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Nearly 1 in 5 Test Positive for COVID-19 at Central Health-affiliated CommUnityCare Testing Sites

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(Austin) – According to data from Central Health-affiliated CommUnityCare Health Centers, one in five tests administered at its drive-through testing sites and within its health centers over the last two weeks (April 26 – May 9) came back positive for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

With the exception of last week, CommUnityCare has consistently seen a week-over-week increase in positive cases since initiating coronavirus testing in mid-March, even as testing has expanded. Last week positive results decreased to 10.06% from a high of 21.41% the week prior.

Additionally, CommUnityCare analysis shows 412 of the 1,679 Latinos tested since mid-March have tested positive, resulting in a cumulative positivity rate of 24.55%. This is compared to a cumulative positivity rate of 7.32% for non-Latinos and 11.23% for those who did not report their ethnicity.

“These are worrisome trends,” CommUnityCare CEO Jaeson Fournier said. “The reason for higher positivity rates among Latinos we’ve tested could be both cultural and socio-economic – families living together in multigenerational households and people paid hourly who are unable to work from home. CommUnityCare is committed to making testing accessible to everyone,

especially communities that are clearly disproportionately affected by COVID-19.”

Overall CommUnityCare’s testing sites have administered 3,593 tests, a portion of which are still pending results. The overall positivity rate for returned tests is 16.89%, which is higher than Travis County’s positivity rate of 13.6% and more than double the state’s positivity rate of 7.8%, based on data from the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) dashboard as of May 6.

Central Health President & CEO Mike Geeslin notes the importance of providing testing, public awareness, and new ways to access care.

“This pandemic has placed communities of color at even greater risk, and the Central Health enterprise partners will respond,” Geeslin said. “There is more work to do, and we’re going to continue reaching out to these communities and supporting CommUnity Care’s efforts.”

There are hopeful signs in the CommUnityCare data – COVID-19 positivity rates for African Americans has declined since the week of March 29.

In March, CommUnityCare opened the first public COVID-19 testing sites in the Austin area that do not require a doctor’s referral or an appointment, and tests are free to people without insurance. Anyone can walk up or get tested while remaining in their vehicle. Almost 57% of all tests to date have been for non-CommUnityCare patients, and non-patients make up nearly 60% of all positive results returned.

“Testing is one of the most important ways to flatten the curve, which is why we are not just testing our own patients,” CommUnityCare Chief Medical Officer Dr. Alan Schalsha said. “It’s encouraging to see more and more people come to us get tested. If they know they’re positive, they can take proper precautions to protect their families, friends and community at large.”

CommUnityCare and Central Health continue to collect and analyze data regularly and are sharing the data with Austin Public Health and other health authorities to track larger community trends over time. CommUnityCare is also joining Austin Public Health and Dell Medical School’s UT Health Austin to perform contact tracing — identifying everyone an infected person may have exposed — to help reduce further spread of the disease.

CommUnityCare operates seven public drive-up testing sites: Hancock Center in Austin, Austin's Colony/Hornsby Bend, Colony Park, Del Valle, Dove Springs, Manor, and Pflugerville. The testing sites are open on a rotating schedule, Monday through Saturday. Medical experts at each location screen everyone for symptoms of COVID-19, regardless of whether they are a CommUnityCare patient. If a person meets certain criteria, they are tested.

CommUnityCare Testing By the Numbers (for all tests conducted from March 15 – May 9 as analyzed on May 11, 2020)

- **Seven** drive-up testing sites
- **3,593** tests administered, with **536** positives for COVID-19 and 403 results still pending as of May 11, 2020.
 - **57%** of tests administered for non-CommUnityCare patients
- **16.89%** overall positivity rate (number of positive results out of the total number of tests returned)
- Positivity rate by ethnicity (number of positive results out of the total number of tests returned for that ethnic group)
 - **24.5%** Latino positivity rate (412 out of 1,679).
 - CommUnityCare Latino patient's positivity: 21.60%
 - Non-CommUnityCare Latino patient's positivity: 27.47%
 - **7.32%** non-Latino positivity rate (82 out of 1,120)
 - 11.23% for those who did not report their ethnicity