



ALAMEDA COUNTY COVID-19 HEALTH EMERGENCY PRESS RELEASE

COUNTY OF ALAMEDA ★ CALIFORNIA

Office of Emergency Services
4985 Broder Blvd, Dublin, CA 94568

Alameda County Health Care Services Agency

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 1, 2020

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Alameda County Meets New Equity Metric, Allows Elementary Schools to Open if Ready, and Phases in Some Indoor Activities

ALAMEDA COUNTY, CA – Yesterday, September 30, the State announced its COVID-19 health equity metric, which requires counties like ours to ensure that the testing positivity rates in their most disadvantaged neighborhoods, defined as the lowest quartile of the [U.S. Census Healthy Places Index for California \(HPI\)](#), are within the same range as the county’s overall test positivity rate.

This new metric is in addition to the overall testing positivity rate and case rate requirements within the [State’s Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#) and will go into effect on October 6. This means that for Alameda County to progress to the next tier, Orange, we must have an adjusted daily case rate between 1 to 3.9 per 100,000, an overall positivity rate between 2 and 4.9%, and our lowest quartile HPI census tracts’ testing positivity must be equal to or less than 5.2%. The health equity metric will not be used to move counties to a more restrictive tier.

COVID-19 has highlighted longstanding systemic inequities and their impact on the overall health and life expectancy. We share the State’s commitment to reducing disparities, and have focused on health equity from the outset of our response. That is why Alameda County has already acted to better serve our Latinx, Black and African American, and Pacific Islander communities, who are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. This includes services like culturally and linguistically competent case investigation and contact tracing, resources and housing options to support residents so they can safely isolate, and increasing access to testing in communities that are seeing high testing positivity and case rates. Through the Health Care Services Agency alone, the County is slated to spend more than \$52M toward community-based response efforts, with a focus on zip codes with the highest COVID-19 rates.

Based on the data made available by the State, we are already seeing the results of those actions and Alameda County is currently meeting the health equity metric: our lowest HPI quartile has a testing positivity rate of 3.8% and the overall positivity rate is 2.3%. The adjusted daily case rate is 4.1 per 100,000.

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Alameda County Current Tier Status	Red				
	Tier 1 (Widespread)	Tier 2 (Substantial)	Tier 3 (Moderate)	Tier 4 (Minimal)	Alameda County
Adjusted Case Rate per 100,000	>7	4 to 7	1 to 3.9	<1	4.1
Overall Test Positivity Rate	>8%	5% to 8%	2% to 4.9%	<2%	2.3%
Lowest HPI Quartile Test Positivity Rate	>8.0%	≤8.0%	<5.2%	<2.2%	3.8%

We know the work is only beginning. By partnering with local organizations in communities that have been hit hardest, we can improve health education and increase access to critical resources to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and close the health equity gaps that preexisted this deadly virus. This is the only way to ensure Alameda County can open safely for everyone and why we must continue to take measured steps to opening.

Newly Permitted Activities Under the Red Tier

On September 22, Alameda County moved into the Red Tier of the State’s [color-coded four-tier Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#). Local Health Officers may proceed more cautiously than the State allows, and Alameda County public health officials have used this time to carefully consider the risks associated with activities that may be permitted to open or expand under the Red Tier.

As COVID-19 still poses substantial risk to Alameda County residents and workers, the following updates to the Health Officer Orders represent a phased approach to opening to avoid dramatic increases in disease transmission and re-closures.

Starting October 13, Elementary Schools May Reopen

The State allows schools to open for in-person learning for counties in the Red. As of October 13, elementary schools (transitional kindergarten-6th grade) that complete a [COVID-19 health and safety reopening plan](#) are permitted to open. The decision and timing of when to open rests with each school and school district, and schools are not required to open if not ready.

Elementary schools are required to post their reopening plans to their school or school district website and submit their plan to the Alameda County Office of Education. Schools planning to open must notify the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency of their decision and provide the website link to their plan.

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We know it is hardest for younger children to spend all day learning online. Returning elementary students to classrooms balances the potential risk of increased COVID-19 transmission with the impact of distance learning on both students’ mental health and their ability to learn.

Alameda County will consider permitting middle and high school students to return to in-person education in four to twelve-week phases as local disease conditions allow. This phased approach will allow us to gauge the impact of elementary school re-opening on transmission.

The Alameda County Health Care Services Agency will continue to support schools and school districts with guidance for school reopening plans, guidance and technical assistance in evaluating testing strategies, assistance in identifying supplies and qualified labs and vendors, and support during outbreaks.

Starting October 9, Additional Activities Permitted in Alameda County

Alameda County public health officials have determined that the following activities with restrictions as allowed by the State in the Red Tier would add only limited additional risk when appropriate safety measures are followed and may open on October 9:

Reopening Date	Sectors & Activities
10/9/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hotels & lodging for tourism: fitness centers and indoor pools restricted • Museums, zoos, & aquariums: indoors < 25% capacity • Personal care services: indoors with modification; services requiring removal of face covering prohibited • Libraries < 25% capacity • Gyms and fitness centers: indoors < 10% capacity; restrictions on aerobic exercise and classes • Outdoor film production per local guidance
10/13/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary Schools: may open per State and Local guidance, as ready • Middle and high schools may be considered in 4-12 weeks, as data trends permit
For consideration in next 4-6 weeks, as data trends permit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor retail: expand to 50% capacity • Shopping centers: expand to 50% capacity, add food courts • Indoor worship services: expand to 25% capacity or <100 people • Indoor dining < 25% capacity or <100 people • Indoor movie theaters < 25% capacity or <100 people • Outdoor cardrooms and satellite wagering

For a complete list of activities that are currently open and not open in Alameda County, visit: <https://covid-19.acgov.org/sip.page>. Guidance and resources to support safe opening are available here: <https://covid-19.acgov.org/covid19/recovery.page>

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Research studies continue to show that outdoor activities pose less risk of COVID-19 transmission than indoor activities, and the County encourages all businesses permitted to open indoor operations to continue to provide services outdoors whenever feasible.

Additional risk is inherent to some activities, like indoor dining, that the State may allow in the Red Tier. Having different households together while they eat and drink for extended periods of time in an enclosed space eliminates the protections social distancing and wearing mask provide.

While eating and drinking, unmasked individuals from different households would be near other unmasked people in a less ventilated environment, compared to outdoor dining. Under these conditions, people with mild or no COVID-19 symptoms put the people at their table and other neighboring tables at higher risk of contracting COVID-19.

Indoor dining staff serving tables also have an increased risk because they are being exposed to multiple people daily who aren't wearing masks all the time while they are dining out. The more patrons served, the higher the risk.

Activities that are allowed by the State under the Red Tier but are not currently permitted locally will be considered for the next update to the Health Officer Orders if local disease conditions remain stable or improve.

To help the County of Alameda move to a less restrictive tier, please wear a mask whenever you leave home, wash your hands regularly, keep at least six feet of physical distance from anyone you don't live with, and limit mixing with people outside your household.

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