

## **JOINT STATEMENT ON THE COVID-19 STATUS IN MATAGORDA COUNTY**

A possible “second wave” of COVID-19 in our community.

This joint statement is a collective effort between Matagorda County Judge Nate McDonald, Bay City Mayor Robert Nelson, Palacios Mayor Glen Smith, and the senior medical and administrative leaders of Matagorda County’s largest community health organizations.

In recent weeks, Matagorda County has experienced an increase in both positive COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations complicated by positive COVID-19 status. While testing in itself does not create COVID-19 cases, we believe that more cases have been revealed due to more testing. We also believe that a lack of attention to social distancing and hygiene guidelines have also contributed to new cases now that the stay-at-home-orders have been eased.

Matagorda County elected officials and medical leaders from the Matagorda Regional Medical Center (MRMC), Matagorda Episcopal Health Outreach Program (MEHOP) and the Palacios Community Medical Center (PCMC) agree that what we are seeing indicates a possible second wave of COVID-19 within our community.

We are aware that a large percentage of the population can be infected with the virus and not even know it (asymptomatic). We also know that positive cases have been reported in all age groups including teenagers and young children. This is why we continue to promote the importance of social distancing, handwashing, avoiding large gatherings, avoiding unnecessary travel to known “hot spots,” and though not mandatory, the highly recommended practice of wearing face masks in public settings. During the first wave, it was most likely these measures that helped mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and prevented hospitalizations.

At the community level, we are committed to following the guidance provided by Governor Abbott and the Great State of Texas. We are pleased that our businesses, churches, and civic organizations have begun their return to normal operations, and we support the federal and state recommended efforts to return our citizens to work in a safe and responsible manner. But we must remember that a critical component of the plan to reopen our economy safely and responsibly was the rigorous observance of social distancing guidelines, personal hygiene, limiting crowd exposure, avoiding nonessential travel to known “hot spot” areas, and though not mandatory, the highly recommended practice of wearing face masks in public settings.

Regarding the delivery of health care in our community, all of our largest health organizations continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation in our community and work closely with each other and our elected officials to share new and relevant information. We will continue following the most conservative interpretations of the latest patient safety and infection control guidelines from the Texas Medical Board, the CDC, and other authoritative medical associations. Collectively, local health organizations have remained in a state of readiness and have anticipated this possible second wave of COVID-19. Rest assured that we have continued COVID-19 training for medical and administrative staff members, secured sufficient supplies, and are utilizing the latest safety

protocols when caring for our patients. We ask that you be patient with us as we continue to limit visitors and increase screening measures according to national, state, and local guidelines.

We encourage everyone who lives, works, and plays in Matagorda County to remain aware of their surroundings and to actively monitor and manage their health status. Please follow the social distancing, hygiene, and travel guidelines that we all know so well, and continue to support and pray for each other as we do our part to stay healthy and safe during this global pandemic.

Questions or comments about your personal health status should be directed to your physician or advanced practice provider. Questions or comments about this joint statement should be sent directly to the Matagorda County Emergency Operations Center at [covid19@co.matagorda.tx.us](mailto:covid19@co.matagorda.tx.us) so that we can work with local leaders to get you a complete and accurate response.