



**ELKO COUNTY**  
**EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER**  
571 Idaho Street  
Elko, NV 89801

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## **ELKO COUNTY COVID-19 ASSESSMENT PLAN**

### **Revised October 21, 2020**

#### **OVERALL ASSESSMENT**

Elko County is the fourth largest county in the continental United States covering just over 11 million acres or 17,000 square miles with over 70% of our land being federally managed land. Elko County has a cumulative population of 55,116 according to the [2019 Nevada State Demographer's Certified Estimate](#). Within the borders of the County are four incorporated cities (Elko, Carlin, Wells, and West Wendover), three unincorporated towns (Jackpot, Montello, and Mountain City) and several other rural communities, including Spring Creek. Approximately 90% of the County's population resides within a 20-mile radius of the City of Elko. Spring Creek is approximately ten miles south of Elko and is the second largest homeowner's association in the United States with approximately 13,000 residents. It is also the second most populated community in Elko County. Every community across the State is faced with unique challenges as the situation and response to COVID-19 evolves. Elko County communities are no exception.

Pursuant to Nevada Revised Statute 441A, the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health (DPBH) is the health authority for Elko County and most other rural and frontier counties in the State. Immediately following the Governor's emergency closure of schools in mid-March, Elko County stood up the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) under a Unified Command Team structure consisting of the County Health Officer, Emergency Manager, and command staff. The focus of the EOC was to provide immediate, local response to our communities, including five neighboring counties, and to support the State in unprecedented times knowing that resources were, and continue to be, limited.

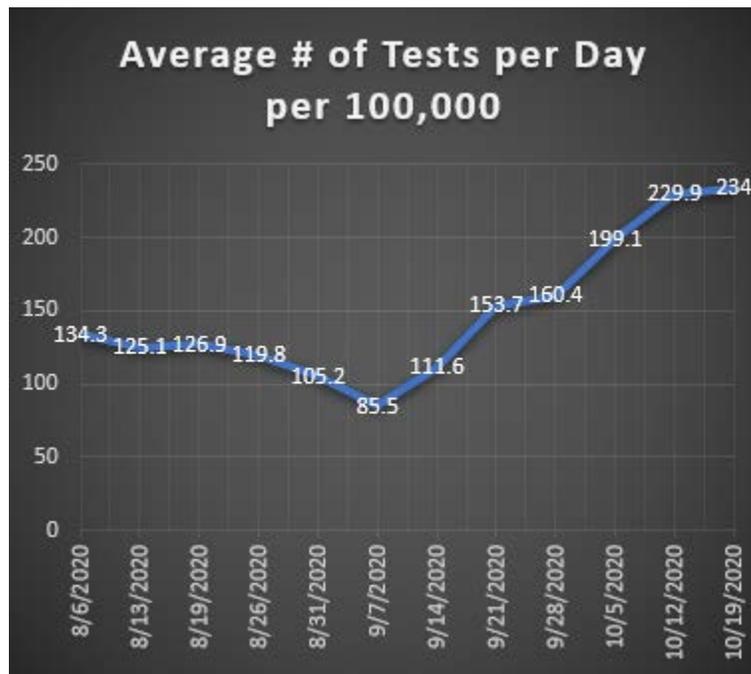
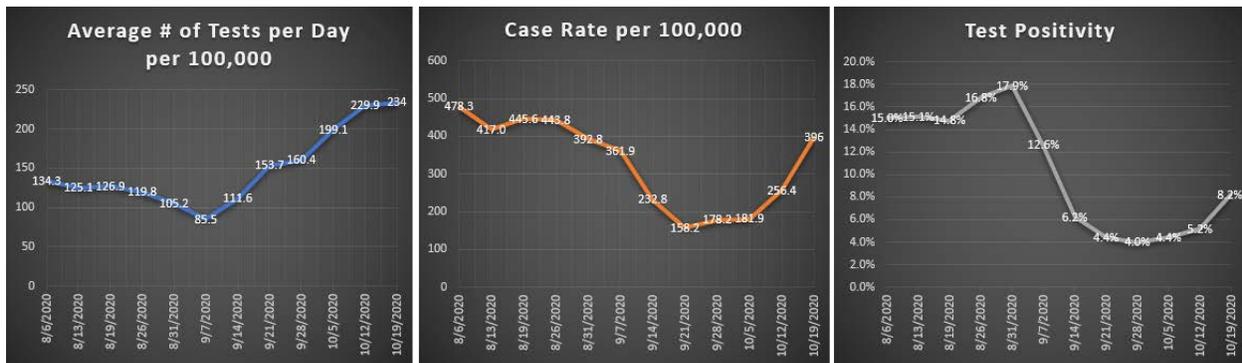
On March 26, 2020, the COVID-19 Hotline went live under the direction of the Elko County Health Officer in collaboration with Nevada Health Centers and the University of Nevada, Reno School of Medicine as well as other medical facilities across the Northeast Region as an innovative solution to mitigate multiple challenges including not overwhelming the health care system, limited test kit availability at that time, and a quasi-contact tracing mechanism. The hotline has served as resource for five counties which has enabled concerned community members to call with questions, concerns, or to be referred for testing. The hotline was one of the first of its kind and served as a model for similar resources across the State. It continues to be an integral part of the response in Elko County.

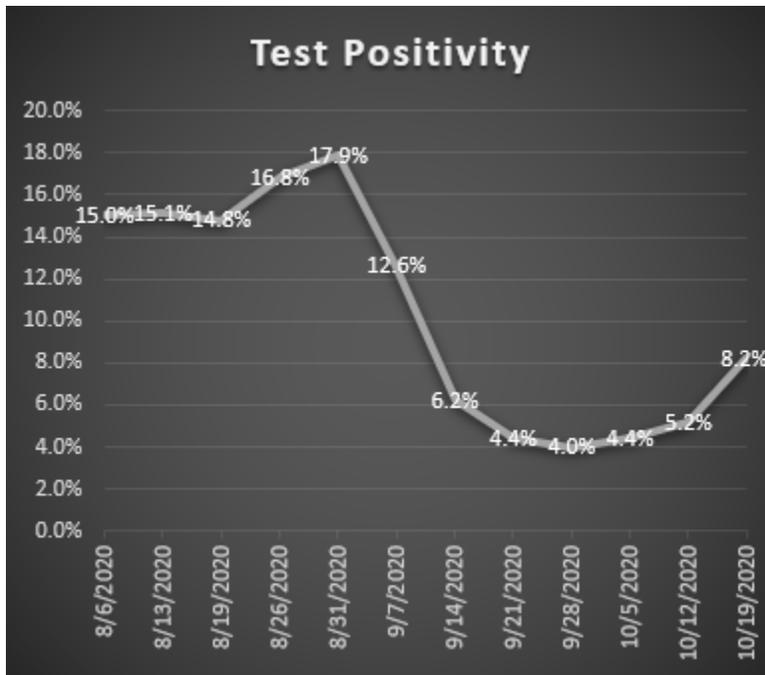
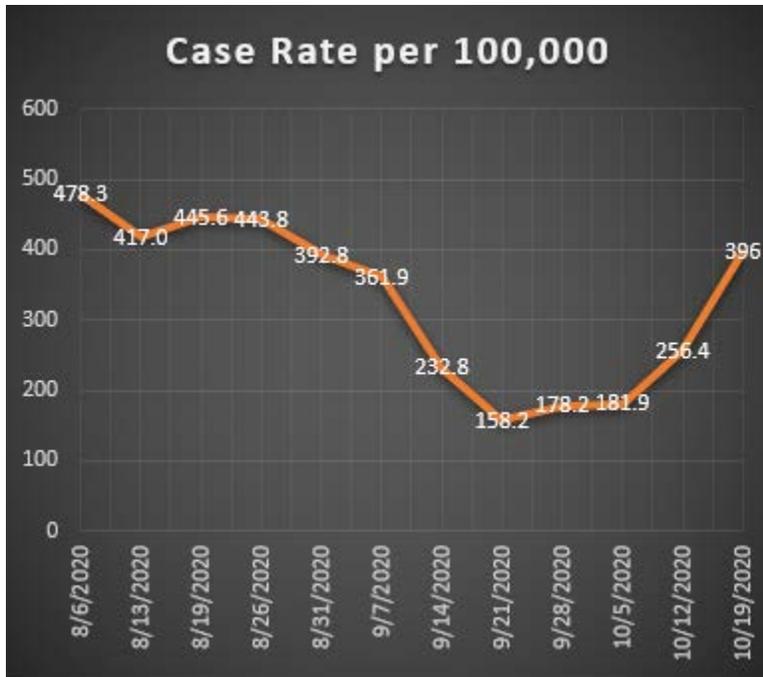
In addition, the Unified Command Team established a regional warehouse to help address PPE needs for the northeast region, including the tribes. On March 22, 2020, the Elko County COVID-19 Response Facebook page was launched. It has been dedicated to communicating about local response efforts and resources, including educational materials, Facebook live sessions with community leaders and the County Health Officer. Between September 23 and October 20, 2020, nearly 17,296 people have been reached through the Facebook page. A local

COVID-19 dashboard was also developed when County level data was otherwise not readily available.

In mid-May, Elko County engaged Great Basin College and Dr. Amber Donnelly, Dean of Health Science and Human Services, to lead a local contact tracing team which has been instrumental in slowing the spread of COVID-19 in our communities, as well as Eureka and Lander County. According to data provided by DPBH, approximately 40% of the County's confirmed cases have been identified through the contact tracing process. The model developed by Dr. Donnelly has been utilized as a best-practice across the State.

Elko County is currently experiencing an increase in cases consistent with many other counties in Nevada and surrounding states. Below are the trends over the last two and half months which include average number of tests per 100,000 people, case rate per 100,000 people, and test positivity rate.





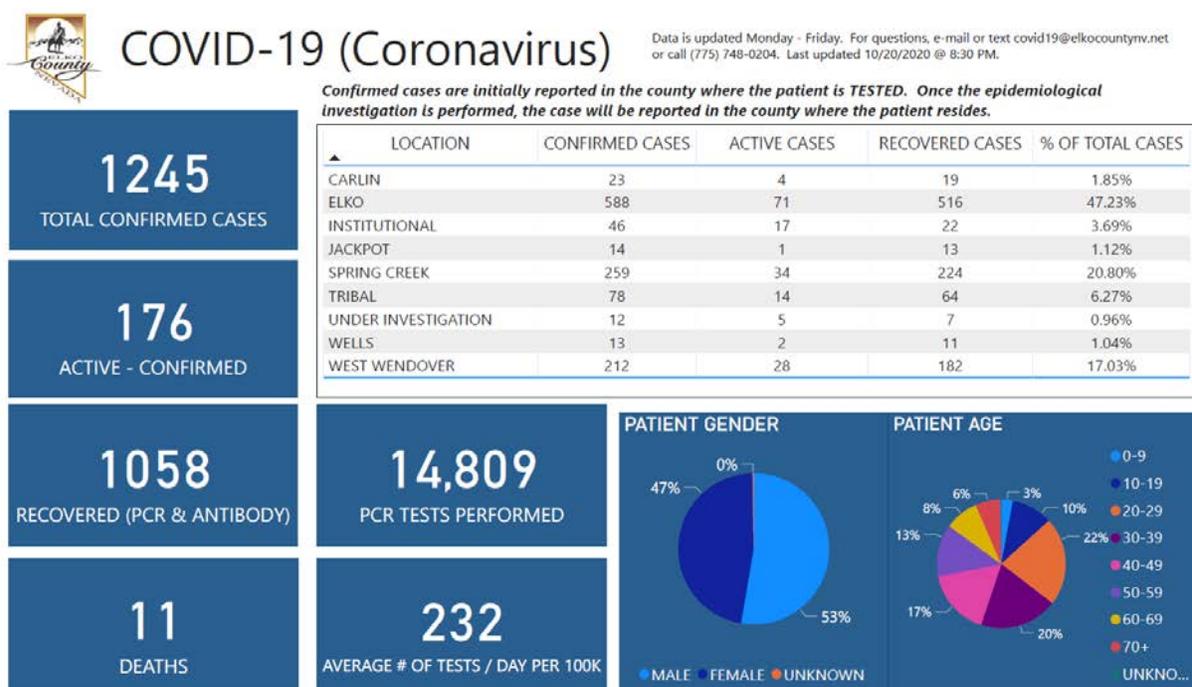
We have been actively engaged with local providers to maintain the increase in testing we appreciated over the last few weeks. Through the use of CARES Act funding, Medallus Urgent Care is offering free testing seven days a week. Through social media and other communications platforms, we are encouraging anyone who wants to test, to get tested.

In addition, we continue to collaborate with DEM and NVNG to host community-based testing events through the end of October. We have engaged local partners to assist with these efforts as well. During our third event on October 16, 2020, we tested 122 individuals. As of today, we have not received results for this event.

Result times from the Nevada State Public Health lab have been averaging more than 7 days in the last three weeks, in some cases it has been more than ten days from sample collection to receipt of the results. The turnaround time has been a barrier to when it comes to supporting increased testing in our communities. We'd like to see the turnaround time in the 2 to 3 day range.

In addition, it is imperative that Elko County and the Task Force are on the same page and understand the data in which we are being held accountable to. For example, we were notified on September 1, 2020, that rapid tests which have been completed on a POC machine are not counted unless the result is positive. The State team has developed a reporting template to capture this data which can be uploaded in the Electronic Lab Reporting (ELR) system. We are working closely with our local providers to get the information completed and returned to the State. This is a very labor-intensive process where resources are already limited and will take some time.

In the last thirty days, Elko County is reporting a total of 308 new cases and 183 recovered cases. As of October 20, 2020, Elko County has 176 active cases.



**HOSPITAL CAPACITY**

**Describe the state of hospital capacity within the county, including:**

**Describe the status of staffed ICU beds, ventilators, staffing, medication treatments, and PPE.**

Elko County continues to collaborate with Northeastern Nevada Regional Hospital (NNRH) to closely monitor overall capacity to treat and care for all patients, not only those with COVID-19.

NNRH has ten designated rooms to isolate and treat COVID-19 patients, including a negative pressure room. Through the pandemic, staffing and occupancy has been good.

NNRH reports they have a good supply of Remdesivir. The current levels of medication are holding steady as of October 20, 2020.

As of October 20, 2020, based on the daily report from Nevada Hospital Association:

- 19% of Licensed Inpatient Beds are being utilized
- ICU beds – 7 licensed beds, 0 occupied
- Ventilators – 6 machines , 0 in use
- Nine total positive cases are currently hospitalized
  - 1 at Northeastern Nevada Regional Hospital (Elko)
  - 5 at the University of Utah
  - 1 at Saint Mary's
  - 1 at St. Mark's
  - 1 at VA Salt Lake

PPE, and medication levels are adequate as reported to NHA. NNRH is sanitizing PPE, including N95 masks in effort to ensure PPE levels remain stable. In addition, they continue to purchase and stockpile PPE to prepare for a surge.

NNRH has a small number of staff that are off duty due to COVID-19. The 14-day quarantine for close contacts could provide a substantial staffing challenge if there is an increase in the number of staff exposed to COVID-19, especially through household contacts.

**Describe the status of Alternative Care Facility planning, staffing, and implementation.**

NNRH can expand capacity within their own facility, including obtaining additional ventilators, if necessary. However, full implementation of NNRH's Surge Plan, even if only expanding within the currently facility, will require additional staff.

**Describe your current assessment of overall hospital capacity and metrics that will determine expansion to Alternative Care Facilities.**

Elko County has worked with NNRH to ensure appropriate metrics have been identified which determine the implementation of the Surge Plan. The "triggers" which require implementation of the plan are based mostly on staffing needs, which are situational and dynamic. NNRH has sister facilities from which they may be able to utilize staff. In addition, NNRH works with contract staffing agencies to fulfill staffing requirements, when needed, and are prepared to do so.

Overall, Elko County's hospital capacity is good and remains stable. The capacity at transfer facilities is being closely monitored and could become a challenge in the event we are not able to transfer patients to a higher level of care, if needed.

The Task Force should also note, the town of Jackpot is located on the Nevada-Idaho border and the City of West Wendover is located on the Nevada-Utah border. Both communities have

access to an acute care clinic operated by Nevada Health Centers; however, most residents seek medical care outside of the State, especially when advanced care, such as hospitalization is required. Jackpot has had 14 confirmed cases, with 1 currently active and West Wendover has had 212 confirmed cases to date, with 28 currently active. Four West Wendover cases which have required hospitalization have received treatment in a Utah facility.

### **ACCESS TO PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

#### **Describe the status of PPE within the county, including:**

The Elko County Logistics Team continues to support the regional warehouse which was established to provide supplies to Humboldt, Lander, Eureka, White Pine, and Elko counties as well as State and tribal agencies in northeastern Nevada. The Nevada National Guard trained the Logistics team members to utilize their database, Inflo.

#### **Describe the status of PPE on hand (in local reserve) and on order.**

Nevada is stable with a 30-day supply on-hand with vendors being identified to maintain continuity of operations.

The current PPE status for health care providers and our public health system, including private practices, is at sufficient capacity for maintaining the status quo. As PPE has become more readily available through the normal supply chain, we have received fewer requests for assistance. However, the logistics team continues to work with existing suppliers and to identify new suppliers to plan for and build supplies necessary to respond to a surge or resurgence of COVID-19. In addition to the regional warehouse, Elko County EOC maintains a local warehouse in effort to respond to immediate, short-term needs.

We're encouraging providers to utilize the Battelle system for N-95 masks, although NNRH is using an in-house sanitizing process for their own PPE.

Through the use of CARES Act funding, Elko County and the incorporated cities have an appropriate amount of PPE to support the continuity of local government and municipal operations for at least 30 days, including the continuance of criminal jury trials in the next few weeks. We are also preparing to support any PPE needs related to in-person voting this in the next few months.

#### **Describe the county's distribution priorities.**

PPE is distributed based on the priorities set by Nevada Division of Emergency Management, specifically hospitals, acute care facilities, private practices and correctional facilities, first responders and those supporting vulnerable populations.

### **TESTING CAPACITY**

#### **Describe the status of your local testing efforts, including:**

Elko County believes from a disease mitigation and public health standpoint that it is important to strategize testing efforts based on identifying and treating those who are symptomatic, are close contacts of confirmed cases, and to protect vulnerable populations and healthcare workers, rather than testing to meet a criteria or metric. However, in effort to prevent additional restrictions or mitigation measures which will inevitably create further economic impacts to our

county, we are committed to increasing testing through sustainable means and not one-time events.

**Description of testing criteria:**

Under the direction of Elko County Health Officer, Dr. Putnam, the testing strategy continues to be driven by availability of local resources. While the turnaround time for test results from the Nevada State Public Health was improving, we have experienced an extended turnaround time in the last few weeks. Sustained improvement in turnaround time is important in the overall mitigation of the virus. The priority for testing is as follows:

- Individuals experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19
- Close contacts of a confirmed case
- High risk or vulnerable individuals
- Healthcare workers and first responders
- Individuals scheduled for medical procedures

*Effective September 21, 2020, providers have been encouraged to test anyone who would like to be tested for COVID-19.*

**Overview of the number of people tested in a day/week.**

Since September 14, 2020, Elko County has consistently exceeded the minimum testing requirement.

Turnaround time from the Nevada State Public Health Lab is currently averaging more than seven days. We do not have results from the community-based testing event held on October 16, 2020.

**Efforts to Increase Testing**

Effective September 21, 2020, Medallus Urgent Care has agreed to test any individual who would like to have a COVID-19 test for any reason. The provider offers services seven days a week, which allows for flexibility to support vulnerable populations and first responders, if necessary. The provider has agreements with two corporate/private labs and is in process of obtaining and implementing point of care testing in the coming weeks. CARES Act funding received by Elko County will be utilized to support this initiative.

We are working closely with DEM and Nevada National Guard to complete community-based testing in the month of October. We are currently scheduled to test on October 2, 9, 16, and 23 in Elko. We have incentivized testing in effort to increase participation.

On October 21, 2020, we are hosting community-based testing in the City of West Wendover. At this time, we have approximately 155 participants.

In addition, we are collaborating with Renown's Lab Director and the Elko County School District to coordinate voluntary testing of all school district staff in effort to safely re-open the schools to a model of in-person learning.

## **Overview of targeted testing efforts for high-risk communities, outbreak intervention and other efforts.**

Elko County is monitoring local data for trends to identify outbreaks. We have on hand over 1,000 rapid test kits for deployment as needed for targeted testing and we are able to deploy these test kits to Nevada Health Centers who has an AbbottID NOW machine and trained staff to use the machine.

We are in the process of obtaining additional AbbottID NOW machines to place with local health care providers.

### **Schools**

The Elko County School District (ECSD) is the third largest in the state with 21 sites and approximately 10,000 students, 868 full-time staff, 224 part-time staff and 263 substitute teachers.

School District Staff: They have developed training modules for staff regarding Coronavirus awareness, cleaning and disinfecting your workplace and managing stress and anxiety. There is an administrator/supervisor quick reference guide for actions to take with their building when a student/employee has symptoms, exposure, or a positive test. They have also established a quick reference guide for students. This includes a description of coronavirus, how it is spread, how to protect themselves and their family what to watch for regarding symptoms, when to seek medical attention and returning to school criteria. The guide is comprehensive and includes picture algorithms.

In addition, we are collaborating with Renown's Lab Director and the Elko County School District to coordinate voluntary testing of all school district staff in effort to safely re-open the schools to a model of in-person learning.

### **Skilled Nursing Facility Outbreak**

Skilled nursing facilities are regulated by the State of Nevada, HCQC.

During mid-August, an outbreak was identified in the skilled nursing facility. A total of 56 individuals have tested positive, including 28 residents, 1 assisted living resident, and 27 staff. To date, there has been eight fatalities related to this outbreak, which accounts for 72.7% of the County's deaths. The last positive resident tested on October 1, 2020. The last staff member who tested positive, tested on October 8, 2020. Both staff and residents have been isolated and continue to be monitored to prevent community spread.

Pursuant to CMS guidance, the skilled nursing facility is required to test staff and residents who have tested negative twice a week for at least the next 90 days. Elko County, through support of the Nevada State Public Health Lab, will continue to provide test kits to allow for regular, weekly testing of staff and residents until the outbreak is under control or longer required be the regulatory agency(ies). Nevada Health Centers will conduct rapid testing as capacity allows.

We also continue to closely monitor the City of West Wendover and keep in close contact with

the Mayor and local health care providers. West Wendover is particularly challenging because on the other side of the Nevada border is Wendover, UT and Nevada and Utah have separate jurisdiction over the city within their respective state. Many of the Wendover, UT residents work in the gaming industry in Nevada. If there was an outbreak in the Wendover, UT community, NV DPBH may not be notified. As it is, reporting of results from Utah Department of Health to NV DPBH for West Wendover residents who test in Utah is generally significantly delayed. It is not uncommon for results to be delayed, significantly limiting our ability to effectively complete the disease investigation and appropriately contact trace each case.

Jackpot is also being closely monitored as the Idaho Department of Health is not transferring the cases to Nevada in a timely manner, if at all. We are generally notified of positive residents by their employer and we follow-up with the individual to obtain the lab and complete the contact tracing process.

### **Elko County Jail Outbreak**

Nearly two weeks ago, we were notified that a Detention Deputy tested positive for COVID-19. As a result, the internal contact tracing process was implemented to identify close contacts and exposures. All deputies identified have been tested. Inmates were provided an opportunity to test as well. As of October 21, 2020, there have been 37 inmates, 4 staff members, and 1 contracted medical staff who have tested positive. Both staff and inmates have been isolated and continue to be monitored to prevent community spread. At this time only mild symptoms have been reported, many cases have been asymptomatic. Inmates and staff are being tested on a weekly schedule. The contracted medical staff is monitoring/assessing positive cases each day and reporting to the contact tracing team. In the event an inmate experiences increased symptoms or complications, a process is in place to ensure they are transferred to a higher level of care.

### **CASE INVESTIGATION AND CONTACT TRACING**

#### **Describe the current status of your contact tracing efforts, including:**

Informal case investigation and contact tracing was implemented by Dr. Putnam early in Elko County's response to COVID-19, partially through the COVID-19 hotline. Positive cases and close contacts were instructed to self-isolate and were closely monitored until recovered.

Contact tracing has evolved to a highly competent team led by Dr. Amber Donnelly, Dean of Health Sciences and Human Services at Great Basin College. She developed a model which has been implemented across the State.

Case investigation and contact tracing has proven to be one of the County's best defenses and most effective strategies against spreading the virus in our communities. Twenty percent of the County's confirmed cases have been identified through familial relationships and contact tracing. Positive cases continue to be instructed to self-isolate and are monitored regularly by the contact tracing team. In addition, Elko County has provided communication about the new contact tracing app, COVID Trace.

#### **Description of your current contact tracing workforce.**

Elko County partners with Great Basin College to provide disease investigation and contact tracing services for Elko, Eureka, and Lander counties. The team is led by Dr. Amber Donnelly, Dean of Health Sciences and Human Services and is adequately staffed to meet our needs. A significant number of cases have been identified through contact tracing efforts, which has led to the stabilization in active cases.

### **Percent of positive cases contacted within 24 hours, and percent of cases contacted within 48 hours.**

Upon notification of a positive result through the NBS system, the disease investigator begins collecting and validating contact information. Many laboratory results are reported without information necessary to begin the case investigation. When data is missing, the ordering facility is contacted for each case to gather the necessary information. Currently, the team is contacting all positive cases within 24 hours as long as they have accurate contact information for the case. Cases are instructed to self-isolate and are monitored regularly. They are also contacting all close contacts within 48 hours so long as they have accurate contact information.

### **Overview contact tracing findings suggesting high-risk areas.**

#### **Skilled Nursing Facility Outbreak**

An outbreak was identified in the skilled nursing facility. A total of 56 individuals have tested positive, including 29 residents and 27 staff. The State Epidemiologist's team initiated an investigation to determine the source of the outbreak and an inspection by the HCQC team was completed the week of August 31 to ensure the appropriate infection control process was being followed, etc.

Ultimately, the State is the regulatory authority and is accountable to provide support and mitigate the spread of the virus in this facility.

Elko County will provide test kits to allow for regular, weekly testing of staff and residents until the outbreak is under control. Nevada Health Centers will conduct rapid testing as capacity allows.

#### **Workplace Exposures**

Over the last several weeks we have been monitoring a localized outbreak of cases that are related to one organization. It has been determined that while several cases have been linked to the organization, many of the positive cases had close contacts outside the workplace with co-workers and family members in social gatherings. The organization developed an action or intervention plan with increased mitigation measures based on number of confirmed cases in a work location. Positive cases are required to isolate and close contacts are quickly identified and directed to test. Increased mitigation measures include daily health screenings and questionnaires for employees and visitors, increased frequency of sanitizing and cleaning, reiterating public health guidance to slow the spread of the virus, and enhanced penalties for employees not wearing appropriate PPE (masks). In addition, the organization is completing internal contact tracing and implementing disciplinary procedures if employees are not following internal mitigation protocols in effort to slow the spread of the virus. As a result of implementing increased mitigation measures, the number of new cases continues to decrease.

We have developed a good working relationship with this organization and will continue to monitor the progress and implement additional measures or provide additional support as necessary.

One other organization has been determined to meet the outbreak criteria. All employees associated with the organization have been recovered and we'll continue to work closely with the organization to ensure the proper mitigation measures continue to be followed.

### **Tribal Data**

**Currently, tribal cases make up 6.2% of our active cases.** Elko County has separated tribal data from the rest of the county data to ensure local practices are consistent with those across the State. Separating tribal data from the County data is important because Elko County does not have the ability to require implementation of mitigation measures by tribes. Although, it is important to note, the tribes in Elko County have been very diligent about tracking their cases and ensuring their cases have any support needed.

### **Other Information**

In addition to COVID-19 screening, the City of Elko has implemented testing of sewage and septage samples. The sewer system serves nearly 25,000 residents and also accepts septage from outside septic systems. Reports have indicated a week over week decrease of active cases.

## **PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE POPULATIONS**

**Describe your county's plans for addressing outbreaks within vulnerable populations, including:**

### **Overview of efforts and interventions in skilled nursing facilities.**

As previously mentioned, the skilled nursing facility in Elko is currently experiencing an outbreak amongst staff and residents. This facility is under the authority of the State.

### **Overview of efforts and interventions in correctional facilities.**

Elko County Jail and the Juvenile Detention Center are the only correctional facilities which fall under the jurisdiction of the County.

- Inmates are brought in by patrol from any one of several agencies. Generally, arrestees are masked before being placed in the patrol vehicle, if possible. When the arrestee arrives at the facility, a jail deputy or contracted medical staff goes over the COVID-19 questionnaire. The arrestee's temperature is taken and depending on the arrestee's answers to the questions, they're cleared to be booked into the facility or sent to NNRH for further medical evaluation. Inmates who are clear for booking without symptoms are placed in isolation for at least 72 hours.
- If the inmate does not have a mask when booked, one is provided to them.
- Cleaning of the cells is completed at least twice a day to allow for the cells to be disinfected.
- Hand sanitizer and mask are provided to all employees.
- Employees are required to stay home if they're sick.

An outbreak has been identified in the Elko County Detention Facility. A total of 37 inmates, 4 staff, and 1 contracted medical staff has tested positive. Positive cases have been isolated away from the rest of the facility and regular assessment and testing is occurring to immediately identify and isolate any new potential positive case.

Elko County continues to work closely with Nevada Youth Training Center (NYTC) to ensure they are supported from all aspects, including adequate PPE supplies. At least one staff member of NYTC has tested positive; however, NYTC falls under the jurisdiction of the State.

### **Action Plan**

As of Monday, October 19, 2020, Elko County was flagged for meeting two criteria which indicates risk for elevated disease transmission. We will provide a comprehensive action plan in next weeks' report.