

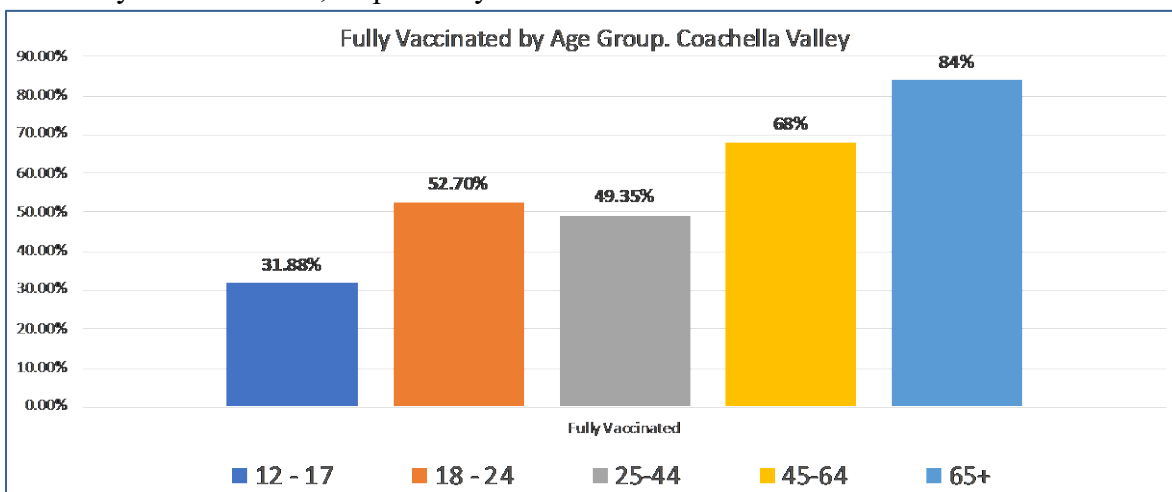


DESERT HEALTHCARE
DISTRICT & FOUNDATION

Date: July 27, 2021
To: Board of Directors
Subject: COVID-19 Vaccination Efforts in the Coachella Valley - UPDATE

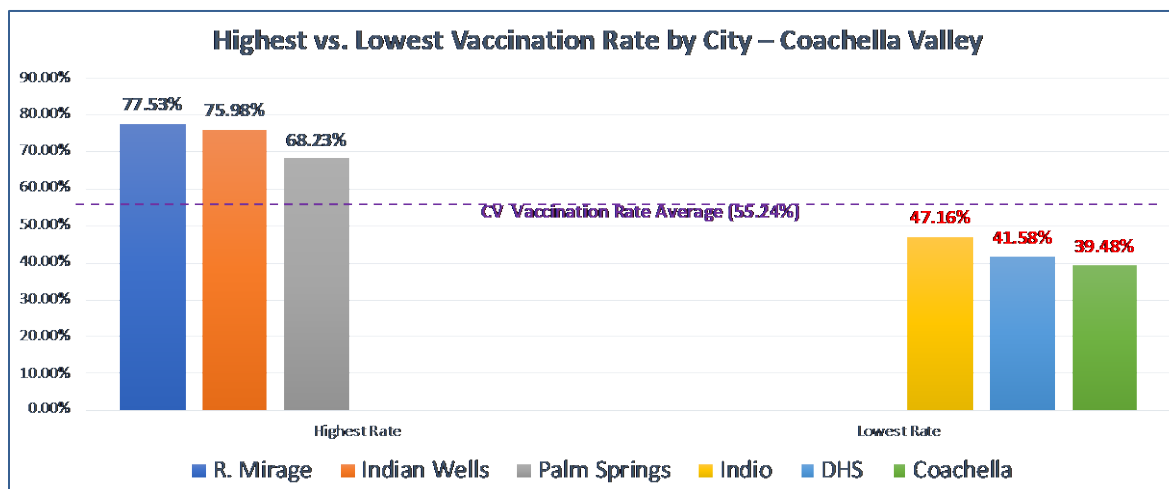
Information:

- Nearly 12% of the Coachella Valley population has been infected with COVID-19 since the onset of the pandemic (early 2020). There have been 51,525 COVID-19 cases and 1,002 deaths in our region.
- The communities/cities with highest infection rates have been: Thermal (35.78%); Oasis (31.33%); Coachella (17.69%); Mecca (17.14%), and Garnet (17.01%). The communities with the highest mortality rate to-date are Thermal (0.68%), Desert Edge (0.48%), Garnet (0.38%), Indio Hills (0.38%), and Desert Palms (0.37%).
- Two mRNA vaccines received EUA by the FDA in December 2020. Vaccines have proven to be highly effective and COVID-19 cases decreased significantly.
- But not everyone has chosen to take the vaccine.
- There are an *estimated 139,000 unvaccinated* individuals in the Coachella Valley who are age-eligible (aged 12+) to receive the vaccine. This represents nearly one third (1/3) of our population, who remains unvaccinated.
- Most of these individuals belong to the following age groups: 12–17 (68.12% unvaccinated); 18–24 (47.30% unvaccinated); and 25–44 (50.65% unvaccinated).
- In contraposition to this, older age groups, 45 – 64 and 65+, exhibit vaccination rates of nearly 68% and 84%, respectively.



- Despite low vaccination adherence amongst younger groups, public health authorities nationwide have lifted restrictions that were in place to protect the public. On June 15, 2021, most restrictions related to COVID-19 were lifted in the state of California.

- A major concern right now is the Delta (B1617.2) variant, a highly contagious SARS-CoV-2 virus strain, which was first identified in India in December 2020. It then swept rapidly through that country and Great Britain as well. The Delta variant is more contagious than other variants. The first Delta case in the U.S. was diagnosed in March 2021 and as of July it represents 83% of COVID-19 sequenced samples in our country, according to the CDC.
- COVID-19 vaccines are effective and are a critical tool to bring the pandemic under control. However, no vaccines are 100% effective at preventing illness in vaccinated people. There is a small percentage of fully vaccinated people who still get sick, are hospitalized, or die from COVID-19. These are called breakthrough cases.
- A breakthrough infection is a case of illness in which a vaccinated individual becomes sick from the same illness that the vaccine is meant to prevent.
- In the Coachella Valley, over 238,000 people have been fully vaccinated to date. 139,000 age-eligible remain unvaccinated.



- But like with other vaccines, vaccine breakthrough cases occur. Asymptomatic infections among vaccinated people also occur.
- There is some evidence that vaccination may make illness less severe for those who are vaccinated and still get sick.
- Current data suggest that COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use in the United States offer protection against most variants currently circulating in the United States. However, variants will cause some vaccine breakthrough cases.
- We have begun to see a significant increase in COVID-19 cases in Riverside County.
- Current **case rate in Riverside County is 7.1** new cases per day per 100,000 residents. In comparison, the case rate reported last month was less than 1.5 new cases per day per 100,000 residents. **Most of these cases are in the 25-44 and 45-65 age groups.**
- **The county positivity rate is 4.7%, which is more than four times the rate of 1.1% reported last month.** These are alarming numbers.
- Therefore, staff recommends a “call to action” or “community health and safety recommendation” to encourage a broader participation of community actors to remain vigilant against COVID-19 and increase vaccination rates amongst eligible individuals.



**DESERT HEALTHCARE
DISTRICT & FOUNDATION**

**Community Health and Safety Recommendations
to Reduce the Transmission of COVID-19 in the Coachella Valley**

Vaccine Requirements

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that you should get the vaccine when it is available to you. Requiring vaccination may bring great benefits for the entire community. Vaccination against COVID-19 will decrease the risk of spreading the virus in schools and in the workplace, reduce absenteeism, increase productivity, and decrease health care costs.

- COVID-19 vaccines must be strongly recommended to all students, faculty, and staff to enter a community college or university campus.
- School Districts must strongly recommend the COVID-19 vaccine to all eligible students, teachers, and staff in order to return to in-classroom instruction.
- Employers must require proof of COVID-19 vaccine to all eligible workers.
- Accommodation must be made for those who for medical reasons or religious objections cannot be vaccinated.

Mask Use

- The use of face masks should be mandatory in public spaces regardless of vaccination status.

Testing for COVID-19 in schools

- Students, faculty, and staff should be tested weekly.

Testing for COVID-19 in the workplace

- Employees should be tested weekly.

Testing for COVID-19 in the medical setting

- Patients must be tested using a point-of-care testing prior to entering a medical facility.

In addition to these measures, we recommend that Cleaning, Disinfecting, and Ventilation of public spaces continue to be observed and that everyone is encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water frequently.

These recommendations must remain in place until a vaccination rate of at least 80% is reached. To accomplish this goal, 106,707 additional individuals must be fully vaccinated. Together, we can do this.

In line with its mission and vision, the Desert Healthcare District continues to offer assistance to our population to obtain COVID-19 vaccines, testing, and other resources, such as face masks and hands and surface sanitizers.