



Municipality of Anchorage

Ethan Berkowitz, Mayor

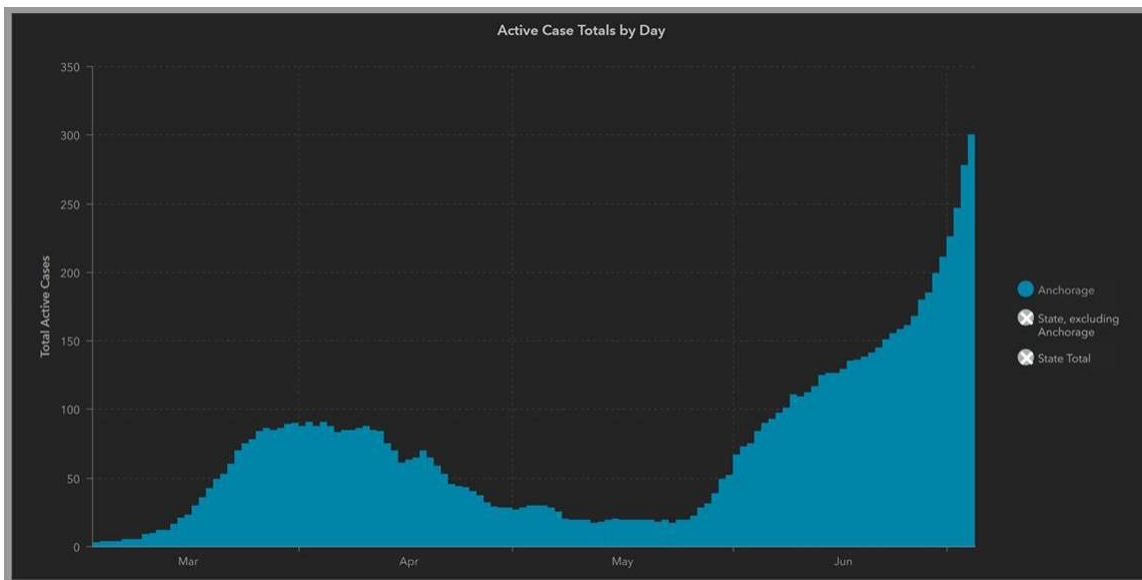
Anchorage Health Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 6, 2020

Anchorage Health Department statement in response to confirmed COVID-19 exposure locations

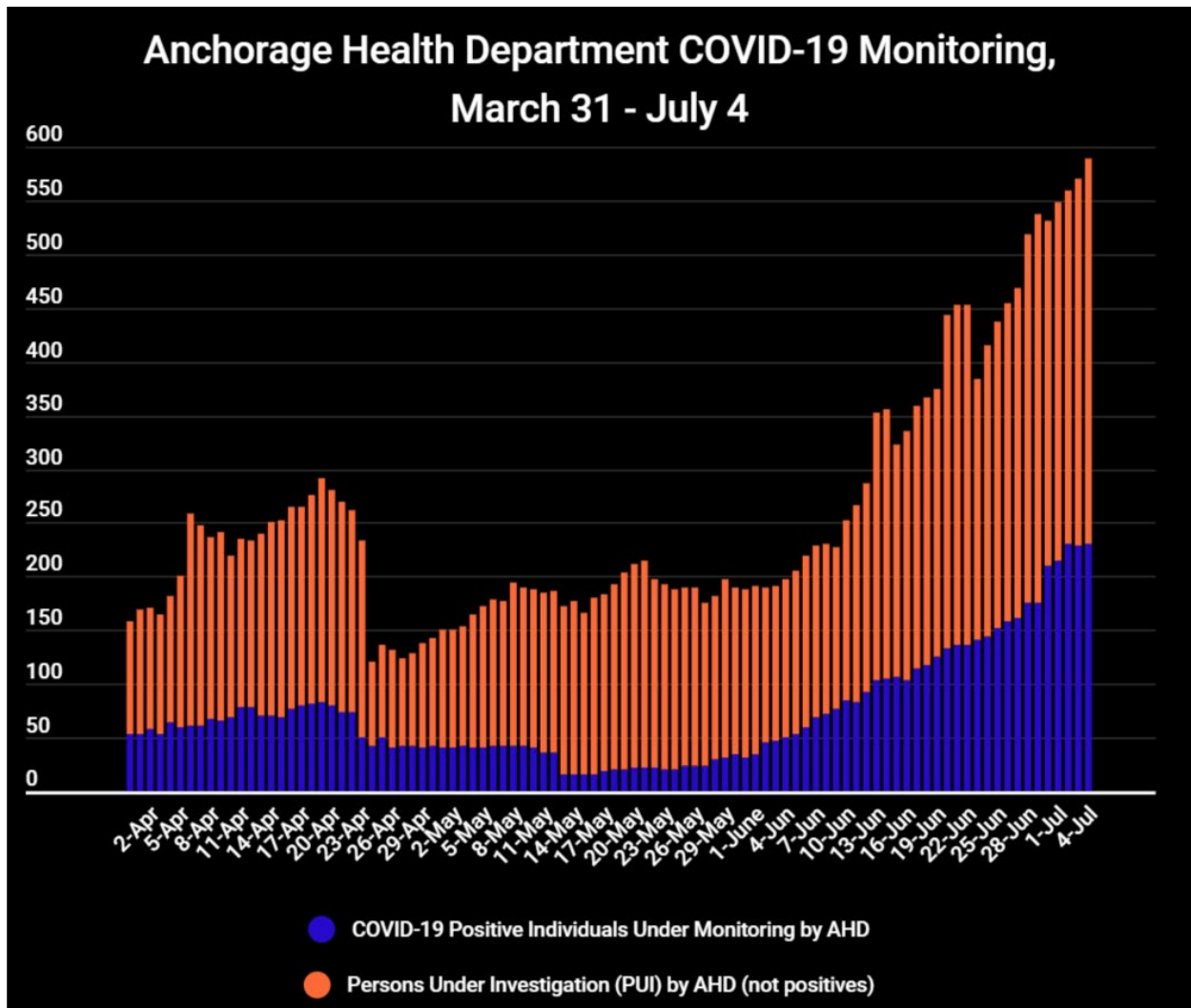
Anchorage, Alaska – Today, the Anchorage Health Department (AHD) released additional information surrounding the decision to release [confirmed COVID-19 exposure locations](#) frequented by Anchorage residents.

As reported at the [Mayor’s community briefing](#) last Wednesday, community-acquired COVID-19 has surged in the last three weeks.



[Active Case Totals by Day](#)

AHD’s small public health nursing team and a number of other contact tracers from other agencies investigated these cases and, based on their investigations, identified that many people with COVID-19 had recently spent time while infectious in certain locations. Then, in the same way that the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services [publicly announced](#) bar exposures on June 26, AHD publicly announced the names of businesses where infectious Anchorage residents had spent time.



As we have seen in many other locations around the country, bars and clubs pose a high risk of transmission to staff and patrons because it is difficult for many customers to practice safe physical distancing and avoid face-to-face contact. It is impossible to wear a mask or cloth face covering while eating or drinking. This situation is unlike, for example, a grocery store trip that allows the use of masks for the duration of the visit and limited face-to-face contact, or even a personal care visit that involves one customer and one employee in close contact. For reference, the [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC) defines a close contact as anyone who was within six feet of an infected person for at least fifteen minutes starting from 48-hours before the person began feeling sick until the time the patient was isolated.

A number of the people with COVID-19 who visited the facilities were unable to or declined to provide information on the people with whom they had close contact. Many businesses did not have contact information for everyone who was in the facility at the time that would allow AHD contact tracers to notify all staff and patrons of their possible exposure in a timely fashion. With a large population of people potentially at risk, AHD issued a public advisory to alert people of their potential exposure and to provide information on what they should do during the 14 days after possible exposure. This information was critical for Anchorage residents to make informed decisions about their health.

The fact that a business appeared on the list does not mean it did anything wrong. Some of the listed businesses have met or exceeded the safety measures recommended by the CDC and in [Phase 3 of the Municipality's Roadmap to Reopening](#). AHD only listed businesses where they could not confidently contact all persons who likely came into close contact with an infectious person. That can happen even when a business does everything right. This is also an important reminder that businesses cannot solve COVID-19 alone. We all have a responsibility to protect ourselves and our community.

As of today, AHD has not identified new cases associated with many of the businesses identified on Friday. Businesses with no further cases for ten days after the last case are being removed from the [Confirmed COVID-19 Exposure Locations webpage](#). Additions to the list are likely when public health investigators identify a high risk to staff and customers and if all staff and customers cannot be identified and contacted by the business and public health in short order.

AHD is expanding its team of public health investigators and contact tracers. This will help us investigate and monitor more cases. But we need the public and all businesses to understand that COVID-19 in Anchorage is surging and we all need to take this seriously. The virus can move from person to person easily, especially in indoor locations if we don't practice safe distancing and wearing a face covering. And as we have seen this week, many among us have high-risk conditions that can be fatal if we become infected.

For more information, call 2-1-1 or visit www.muni.org/COVID-19.

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