



Date: October 1, 2021

To: Assembly Health Policy Committee

Thru: Joe Gerace, Anchorage Health Department Director

From: Dr. Michael Savitt, Anchorage Health Department Chief Medical Officer

Subject: October 1, 2021, COVID-19 Risk Assessment Update for the Municipality of Anchorage

This weekly report shares data available on the State of Alaska (SOA) and Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) websites for the period September 23, 2021 – September 29, 2021, as well as some older and newer data as noted. Unless otherwise indicated, these data are for cases reported in the MOA.

Cases, Hospitalizations, Deaths, and Clusters

- **Alert level.** Anchorage is in the High risk alert level per [DHSS](#) and [CDC](#) transmission data tracking. DHSS Alert levels are based on the case counts over the past 7 days as well as the number of reported cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days.
- **Case count this week.** There were 3,004 new resident cases this week, compared to 2,562 new resident cases reported last week.
- **Daily cases.** The number of reported cases in the past 7 days per 100,000 population is 1,039.6, a 17% increase over last week. The current 14-day rolling daily average of 137.5 cases per 100,000 residents, is a 21% increase over last week. These are the highest case counts seen since early December 2020, and reflect the prevalence of the Delta variant, which is more than two times as contagious as previous variants.
- **Age and race distribution:** Age and race breakdowns will now be provided in the last report of each month.
- **Cumulative cases.** As of September 29, there have been 47,929 confirmed cases in the MOA. This includes 46,831 Anchorage residents in- and out-of-state and 1,098 nonresidents who tested positive in Anchorage.
- **Current hospitalizations.** As of September 29, there are 99 hospitalized COVID-19 cases. The number of hospitalized cases ranged between 97 and 119 this week. This is a slight increase compared to last week where the range was 97 to 114 cases.
- **Deaths.** There have been 278 Anchorage deaths, 272 among Anchorage residents, and six among nonresidents. This is an increase of 35 resident deaths since last week. Note from DHSS on some of the deaths reported this week: *Some of these deaths occurred in the spring, but most are fatalities that occurred in August. Reporting was delayed due to the cyberattack on DHSS this year. Please know that our data team and Health Analytics and Vital Records Section (HAVRS) are diligently examining death certificate reviews to identify COVID-related deaths as we come back up to speed following the cyberattack.*

Health Care Capacity

- ICU beds.** On average, between September 23 and September 29, only 3.96% of staffed adult ICU beds at the three acute care hospitals in Anchorage were available. This is down from the previous week (6.19%) and well below last month’s average (13.1%). Between September 23 and September 29, the number of staffed adult ICU beds ranged from 67 to 71, and the number of available staffed adult ICU beds ranged from 0 to 6.
- Hospital Closures.** Anchorage hospitals are either near capacity or at capacity. For real-time Alaska hospital status regarding Adult ICU, Adult Non-ICU Inpatient, Psych, and Emergency Department visit <https://alaska-dhss.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/8edf91ce0e474126a8c6ace0250f952c>.

Infection Rate

- The Rt from the SOA model on September 29 was 1.17. We expect to see weekly fluctuations in the Rt, but it is important to note **that Rt above one indicates that the virus is continuing to spread.** See Table 1.

Table 1: Reproductive Number Estimates

Geography, Source	September 22	September 29
Anchorage, SOA model, (in-state residents only)	1.19	1.17

Testing

- Percent positivity:** On average, between September 23 and September 29, approximately 9% of COVID-19 PCR and antigen tests had positive test results. This is same as last week’s positivity rate. Percent positivity increasing above 3% indicates that we are missing cases because the community may not be accessing the available testing.
- Test volume:** Tests are not counted until test results are received. Test counts for more recent weeks will increase as more test results are received. Increasing testing volume along with increased test percent positivity suggests that the increasing case counts are real and not just an artifact of testing. See Table 2.

Figure 1. Average Daily Test Per 100,000 Anchorage Residents

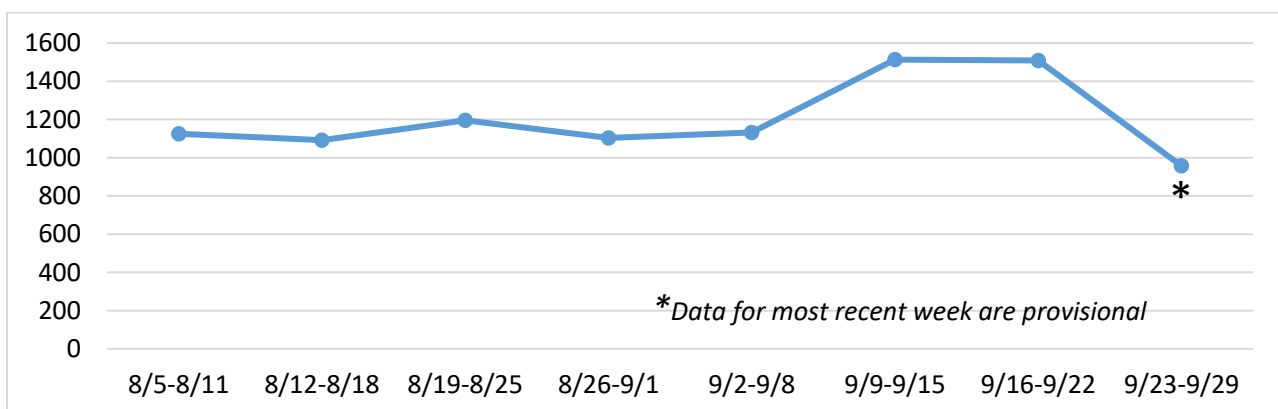


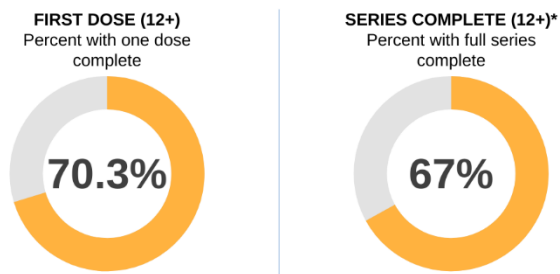
Table 2: Weekly Test Volume Indicators, updated as of September 29

Indicator	Sep 9 – Sep 15	Sep 16 – Sep 22	Sep 23 – Sep 29 <i>Provisional</i>
Tests in the week	30,600	30,500	19,361
Average daily tests per 100,000	1,513	1,508	957

Vaccination

Percent of Population Vaccinated

Ages 12+, including JBER



*Vaccine series complete: Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require a two-dose series. Johnson&Johnson/Jansen vaccine requires a single dose series.

Data updated as of September 29, 2021

According to VacTrAK, 171,387 first COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered to residents aged 12 and older within Anchorage, and 163,338 vaccine series have been completed as of September 29.

VacTrAK does not include data regarding vaccine doses administered by the Veterans Administration (VA) or the Department of Defense (DoD).

The proportion of individuals in each community that are vaccinated is shown in Table 4. The highest proportion of Girdwood residents are vaccinated, followed by Active-Duty Military at JBER.

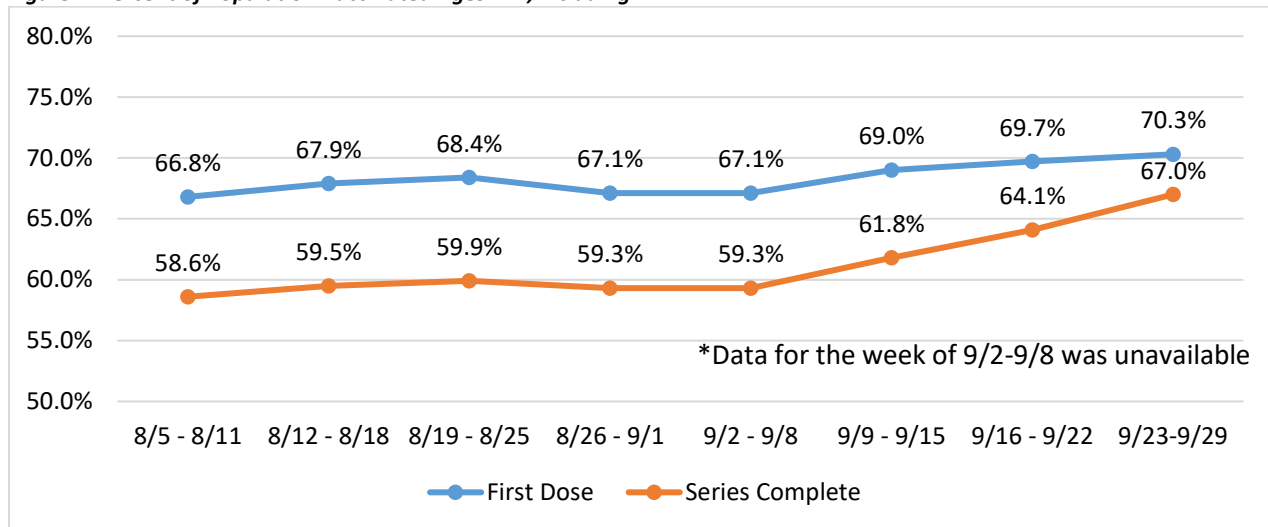
There are often delays in vaccination reporting data as the VacTrAK system processes results and removes duplications. Please note that we will be adding data on third doses and booster shots when it is available.

Table 3: Resident Vaccination by Dose and Population Percentage, Municipality of Anchorage. (VacTrAK & JBER)

Anchorage	First Dose	Series Complete	Anchorage Population
Total Vaccinated Individuals	171,387	163,338	288,970
12+ Percent Vaccinated (Eligible)	70.3%	67.0%	243,890
65+ Percent Vaccinated (Eligible)	83.0%	88.1%	35,455
Total Population Percent Vaccinated (Eligible + Ineligible)	59.3%	56.5%	288,970

Table 4: Resident Vaccination by Population Percentage by Community (All Ages)

Anchorage	First Dose	Series Complete	Population
All Communities	59.3%	56.5%	288,970
Anchorage Municipality	58.1%	53.2%	249,923
Chugiak	46.7%	43.1%	8,843
Eagle River	47.0%	43.4%	28,462
Girdwood	89.8%	82.8%	1,742
JBER (Active Duty Military Only)	68.8%	66.3%	10,029

Figure 2. Percent of Population Vaccinated Ages 12+, Including JBER

School Transmission

School is in session, leading to a high volume of unvaccinated children interacting. Universal masking is required for all individuals while inside any Anchorage School District (ASD) school or building.

A total of 2,143 confirmed cases have been reported within the Anchorage School District since 8/12/21. This includes both students and teachers. In the past week there were 405 new cases reported by ASD.

As of noon on September 29, no schools have partial or complete closures. For real-time case counts and school closures visit <https://apps.asdk12.org/PTAC/Report/ExternalDashboard>

Additional Community Factors

We continue to watch the following community factors which may affect COVID transmission:

- Increased prevalence of more transmissible Variants of Concern, especially the Delta variant.
- Recent increases in vaccination uptake.
- Minimal use of non-pharmacologic interventions, including masks, physical distancing, and handwashing.
- Increasing case counts across the state and the country. Processing and accounting for cases is backlogged. Viewing cases dashboard data by onset date rather than report date is more reflective of the actual trajectory of cases (increasing or decreasing).
- Hospitals reporting surge in cases, limited beds available.
- Positive cases are being asked to isolate immediately and notify close contacts, as contact tracing needs have exceeded capacity of contact tracing efforts.
- Hospitals reporting ongoing surge in cases and limited beds available.
- Discussions at the FDA and CDC around booster doses.
- Upcoming flu season.

Recommendations

Messaging to the public:

- **Get vaccinated**
 - As flu season approaches, now is the time to consider getting a flu shot. Per CDC guidance, flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccines can be given at the same time.
 - Vaccination helps protect you and your family, especially those that are not able to get vaccinated, like children under the age of 12.
 - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) fully approved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for individuals 16 years of age and older.
 - The Pfizer vaccine continues to be available under emergency use authorization (EUA) for individuals 12 through 15 years of age
 - [A third dose of an mRNA vaccine \(Pfizer or Moderna\) is recommended](#) for those who are moderately or severely immunocompromised. This recommendation does not include those who received the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine.
 - [A Pfizer booster dose](#) is available to those that received the Pfizer vaccine more than 6 months ago and are:
 - Age 65+
 - Residents and staff in long-term care settings
 - Age 18+ and have underlying medical conditions including asthma, diabetes, obesity
 - Age 18+ and work in high-risk setting including healthcare workers, teachers, grocery store workers
 - To reduce likelihood of future infection, all eligible persons should be offered COVID-19 vaccine, even those with previous SARS-CoV-2 ([see recently published MMWR](#))
 - As per the CDC, [COVID-19 vaccination safe for pregnant people](#).
- **Wear a mask in public indoor settings** if you are in an area of substantial or high transmission ([Anchorage is currently HIGH](#))
- **Practice physical distancing**
- **Wash your hands** for at least 20 seconds or sanitize your hands frequently
- **Ensure adequate ventilation** and air filtration when indoors. Outdoor air is better.
- **Get tested** (anchoragecovidtest.org) if you experience [COVID-19 symptoms](#) or are exposed to someone with COVID-19, whether you have had the disease or, are vaccinated or unvaccinated
 - Regular testing in schools, along with COVID-19 vaccination, helps protect students, staff, family members, and others who are not currently vaccinated against COVID-19 or are otherwise at risk for getting seriously sick from COVID-19.
 - [Monoclonal antibody treatment](#) is available in Anchorage for individuals ages 12 and older who have recently tested positive for COVID-19 and are at risk for severe illness to prevent severe symptoms and hospitalization. This week, significantly more treatment capacity was added by moving the provider WEKA to the prior Golden Lion Hotel (1000 E 36th Ave). Contact your medical provider for more information and referral or call the Statewide COVID-19 Helpline at 907-646-3322 and ask for an interpreter immediately if needed.

Recommendations for local businesses:

- Encourage and continue to support telework when feasible

- Encourage use of virtual meetings (video- or tele-conference) versus in person meetings when feasible
- Encourage event organizers to consider keeping number of participants small, encourage mask wearing and hosting events outside whenever feasible
- Encourage unvaccinated frontline workers to get tested weekly and anyone experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 to get tested as needed to ensure continuity of critical services
- Consider allowing employees to get tested or vaccinated on work time
- Encourage all employers to review OSHA's [Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)