



Cambridge
Public Health
Department

Agenda
Cambridge COVID-19 Expert Advisory Panel
1 pm, Thursday October 1, 2020

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Join with Google Meet



Join by phone



Attendance:

Jill Crittenden
Bill Hanage
LouAnn Bruno-Murtha
Chris Kreis
Claude Jacob
Sam Lipson
Nancy Rihan-Porter
Sammi Chung
Anna Kaplan

Meeting convened at 1:00 pm

1. City and CPSD metrics for increasing or relieving safety restrictions:
 - local and regional sewage data would provide unbiased samples for setting thresholds (eg relative to main MA data set biased by repeat testing at schools and universities)
 - update on sewage sampling for Cambridge
 - update on setting of metrics
2. Can free testing be encouraged and offered for non-Cambridge residents who work in Cambridge, especially those in frontline service positions and restaurants?
3. Should school playgrounds be open or closed to the public during school hours?
4. Update on recommendation for antigen-testing company?

Recommendations from this meeting:

Notes:

1. City and CPSD metrics for increasing or relieving safety restrictions:
 - Can see increasing, cutoff is at 100 for change to school opening.
 - North ~40, South ~50, low point around 10/15 at the end of June
 - There have been individual points >100, but they come down quickly
 - To interpret this over time, we need to compare to prior dates
 - Baseline will creep up over time, since people infected will continue to shed

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- Reviewed proposals w/ DPW and the City Managers office, calls for a min of 3 collection sites in the city, more to share in the coming week.
 - Multiple metrics/sources for indicators of increasing infection is good. Multiple inputs provide more coverage.
 - Bike Rack: Get Mauricio to come talk to us, good at combining multiple data streams. He is based at Children's, and affiliated at Harvard
2. Can free testing be encouraged and offered for non-Cambridge residents who work in Cambridge, especially those in frontline service positions and restaurants?
- Bill: This makes a ton of sense
 - Claude: Rate determined by kits and capacity to provide tests
 - AK: Don't want to push out community members by having private companies abuse the system. However, places with high risk places, smaller, public institutions, that's different.
 - Nancy: We could support smaller shops, etc. Concern: Dunkin Donuts, Shaws, very low income employees, can't pay for a private test. Those corps may or may not want to do it. Those people are key. Ex: We tested early childhood providers. People showing up at the testing sites are not necessarily the people we are targeting.
 - Claude: Unevenness of access is an issue – ex: walkins to clinics.
 - Sammi: Some people are regular testers and doing this already. However, we don't really have the team capacity to do this.
 - Bill; There are issues with prioritization and with capacity and ability to do this.
 - **Action item:** Next week, discuss the priorities for this.
 - Nancy: a permanent location would help
 - Claude: Intersection between race/ethnicity and job function. If we're really trying to get the frontline workers, how can we ensure that?
 - Sam: Set aside a two hour block for certain groups?
 - Claude + Nancy: We've done that.
 - **Bill: Let's talk mostly about this next week, how can we improve**
3. Should school playgrounds be open or closed to the public during school hours?
- Jill: This came up with Cambridge school committee. Someone suggested playground should be off-limits during school hours to the public.
 - Bill: What's the rational? To prevent people from walking through and shedding virus? Doesn't sound very high risk.
 - Sam: Enforcement nightmare
 - Not something we need to do, fomite transmission risk is super low.
 - Messaging: The three C's: these things are dangerous, risk of transmission by touch → risk by hand washing is much less.
 - Hierarchy of risk graphics
 - Sam: I have backed off a little on fomite risk, but there are still challenges: You have a sense of how far apart you are from others, but you have no way of knowing the fomite risk. Much harder to message about this risk, individual perception about risk vs how it actually works.
 - Bill: Better to message around avoiding high touch surfaces, vs. one off surfaces.
 - Sam: That is exactly how we discuss it, we make a low to high touch surface map. Put all effort into red > green.

4. Governor's Phase III, Step II of reopening

- There is a reason they are low risk, maybe because they delayed reopening
- Sam: What Somerville and Boston has done is add a 2-3 week delay to each step. This helps solve the problem of having no notice from the state. Gives us time to create a thoughtful restriction
- Claude: Being slow and steady has been key. These orders have made it hard to adjust. Goes into effect Oct 5th. Meeting with City Manager after this
- AK: Incidence for us is 3-4 cases per day
- Bill: This is like the lockdown in reverse. This needs to be a reversible process if we reopen. Because we are about to see what happens with schools, it makes no sense to do these together. We will see more cases in school. We can't distinguish school cases vs reopening cases. This will mostly impact young people.
- Claude: Recommended window between school opening and reopening?
- Bill: With all of our surveillance, you might have an estimate within 2-3 weeks, ideally 3, to assess impact.
- Jill: Sewage will reduce lag time to assess impacts.
- Bill: Best plan: Open schools, wait three weeks, then decide whether to proceed with step 3.
- Sam: What does phased re-closing look like?
- Jill: When I walk around the city, the people not wearing masks are teenagers and kids
- Bill: I can back calculate from hospitalizations and deaths how many cases there were the week before, and then if we approach that slope of curve we can do something
- Louann: If Boston doesn't have indoor dining, many will probably come to Cambridge
- Sam: Lots of outdoor seating in place
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5. Halloween and guidance/precautions

- No indoor gatherings
- "Present street" (?) should do drive by vs crowds?
- Claude: By ordinance in Somerville, throwing of candy is not allowed
- Sam: In Cambridge you cannot throw pickles out the window
- Conclusion: Lots of absurd laws on the books. Nancy is not allowed in Illinois.
- Covid fatigue, CDC has turfed this to states and locals. Whatever cities and towns say yes, the ones next door say no.
- Halloween is on a Saturday this year.
- People are doing "Trunk or Treating"
- Can it go longer? To reduce density
- Anna: we never saw spikes after any of the ongoing protests for black lives, because mask compliance is so good. Hand hygiene will be the key in Halloween.
- Bill: Yes, each piece of our lives outside of pandemic have value
- Louann: We could advise parents to have candy sit for a few days for viral decay.