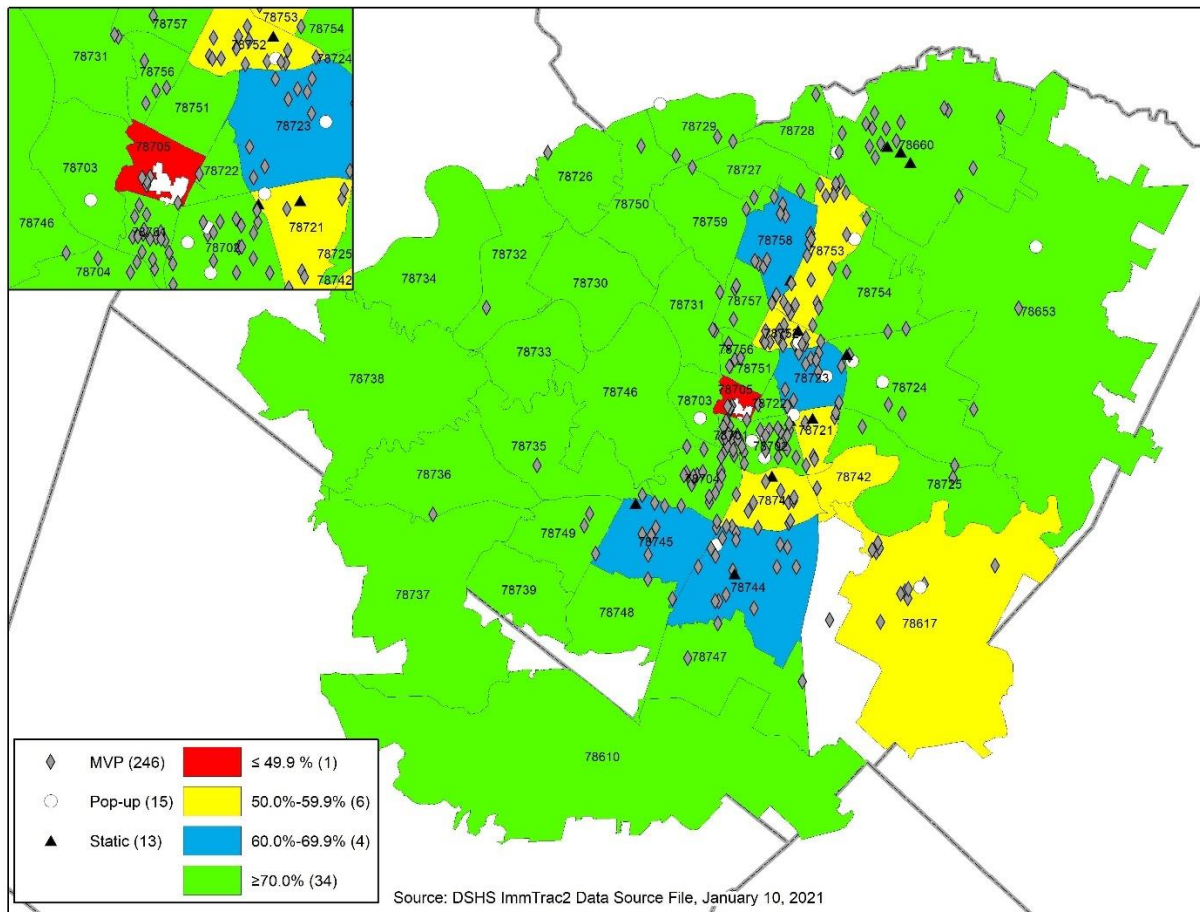
APH began distributing COVID-19 vaccines to the 5-11-year-old population in early November. 36% of Travis County Residents aged 5-11 have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, and 25% are fully vaccinated

APH also tracks vaccine uptake by zip code to inform vaccine operations and track progress toward achieving 70% fully vaccinated eligible populations. The map below provides a gauge for our progress toward reaching this target by zip code. The maps have been adjusted to account for the total eligible population 5-11.



*The number of vaccinated first dose penetration by zip code—data sources: DSHS COVID-19 Vaccine by Zip Code and 2018 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates.*

The fully vaccinated rate for Travis County is 70.59% as of January 13, 2022. The map below demonstrates this progress by zip code.

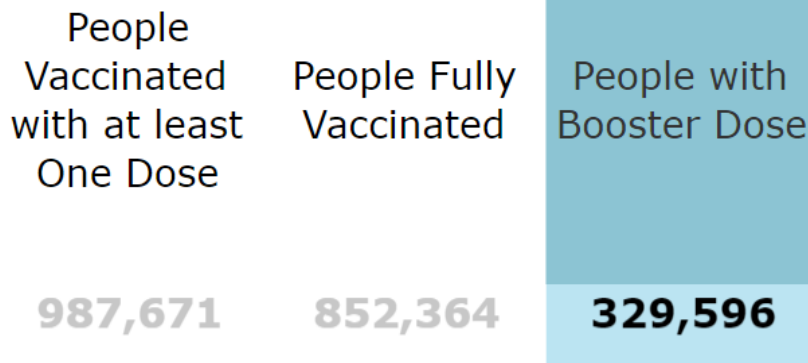


*The number of vaccinated second dose penetration by zip code—data sources: DSHS COVID-19 Vaccine by Zip Code and 2018 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates.*

## Boosters

APH vaccine operations continue to demand boosters, accounting for about 80% of all COVID-19 doses administered. APH provides boosters for all eligible populations 12 and older. APH provides both mRNA vaccines, Pfizer and Moderna and Johnson and Johnson. Both Pfizer and Moderna vaccine boosters are recommended five months after completing the initial series. Johnson and Johnson vaccine boosters are recommended after two months. Boosters are critical to ensure full protection and increase immunity to help reduce COVID-19 infection, severe disease, hospitalizations, and death.

The graph below depicts the overall vaccine doses provided for Travis County. Note of the population 12 and older fully vaccinated population only 40% has been boosted.



## Focus on Equity

Austin Public Health continues to assess vaccine hesitancy and gaps in vaccine distribution. Data indicates that in addition to gaps in geographic reach, younger age groups and populations of color are not reaching the 70% fully vaccinated goal.

APH continues to meet people where they are and provide outreach through trusted sources at the neighborhood level. Our strategy is data-driven and is community-informed. We review where there has been limited vaccine uptake, higher rates of death and disease, and community feedback to guide vaccine operations. There were 1,276 vaccines administered last week, including two pop-up locations: Harmony Science Academy (29) and Leander ISD Technology Building (105). Additionally, there were 529 vaccines administered through the Mobile Vaccination Program.

Vaccine efforts are paired with boots-on-the-ground educational programs to engage vaccine-hesitant populations to answer questions and address concerns on site. APH partners with trusted community sources to inform and host clinics, provide education sessions, distribute PPE, and conduct outreach.

APH continues to build on current outreach efforts with partners the community trusts and released a solicitation to contract to provide additional resources.

## Focused Outreach and Messaging

The Health Equity Task Force continues to work with the Vaccine Incident Management Team (IMT) to bring vaccine resources to zip codes not at the 70% fully vaccinated goal. Outreach events continue to be an important tool to support protective behaviors, meet basic needs and provide information about the vaccine.

During the last two weeks, CHWs have targeted priority zip codes 78721, 78753, and 78721. We have distributed 910 flyers to various apartment complexes and collected 14 surveys. In the upcoming weeks, CHWs will distribute in the underserved zip codes 78723, 78664, 78660 and 78721. we will distribute 846 flyers.



## Summary of Previous Outreach Events

### *Oaks Apartment – 78753*

Monday, December 26, 2021, from 10 am-Noon  
Distributed 176 flyers to individuals and collected 14 surveys.

### *Arrowhead Apartment -78753*

Wednesday, December 28, 2021, from 1 pm – 3 pm  
Distributed 290 flyers to individuals.

## Current Outreach Events

### *Enclave at Falcon Point Apartments – 78660*

Thursday, January 13, 2022, from 2 pm – 4 pm  
324 flyers were distributed to individuals

### *Broadstone Avenue – 78660*

Thursday, January 13, 2022, from 4 pm – 4:30 pm  
80 flyers were distributed to individuals

## Upcoming Outreach Events

### *Lakewood Apartments – 78660*

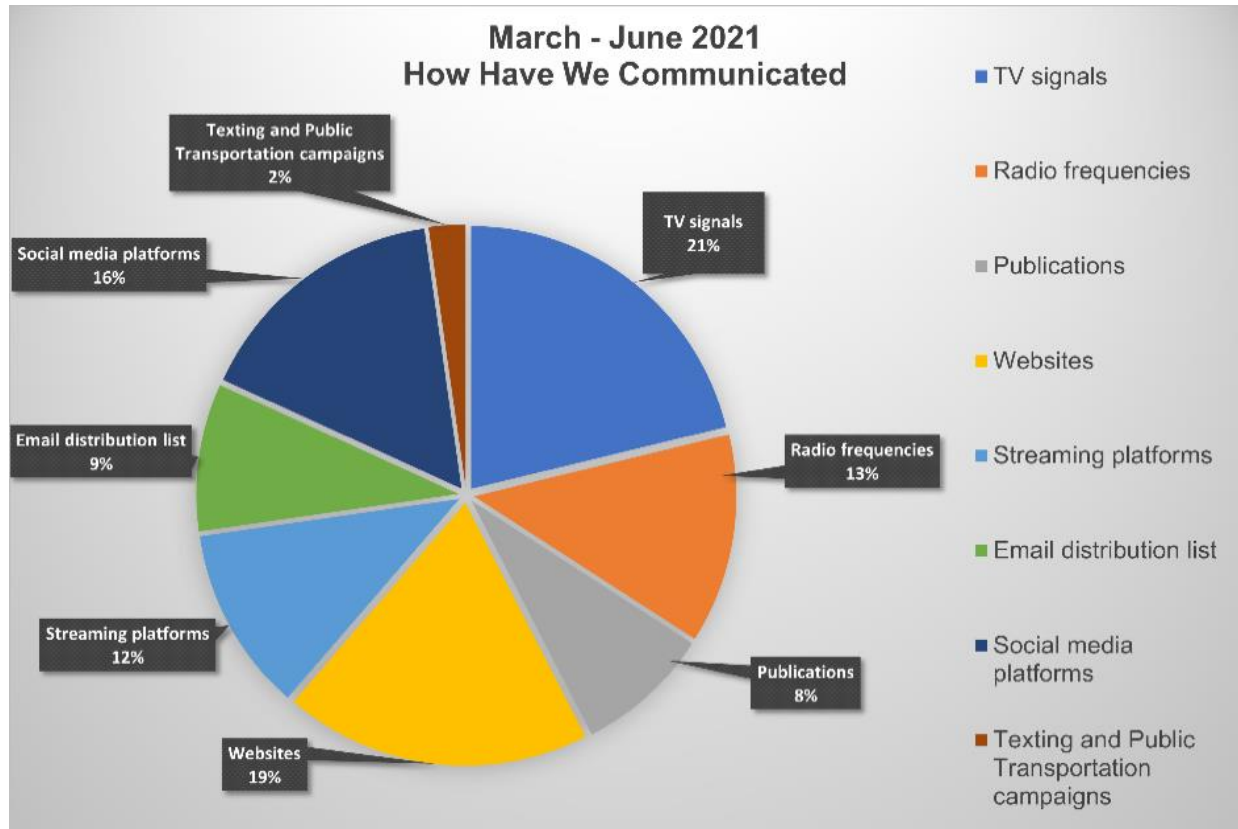
Wednesday, January 19, 2022, from 2 pm – 4 pm  
336 flyers will be distributed to individuals

Austin Public Health is also promoting vaccines using focused messaging and paid advertising and leveraging partnerships. For example, Austin Public Health partnered with Travis County, Central Health, and CommUnityCare to launch the "Let's Stick Together" initiative on June 28, 2021. The initiative aims to achieve the community-focused goal of 70% of eligible Travis County residents receiving at least one dose of the vaccine by July 4 and 70% of residents fully vaccinated by Labor Day. Other organizations were involved in contributing to the initiative, including Ascension Seton, Austin Independent School District, Baylor Scott & White, Capital Metro, Dell Medical School, Del Valle Independent School District, Integral Care, Lone Star Circle of Care, People's Community Clinic, St. David's HealthCare, St. David's Foundation, and the University of Texas at Austin.

As part of the "Let's Stick Together" initiative, Austin Public Health, Travis County, and Central Health are placing targeted advertising on radio, print, and online in both Spanish and English. Austin Public Health has utilized television signals, radio frequencies, publications, websites, streaming platforms, email distribution lists, social media platforms, texting, and public transportation for paid advertising efforts.

Through these efforts, 135,012,890 impressions (the times our content has been seen) have been among the Hispanic/Latinx community, 129,633,658 impressions among the Black/African American community, and 3,253,077 impressions among the Asian American/Pacific Islander community.





### Current Communications Strategies

- Promoting walk-up and pop-up vaccination events, with paid radio promotions and paid social media and texting that is zip code geofenced to the area in which vaccines are being provided.
- Encouraging people to prepare for summer travel by getting vaccinated, including information that it takes two weeks after the second shot for Pfizer and Moderna or two weeks after the single-shot Johnson & Johnson to be considered fully vaccinated.
- Providing the Equity Task Force educational materials to address hesitancy and combat misinformation. Content includes educational materials to address community feedback such as concerns with infertility, severe side effects, and how the vaccine works with your body to protect you from disease.
- Continuing to encourage proper hygiene (washing your hands, not touching your face, wearing a mask if unvaccinated, immunocompromised, etc.) as well as information on testing and quarantine if you develop COVID-19 symptoms.

### Testing Update

With the rise in cases associated to the Omicron variant, COVID-19 testing demand has increased throughout the community, surging all testing operations. Austin Public Health maintains two static testing operations to improve community access to across the community, meet the growing demand, and understand and inform the spread of COVID-19. As of January 3, 2022, APH tested 14,571 individuals



in both static and mobile testing operations. There are current plans to expand operations to two more locations to provide locations throughout the city and county.

### Static Testing

- Austin Public Health currently has two testing locations. Testing is available with or without an appointment. However, scheduling an appointment is recommended to save time on-site and confirm test availability for a given day.
- Schedule online at <http://covid19.austintexas.gov> or by calling 3-1-1 or 512-974-2000. As with all APH testing sites, the services are free.
- Static test site are currently available with or without an appointment at:
  - **George Morales Dove Springs Recreation Center** (park and enter)
    - 5801 Ainez Dr, Austin, Texas 78744
    - Tuesday through Saturday, 8 am-2 pm.
  - **Travis County Exposition Center**
    - 7311 Decker Lane, Austin, Texas 78724
    - Monday through Friday, 8 am-2 pm.

### Mobile Testing

Mobile (facility and home) testing continues to be in demand. Many facilities have contracted with private entities for testing. However, APH continues to offer testing services as needed. In August, APH provided testing to 3 facilities. August 2021 was the highest monthly total for home testing to date. 413 tests were administered.

Mobile testing will continue by appointment only

- (Monday- Friday 8 am - 4 pm).
- Mobile testing appointments can be made by calling 512-972-5560.

		8/30	8/31	9/1	9/2	9/3	9/4
St. John's	<b>Tu-Sa 8a-2p</b>	--	623	569	451	403	453
Dove Springs	<b>Tu/Th 3p-7p W/F/Sa 8a-2p</b>	--	260	227	171	194	204
Home Testing	<b>By Appointment Only</b>	9	15	20	12	19	--
Facilities Testing	<b>By Appointment Only</b>	--	--	--	--	60	--
Daily Total		<b>9</b>	<b>898</b>	<b>816</b>	<b>634</b>	<b>676</b>	<b>657</b>
Weekly Total		<b>3690</b>					

### At-Home Testing

The Federal Government COVID-19 at home testing program released a new website for households to order up to 4 free at-home COVID-19 rapid antigen tests. The tests are completely free and will take 7-12 days for delivery. The site also provides information on other testing resources including additional at-home testing resources, and information on free testing sites. The website link is: <https://www.covidtests.gov/#resources>.

City and County Emergency Operations Center is working on an emergency contract to purchase additional rapid antigen at home test kits to support critical infrastructure and respond staff as well as childcare/schools and other high risk community sectors.



## Self-Reporting

With the large amount of rapid antigen (Ag) -home testing occurring in all communities, there is recognition by public health officials throughout the United States that there is underreporting of disease within their communities. However, both DSHS and CDC's case definitions for public health reporting rely on results that have been administered, analyzed, and interpreted, and reported by laboratories or providers in clinical settings. APH follows the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) strict case classification guidance for reporting COVID-19 cases. Following this guidance, DSHS does not accept self-reported positive test results and does not provide a standardized process for APH to receive, or report self-administered positive test results.

Because of interest by the Austin City Council, APH established an email inbox for citizens to report their self-administered positive results. Collecting self-reported results has been a challenge. A cursory review of report at-home results indicates a lack of standardized information reported to date, residents reporting results for persons residing outside of Austin and Travis County, or residents submitting laboratory-confirmed results that would be duplicate results of those submitted by labs to APH. Monitoring information that will not be reported to state and federal public health officials is also an additional burden to an already overwhelmed public health staff, focusing on tens of thousands of laboratory-confirmed cases that are required to be reported to the DSHS. For the week of January 3, 2022, APH received 24,577 positive COVID lab results through the National Electronic Disease Surveillance System's (NEDSS) electronic laboratory reporting and additional laboratory reports via facsimile transmission and encrypted email.

For this reason, APH epidemiologists and health Information Technology staff have developed an automated, standardized process for individuals to self-report their results. Link to the reporting form is available at <https://www.austintexas.gov/covid-testinfo> under "Reporting Your Results." Because current resources are required to focus on processing and investigating those laboratory-confirmed or probable cases required by law, there is a need to identify resources to hire staff to validate, review and analyze these data to support this self-reporting initiative. Until these resources are identified, staff will pilot the analysis and reporting of the data on a monthly basis.

As of January 12, 2022, there have been 145 self-reported at-home rapid Ag results reported to APH. 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.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Desmar Walkes, Health Authority at [Desmar.Walkes@austintexas.gov](mailto:Desmar.Walkes@austintexas.gov), or Director, Adrienne Sturup at [Adrienne.Sturup@austintexas.gov](mailto:Adrienne.Sturup@austintexas.gov).

Cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager

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