



December 10, 2020

**Re: Open Letter to the Residents and Visitors of Pima County**

To the People of Pima County,

We, the undersigned representatives of your healthcare providers and emergency response network, and the Pima County Health Department, need everyone in Pima County to help us during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our acute healthcare system is experiencing heavy stress and is near the breaking point. If our community does not take immediate action to slow or stop the spread of COVID-19 in Pima County, the results for the healthcare delivery system could be catastrophic.

Our emergency departments and hospitals are full, and they are facing shortages of staff and critical supplies. Hospital workers are exhausted and there is no end in sight, presently. Without significant changes in community behavior, there will be continued growth in positive COVID cases and hospitalizations through the remainder of December.

We must all rally together and do what is necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19. We are collectively asking everyone in Pima County to do the following:

- Stay home as much as possible. Do not participate in unnecessary gatherings. The virus spreads from person-to-person via exhaled droplets in the air. The fewer interactions you have with others, the less likely it is you will contract or spread the virus. In other words, the fewer people you are around, the less of a chance you'll get COVID-19.
- Wear a mask. Pima County has made mask wearing mandatory throughout the county. Take that seriously. The mask can help protect you from getting COVID, but more importantly, it can help prevent you from giving COVID to someone else if you have contracted the virus and don't know it yet. The science is irrefutable. Masks work to help limit the spread of COVID-19, and they are even more effective for infection control if EVERYONE wears one. If you have to go out for work or for essentials, please, we're imploring you to wear a mask.
- While we know that this is a time of year to come together as families, friends, and as a community, it is really important that for this holiday season we ask you to avoid altogether any social gatherings, including among non-household family. Again, stay home, even during Christmas and New Year's. We know that's a lot to ask this time of year, but the holidays will come again; sit this one out. Use the internet and telephones to communicate with family and friends.

Not everyone who gets COVID-19 gets terribly sick. But many do, and many of them are dying from it. Even though you may think you're healthy and won't be affected by COVID-19 if you get it, you may unintentionally give it to someone else.

Relief is on the horizon. The first few people in Pima County will start getting the COVID-19 vaccine this month, but it may not be until later in the year before we can start relaxing COVID protection protocols.

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In the meantime, we are witnessing a dramatic spike of virus transmission. Please, for you, your family and your community, do your part this month to stop the spread.

Signed,

Dr. Theresa Cullen, Pima County Health Director,  
Dr. Francisco Garcia, Pima County Chief Medical Officer,  
Dr. Chad Whelan, Chief Executive Officer, Banner – University Medicine  
Sarah Frost, Chief Executive Officer, Banner – UMC Tucson and South  
Cathy Townsend, Chief Nursing Officer, Banner – University Medicine  
Dr. Gordon Carr, Chief Medical Officer, Banner – University Medicine  
Dr. Bethany Bruzzi, Chief Medical Officer, Banner – University Medicine  
Judy Rich, President and Chief Executive Officer, Tucson Medical Center  
Dr. Rick Anderson, Chief Medical Officer, Tucson Medical Center  
Jennifer Schomburg, Chief Executive Officer, Northwest Medical Center and Oro Valley Hospital  
Kate Schneider, Chief Administrative Officer, Northwest Medical Center Sahuarita  
Heather Bulman, Market Chief Quality Officer, Northwest Healthcare  
Jorge Salas, Chief Nursing Officer, Northwest Medical Center  
Julie Hunt, Chief Nursing Officer, Oro Valley Hospital  
Troy Klarkowski, Chief Executive Officer, Sells Hospital  
Dr. Clinton Kuntz, Chief Executive Officer, MHC Healthcare  
Dr. Jenitza Serrano-Feliciano, Chief Medical Officer, MHC Healthcare  
Dr. Nancy Johnson, Chief Executive Officer, El Rio Health  
Dr. Doug Spegman, Chief Clinical Officer, El Rio Health  
Charles W. Ryan, III, Chief, Tucson Fire Department  
Randy Karrer, Chief, Golder Ranch Fire District  
Norman K. “Brad” Bradley, Chief, Northwest Fire and District  
Simon Davis, Chief, Corona de Tucson Fire District  
Thomas Knapp, Chief, Three Points Fire District  
Karl Isselhard, Chief Rural Metro Fire Department  
Jackie Evans, Regional Director, American Medical Response

