

## COVID-19 Pandemic Updates - May 18, 2021

<b>Ft. Bend Co. RISK LEVEL: <span style="color: yellow;">Low/Mod</span> *</b>	Prior Reporting Period (as of 5/11/21)	Current Reporting Period (as of 5/18/21)
Total Confirmed Cases	58,095	58,427
Deaths in FBC	633	638
Case Fatality Rate	1.06%	1.0%
Test % Positive Rate: NOTE: Due to insufficient testing numbers, FBC-HHS is unable to calculate a reliable test positivity rate that represents the level of community spread occurring FBC <i>*Goal is to sustain a rate of &lt;5% for at least 14 days</i>	---	---
<b>SETRAC / FBC Hospital Data</b> (Current as of 5/18/2021)		
FBC General Bed Usage	64	36
FBC ICU Bed Usage	10	8
% FBC ICU bed occupied by COVID+ Pts	9.4%	7.6%
<b>TMC Data §</b> (week of 5/10/2021)		
Effective Reproduction Rate R(t) <i>R(t) &gt;1: indicates increasing viral transmission</i> <i>R(t) &lt;1: indicates viral transmission is slowing down</i>	0.86	0.84
TMC % Positive Rate	4.1%	3.7%
% TMC ICU beds occupied by COVID+ Pts	11%	12%
TMC ICU Capacity (non-pandemic, Phase 1)	100%	98%
TMC ICU Capacity (combined, Phase 1&2)	78%	---

**\*as of April 13, 2021**

§ TMC is seeing limited daily changes and will now be reporting on a weekly basis. They will change back, should the need arise.

### Assessment/Comments

- COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations continue to decline. Good News!
- Case Fatality Rate remains flat or declining. Good News!

Two Major events since last week:

1. On May 13, 2021, CBC updated its guidance with respect to fully vaccinated individuals allowing for these individuals to stop wearing masks or practice physical distancing outdoors and in most indoor settings. It was just 2 weeks ago, however, that the CDC recommended that fully vaccinated individuals continue to wear masks indoors in all settings, and outdoors in large crowds. The abrupt change was presumably due to recent studies that have shown all 3 currently available vaccines in the US to be very effective (significantly low risk of viral transmission as well as prevention of severe COVID-19 disease and even death), and now vaccine approval (Pfizer) for children ages 12 years and up. There are some notable exceptions however and these include high risk environments such as planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation, correctional facilities and homeless shelters. People must still wear masks and practice physical distancing when going to the doctor's office, hospitals, and nursing homes.

Another notable exception is anywhere that masks are mandated by tribal, state, or local governments or in businesses or workplaces that have their own mandates. The CDC has basically left it up to local city and community governments to make decisions on wearing masks and physical distancing with respect to schools and municipal buildings. Earlier this week however, the CDC announced that it would be providing updates and/or clarification regarding school re-opening in the fall.

Please note that the CDC changes apply to fully vaccinated individuals (i.e.,  $\geq 2$  weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or  $\geq 2$  weeks following receipt of a single-dose vaccine). They do not apply to unvaccinated or partially vaccinated persons.

2. Earlier today, Texas Governor Greg Abbott issued Executive Order GA-36 stating that "No governmental entity, including a county, city, school district, and public health authority, and no governmental official may require any person to wear a face covering or to mandate that another person wear a face covering", with a few exceptions such as state supported/owned/operated hospitals and living centers as well as TDC facilities as they would be allowed to utilize their own appropriate policies regarding facemask coverings.

In addition Governor Abbott's Executive Order stated that "public schools may continue to follow policies regarding the wearing of facemasks to the extent reflected in current guidance by the TEA, until June 4, 2021." But that after that, "no student, teacher, parent, or other staff member or visitor may be required to wear a face covering."

Comments: Obviously we must all comply with the law (GA-36 has put in place financial penalties for non-compliance). I would hope that we would want to encourage people to still wear a mask if they so choose (especially if unvaccinated) as an option.

I think now more than ever we all need to very diligent about carefully watching the data, especially with respect to new cases coming out of our schools, county and state. No doubt that there will be many meetings to discuss these issues at the municipal and county level, as well as our school districts. Our public health messaging should be as clear as possible.