DATA FAQs

How are total cases defined?

Total cases reflect lab-confirmed COVID-19 cases reported to Santa Barbara County Public Health by providers and commercial laboratories. The lab confirmed case is reported through the California Reportable Disease Information Exchange (CalREDIE) system. A lab-confirmed case is defined as detection of SARS-CoV-2 RNA in a clinical specimen using a molecular amplification detection test. Total case count may be delayed due to backlogs in the CalREDIE system. Total cases include infectious cases, no longer infectious cases, and deaths.

What is "episode date" and why are you using it to count cases and calculate testing positivity?

Episode date is defined as the earliest of several dates (illness onset date, specimen collection date, date of death, or date reported). The State is using episode date to calculate case rates and testing positivity rates because episode date is a more accurate reflection of the infectious period. We are using episode date to align with the State method and data. Previously, we used report date in our calculation, which is the date when we receive the testing results.

What does "Still Infectious" mean?

Can also be known as an "active case", a case is counted as "still infectious" if their onset date is within 10 days or in the absence of symptom onset, the date of the lab collection is within 10 days. For example, John is asymptomatic and gets tested at OptimServe in Santa Maria on August 1. John receives a positive result two days later. John will be considered still infectious from August 1 to August 10. Another example is Jane who is symptomatic on August 1, but does not get tested until August 5. Jane receives her positive results on August 8. Jane will be considered "still infectious" from August 1 to August 10. Due to the lag in resulting of the test and reporting to Public Health, Jane's lab result may not be processed by Public Health until after August 10th. Therefore, she would be considered recovered and not counted in the "still infectious" count at time report. Counties have slight variations on the definition and how active cases are recorded.

What is a no longer infectious case?

A no longer infectious case is a confirmed COVID-19 case greater than 10 days symptom onset or post-diagnosis with COVID-19 (based on test date) excluding deaths due to COVID-19.

What is a new case?

A new case is a case that has not been previously reported.

Is a new case not considered an active case?

A new case may not be considered a "still infectious" case if the 10 days between onset of symptoms or the collection date have lapsed by the time the test result is reported to the Health Department. For example, If Mary was symptomatic on August 1 and tested on August 9, and positive results were reported to the Health Department on August 14, she would be considered a new case, but because greater than 10 days have lapsed between onset of symptoms she is considered a new case but NOT a "still infectious" case.

Total Tests

Total tests is derived directly from the state CalREDIE data for Santa Barbara County residents only. This uses specimen collection date. Data availability is dependent on the CalREDIE system.

What is a hospitalized case?

The total number of Santa Barbara County residents hospitalized for COVID-19, may include out of county residents hospitalized at hospitals within Santa Barbara County. This count is based on CDPH data. Other jurisdictions may derive their hospitalized case numbers through their own local case investigations.

How are hospitalized cases counted?

Hospitalized cases are considered still infectious if it has been less than 10 days since onset of symptoms or specimen collection date. If a case has been hospitalized longer than 10 days since onset of symptoms of specimen collection date, then they are considered no longer infectious. Hospitalized cases <u>may not</u> be infectious and therefore are not always included in the infectious cases count. This is due to difficulty in gathering the data regarding exact date a person is no longer infectious while hospitalized. Individuals who are hospitalized, while not infectious, may still be recovering from the effects of COVID-19.

Why does data for Santa Barbara County and other counties vary amoung various websites and dashboards?

The data sources used are dynamic, which means they are routinely updated. Santa Barbara County Public Health receives reports of positive COVID-19 cases thru CalREDIE, the state's electronic lab reporting (ELR) system. There are significant delays in CalREDIE reporting (approximately 4-7 days) especially from private labs. Labs are processing high volumes of tests daily and are not reporting same-day results. There are also delays due to the need for manual entry of faxed laboratory results. Data is updated daily as CalREDIE information is updated. Cases can be reassigned to the county of residence or have status changed, which results in a change of case counts. Other data trackers and websites may pull data from CDPH or our County website and project numbers based on trends or extrapolate information based on limited data. Some of the State's metrics uses a 7-day lag when tracking its data, while SB County compiles the most up-to-date data locally.

Summarized, the primary reasons for a difference in data are:

Reporting delays - The state of California data specifically often lags behind counties by several days. California Counties are currently working directly to the state data monitoring metrics portal to insure continuity of reporting.

Quality Assurance – Santa Barbara County Public Health actively engages in QI efforts to ensure COVID-19 data is being accurately reported to the public. On occasion this may mean that data needs to be updated to reflect new guidance or to address potential data entry errors as well as reconciliations of data following state updates.

Case definitions – CDPH differs from local jurisdictions on defining COVID-19 cases. Santa Barbara County defines a case as an individual with a positive COVID-19 PCR test, whereas CDPH may consider an individual who is a suspect for COVID-19 and has been entered into the CalREDIE database as case, even without a confirming lab result.

What is HIPAA and how does that inform what the county is reporting for COVID-19?

HIPAA is the acronym for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act that was passed by Congress in 1996. Mandated among many components of HIPAA is the protection and confidential handling of protected health information. The County is guided by the Safe Harbor approach when providing information to the public. The following identifiers of the individual or of relatives, employers, or household members of the individual, are removed under the Safe Harbor method:

(A) Names

(B) All geographic subdivisions smaller than a state, including street address, city, county, precinct, ZIP code, and their equivalent geocodes, except for the initial three digits of the ZIP code if, according to the current publicly available data from the Bureau of the Census:

(1) The geographic unit formed by combining all ZIP codes with the same three initial digits contains more than 20,000 people; and

(2) The initial three digits of a ZIP code for all such geographic units containing 20,000 or fewer people is changed to 000

(C) All elements of dates (except year) for dates that are directly related to an individual, including birth date, admission date, discharge date, death date, and all ages over 89 and all elements of dates (including year) indicative of such age, except that such ages and elements may be aggregated into a single category of age 90 or older

(D) Telephone numbers

(L) Vehicle identifiers and serial numbers, including license plate numbers

(E) Fax numbers

(M) Device identifiers and serial numbers

(F) Email addresses

(N) Web Universal Resource Locators (URLs)

(G) Social security numbers

(O) Internet Protocol (IP) addresses

(H) Medical record numbers

(P) Biometric identifiers, including finger and voice prints

(I) Health plan beneficiary numbers

(Q) Full-face photographs and any comparable images

(J) Account numbers

(R) Any other unique identifying number, characteristic, or code, except as permitted by paragraph (c) of this section [Paragraph (c) is presented below in the section "Re-identification"]; and

(K) Certificate/license numbers

Reporting of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs):

Due to new reporting requirements issued by the federal Health & Human Services (HHS), hospitals are now reporting a 3-day supply of PPEs into the prescriptive monitoring tool created by HHS. Hospitals are also required to report access to acquiring additional PPEs if needed.

Reporting of Deaths Related to COVID-19

 A death will be reported as a COVID death if there is a confirmatory COVID-19 PCR test and one of the following criteria is met:

- COVID is listed as a cause of death on the death certificate
- COVID is listed as a significant condition contributing to death

Why are 7-day sums used instead of 14-day sums?

Seven day sums of cases provide more current data on local trends. By using a more recent time period, data better reflects recent changes. This can be helpful for community members and policy makers.

Why do daily status report data differ from the data on the surveillance metrics?

In alignment with the state, the County reports new cases based on episode date with a seven-day lag. The episode date is defined as the earliest date of illness, such as the onset date of symptoms or specimen collection date. This method takes into consideration the lag in reporting systems and the data is used to calculate the case rates for the Tier assignments. Whereas the new cases for today, which our community is accustomed to being reported prior to the episode date methodology, continues to be reported by the County to give the community a sense of cases. The number of cases that we report each day in the status reports is the total reported numbers via the state's CalReady reporting system. These numbers reflect the new cases received by the health department and do not account for the specimen collection date nor does it account for the lags in processing or reporting.