

**COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT
JOINT INFORMATION CENTER**
Telephone (707) 441-5000



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For more information, contact:
JIC PIO
(707) 441-5000
covidinfo@co.humboldt.ca.us

County Costs Exceed \$11M More Than One Year into Pandemic

Since the first local case of COVID-19 was diagnosed Feb. 20, 2020, Humboldt County's costs to respond to the global pandemic have reached \$11.7 million.

Over the last year, expenses and efforts related to the pandemic have evolved to address the community's needs. The initial efforts focused on developing testing resources, building out an alternate care site in preparation for a potential surge in local hospitalizations and establishing contact tracing and investigations teams to contain cases and stem spread of the virus.

As the scope of the crisis widened locally and nationally, the county's response expanded to include everything from offering technical support to businesses trying to reopen and operate safely to administering direct financial relief to individuals and families facing eviction. Most recently, county costs and efforts have been focused on building and scaling up mass vaccination clinics.

Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) Public Health Director Michele Stephens said, "At first, we had to adapt to information and guidelines from the state and federal governments that were changing not just daily, but sometimes by the minute, and each new development since then has introduced new challenges." Throughout it all, Stephens added, "County staff has worked tirelessly to protect the health of this community."

A total of 265 part- or full-time staff have been assigned to Public Health and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) over the last year. Staffing levels peaked at 145 in April 2020, and there are currently 90 people assigned to the response, including staff and volunteers in the county's vaccination clinics.

The Humboldt County Public Health Laboratory expanded its COVID-19 testing capacity from 20 to 250 tests a day and has processed more than 34,000, or nearly half, of all tests run in the county over the last year.

Staff in the Humboldt County Joint Information Center (JIC) provide daily COVID-19 updates that relay the latest information on local, state and federal policies, public health strategies and significant epidemiological data, while also maintaining the COVID-19 Data Dashboard and county website. As many as 20 JIC Call Center staff diverted more than 41,000 calls from the 911 emergency dispatch system, at times taking upward of 600 calls per day. Currently the JIC is connecting residents without internet or computer access to vaccination appointments.

As of Tuesday, March 23, Public Health and other approved local vaccinators have administered 49,378 doses of COVID-19 vaccine. A total of 18,804 Humboldt County residents have been fully vaccinated against the virus, representing 13.8% of the county’s total population.

In addition to its public health responsibilities, the county provided direct support to local businesses and families impacted by the pandemic. The County Office of Economic Development processed \$3.5 million in grant requests for nearly 700 local businesses.

The DHHS Eviction Protection Program, funded through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, dispersed rental and mortgage assistance totaling \$553,393 to 163 local families, 111 of those with children in the home. DHHS’s HOME program utilized CARES funding and state funding allocations to provide 20,533 nights of housing in local motels for 328 residents experiencing homelessness.

Humboldt County Sheriff William Honsal said, “Our staff stepped up in the middle of a crisis to serve and protect our community, including our most vulnerable residents. At the same time, other staff that weren’t directly a part of the response have kept the county’s day-to-day operations running. I’m grateful to all of them for demonstrating their commitment to our community on a daily basis.”

Throughout the response, the county has maximized the use of state and federal resources in addition to making use of previously allocated funding to cover costs. These funding sources are leveraged along with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) claims to maximize reimbursement to the county for its emergency response efforts.

The state and federal governments have already allocated or committed to future allocations totaling just over \$14 million for Humboldt County’s COVID-19 response. Of those funds, the county has received or claimed nearly \$6.6 million. The remaining \$7.5 million in allocations will be used to fund ongoing response and recovery operations in order to preserve local funds for specific needs.

The EOC Finance Unit continues to track all expenses to ensure maximum reimbursement. See detailed costs that are being tracked below:

Emergency Operations Center and Public Health Response	
Salaries & Benefits*	7,341,911
Contracts	26,167
Equipment	42,972
Supplies	64,820
Other	1,826
Total	7,477,696
Medical Surge, Testing, Contact Tracing & Vaccination	
Salaries & Benefits*	1,209,307
Contracts	232,404
Equipment	96,410

Supplies	103,095
Total	1,641,216
Non-congregate Sheltering	
Salaries & Benefits*	621,978
Contracts	1,076,220
Equipment	125,700
Supplies	843,429
Total	2,667,327
Total	\$11,786,239

*Salaries & Benefits are based on hours reported by staff for COVID-19 EOC time.

EOC Director Ryan Derby said that some of the responsibilities that were initially a part of the emergency response effort have been transitioned to the county departments that normally perform those tasks. “We will continue to find ways to maximize state and federal resources while maintaining only the level of services needed to continue to effectively respond to this pandemic,” he said.

Even with the work of staff and community partners over the last year, Director Stephens noted that everyone has felt the impacts of the pandemic. “Some of us have lost loved ones, others have lost livelihoods,” she said. “While it appears likely that all direct incident costs will be reimbursed, it will take a long time to understand the long-term impacts of this pandemic on our community’s mental, physical and social health and rebuild some of what we’ve lost.”

Sheriff Honsal echoed that sentiment saying that the financial costs are not the only toll the pandemic has taken. “All of us have sacrificed to keep our friends and neighbors safe and healthy. We’ve all lost time with family and friends that we can’t get back. We know that recovering from the pandemic will take all of us working together, but EOC and Public Health staff remain committed to the health and safety of the residents of Humboldt County.”

“This pandemic is not over,” Director Stephens said. “We still have a lot of work to do, but I’m truly hopeful that we can look back on this and remember what we’ve lost and still be able to say that we came through it as a stronger community.”

Please see below a link to a document showing all the county staff, including law enforcement personnel, who have worked the COVID-19 incident, the number of their regular hours worked, their total regular salary and their total amount of overtime worked and paid for the period from February 2020 through February 2021. Salary and overtime costs for all classes of employees are based on longstanding, negotiated agreements with county labor groups.

Visit <https://humboldt.gov/DocumentCenter/View/94251/2021Mar26-County-Costs-Related-to-COVID-spreadsheet> to download the document.

For the most recent COVID-19 information, visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or [cdph.ca.gov](https://www.cdph.ca.gov). Local information is available at [humboldt.gov](https://www.humboldt.gov) or during business hours by contacting covidinfo@co.humboldt.ca.us or calling 707-441-5000.

Some Safeway and CVS Pharmacy locations are offering COVID-19 vaccination appointments.

Learn who is eligible for vaccination and see if there are appointments available for your age group or sector at one of these locations by clicking on the links below.

Safeway: <https://www.mhealthappointments.com/covidappt>

CVS Pharmacy: <https://www.cvs.com/immunizations/covid-19-vaccine?icid=cvs-home-hero1-link2-coronavirus-vaccine>.

Local COVID-19 vaccine information: humboldt.gov/VaccineInfo

Humboldt County COVID-19 Data Dashboard: humboldt.gov/Dashboard

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