



# Tarrant County Public Health 2020 Annual Report.

# A Pandemic Emerges

On January 9, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that a mysterious coronavirus-related pneumonia had been found in Wuhan, China. Eleven days later, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed the first case of Coronavirus in Washington state. On Jan. 31, 2020, the WHO declared a global public health emergency.





Tarrant County Public Health (TCPH)'s Preparedness staff and specialists met in January to discuss possible implications of Coronavirus. TCPH's Medical Reserve Corps, part of Public Health's Preparedness efforts would provide more than 3,000 hours of volunteer service in 2020.

An entomology "show and tell" for Westcliff Elementary School's Career Day in early January. Environmental Health staff members Nina Dacko and Bethany Hambrick give an up-close look at bugs that impact people's health. Due to the pandemic, Public Health provided only 56 educational presentations in 2020.



## JANUARY

## FEBRUARY

In mid-February, the Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County presented the 2020 Unsung Hero Award to Tarrant County Public Health's former Deputy Director Ann Salyer-Caldwell, and TCPH's Health Equity Coordinator Yvette M. Wingate, Ed.D, for their impactful work in the community. Salyer-Caldwell was recognized for her work with the Tarrant County Infant Health Network and Dr. Wingate for her partnership efforts with the Fatherhood Coalition of Tarrant County.



"We are grateful to be recognized as outstanding community partners and representatives of Tarrant County Public Health," said Dr. Wingate. Pictured from left: Mayor Betsy Price, City of Fort Worth; Judge B. Glen Whitley, Tarrant County; Mayor Jeff Williams, City of Arlington; Dr. Yvette Wingate, TCPH Health Equity Coordinator; Ann Salyer-Caldwell, former TCPH Deputy Director; Jon Gustafson, Workforce Solutions Board Member; Gracie Vega, Workforce Solutions Board Member; Commissioner Aaron Demerson, Texas Workforce Commission; Mike Doyle, Cornerstone Assistance Network.

At the end of February, Public Health warned residents about COVID-19, urging them to prevent the spread by staying home and practicing good hygiene.





In early March, Public Health's North Texas Regional Laboratory suspended its regular testing operations to begin COVID-19 testing, implemented CDC testing methods and hired additional laboratory support staff. "We want to reassure the public we are working with our medical community to ensure testing is available for those who meet the case definition for COVID-19," TCPH Director Vinny Taneja told the news media. Public Health had received 800 COVID-19 test kits from the CDC in March, with more expected. The lab would soon be able to process about 100 COVID-19 tests per day and report most COVID-19 test results within 24 hours of submission.



On March 11, Director Taneja hosted Public Health's first Facebook live-stream joint news conference with Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price and Tarrant County Judge Glen Whitley for a discussion of COVID-19 and efforts underway to protect residents. Four days later, a resident of a retirement center in Arlington became the county's first COVID-19 death. This prompted a Public Health team led by Public Health's medical director and Local Health Authority, to inspect county nursing homes and child care centers. The team offered information and guidance to help reduce potential COVID-19 exposures and outbreaks.

## MARCH

## APRIL



To minimize COVID-19 exposure, Public Health modified operations, where possible, to protect both clients and staff. Chronic Disease classes and events went virtual. The WIC Program continue serving WIC participants during the pandemic by phone and virtual interactions instead of in-person services to minimize COVID-19 exposure. WIC downsized operations for 16 clinics to six locations, with minimal staff, while other staff worked remotely by phone. WIC also introduced drive-up curbside service, and WIC benefits were mailed to new participants and to clients who could not come to the clinics.



Also in April, Public Health launched a COVID-19 self-screening webpage, along with other related information to help residents recognize symptoms of Coronavirus, and to schedule a COVID-19 test. Public Health continually promoted the wearing of face coverings, good hygiene and social distancing as a means for the public to minimize possible COVID-19 exposure.

### SOCIAL DISTANCING

**WHAT IS IT?** Keep 6 feet of distance between you and others whenever possible.

**WHY DOES IT MATTER?** It can help limit the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

**HAVE TO GO OUT?** Stay away from group settings, avoid crowds and gatherings.





Contact tracing is an important part of Public Health's work in stopping every contagious disease. With COVID-19 spreading rapidly in late spring and early summer, Public Health hired an army of contact tracers to help monitor the community for the disease, track individuals who were infected and advise the potentially infected on what they could do to further minimize their exposure. Tracking down people who may have been in contact with an infectious person is a necessary task because it allows public health to act preventively to keep others from getting infected –AND it can save lives. For the next several months, Public Health urged residents to "Answer the Call" to slow the spread.

In May, Public Health began offering online self-screenings for COVID-19, with free COVID-19 testing for those who met testing criteria. Appointments were available in Fort Worth and Arlington. With a COVID-19 vaccine still months away, case numbers climbing and long lines forming daily at the few brick-and-mortar testing sites, Public Health responded by creating several mobile testing sites, where individuals could drive up, get a cheek or nasal swab test, park to the side to await the allotted observation time, then continue on. Test results were delivered via email, phone call or text.



## MAY

## JUNE

## JULY

## AUGUST



Early in June, Public Health issued the first of what would be several heat advisories during the summer, warning the public of possible heat injuries. Public Health regularly provides information to help educate residents to the signs of heat injuries and ways they can protect themselves and their loved ones from the dangers of extreme heat.



At Public Health's urging, Tarrant County Judge B. Glen Whitley issued an Executive Order requiring all business entities, including colleges and government organizations in Tarrant County to develop and implement a health and safety policy requiring face coverings in areas and activities involving close contact, and where social distancing wasn't possible. COVID-19 case numbers were still climbing at this point of the year.



COVID-19 cases in Tarrant County surged following the July 4th weekend. To mitigate this surge, local health authorities from Tarrant County, Arlington and Burleson issued a joint control order stating school systems in Tarrant County were not to re-open for face-to-face on-campus instruction or activities until September 28.



Every year, the Immunization Collaboration of Tarrant County, of which Public Health is part, provides back-to-school immunizations for school age children. In previous years, immunization events were held weekly throughout the county. For 2020, the Collaboration and Public Health held a Back-To-School Vaccinations event at the Ridgmar Mall in west Fort Worth from July 20 to Sept. 11. This single location enabled social distancing and other COVID-19 exposure prevention measures that minimized client and staff exposure. For 2020, Public Health provided \$412 million in Back-to-School vaccines, vaccinated 4,749 children for a total of 12,098 doses.



The first West Nile Virus human case and death of the 2020 season was reported on July 21. "We are continuing to see rapid increases in mosquito infection rates in Tarrant County, which means we have more human risk for West Nile Virus," said Public Health Director Vinny Taneja. "To prevent outbreaks of West Nile, it's very important people remember to always use an EPA-approved repellent and wear long sleeves and pants when they go outside." Public Health also implemented control measures to reduce the mosquito population, including increased mosquito surveillance in areas of positive traps and increased ground spraying in areas where spread of West Nile Virus was likely.



Exercising appropriate Covid-19 precautions, Public Health's Nurse Family Partnership staff set up a drive-through graduation ceremony in August, allowing their graduates to drive up, accept their diploma, along with other goodies from their masked nurse partner, while maintaining a healthy social distance. The Nurse Family Partnership program helps improve the lives of children and families by providing home visiting, advocacy and referral services for first time moms. The program graduated 36 young women in 2020.





In early September, Public Health released a school data dashboard to help parents of school-age children better understand the COVID-19 metrics in their areas. “The dashboard is designed to help school leadership and parents understand local COVID-19 infection rates so they can make the best decisions for their children,” said Public Health Director Vinny Taneja.

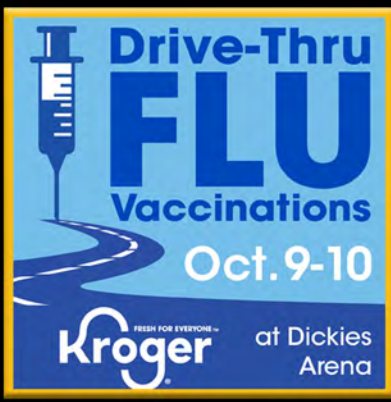
Tarrant County surpassed 50,000 COVID-19 cases by the end of September. Public Health continued to ask COVID-19 patients and their contacts to “answer the call” and respond to contact tracers.

Later in September, Tarrant County received a three-year, \$550,000 grant from the Pritzker Children's Initiative, to identify innovative community-based efforts to improve health outcomes for infants and toddlers. The award is one of only 10 awarded nationally.

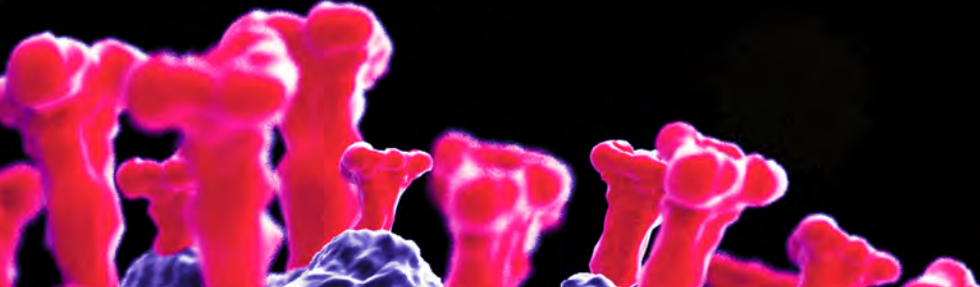


**SEPTEMBER**

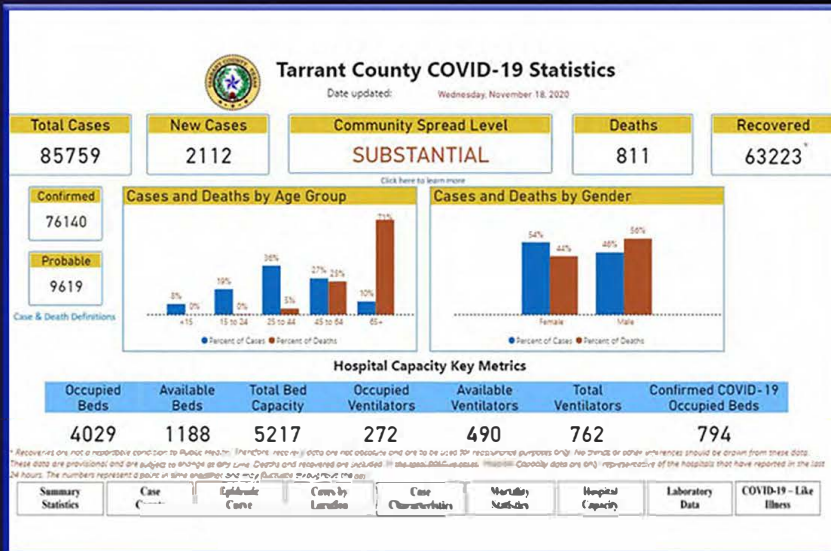
**OCTOBER**



Tarrant County, Kroger and the City of Fort Worth partnered in October to offer drive-thru flu vaccinations at the Chevrolet Parking lot at Dickies Arena in Fort Worth. Individuals were able to make appointments online. “In light of the challenges we may face from both the flu virus and COVID-19 this fall, Kroger Health is proud to partner with Tarrant County and the City of Fort Worth to host this two-day event, offering flu shots by our certified immunizers, in the safety of the individual’s vehicle,” said Jeff Loesch, Dallas Division Health and Wellness Director for Kroger Health. “In particular, we wanted to provide an efficient way for our seniors to receive the recommended high-dose formulation of the flu shot while minimizing the risk of potential exposure in the general public.”







To provide residents and community leaders with more county-specific pandemic information, Public Health created a series of COVID-19 dashboards for the Public Health website. These dashboards contain detailed data and continue to be updated regularly.

As COVID-19 case numbers rose, Public Health partnered with multiple community groups to provide more testing sites in Arlington and other locations, which included nasal and cheek swabbing and saliva testing.

# NOVEMBER

# DECEMBER



Tarrant County received its first shipment of Moderna COVID-19 vaccine in late December.



Public Health staff were ready to begin mass vaccination efforts once the vaccine arrived. More than 4,200 doses were provided before year's end.



Public Health Director Vinny Taneja and Fort Worth Fire Chief Jim Davis, with their COVID-19 vaccination cards after receiving their first COVID-19 vaccine. Because vaccine was initially in short supply, vaccinations were provided first to those most at risk, then to health workers, governmental representatives and others assisting the public.

As the year ended, more COVID-19 vaccine became available, partnerships were established to assist in vaccination efforts throughout the county and COVID-19 cases started to slow down. But they did not stop.



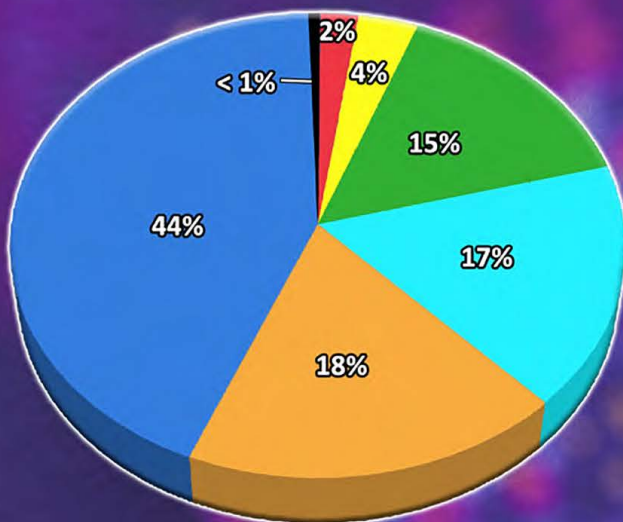
## Performance Measures

	2018	2019	2020
Pregnancy tests & referrals	129	310	130
Flu shots provided	3,107	4,321	10,536
Immunizations provided	30,845	33,034	29,858
WIC - visits	441,227	460,529	460,414
Health education - health events, presentations	674	625	56
Health education - referrals	16,744	16,750	4,300
Communicable disease reports investigated	10,026	2,898	*
New HIV cases reported	283	133	89
STD clinic visits	3,691	11,132	4,411
STD disease intervention, field investigations	2,680	**	1,210
Clinical lab tests performed	58,563	75,088	38,706
HIV/STD cases investigated, partners notified	1,023	**	**
Preventive Medicine Clinic (PMC) HIV care caseload	988	871	800
PMC clinic visits	4,448	4,491	5,308
Travel Health Services immunizations provided	2,724	1,700	740
TB clinic visits	4,249	5,484	4,342
TB contacts screened as part of disease intervention investigation	850	2,022	369
TB cases in Tarrant County	63	75	71
Percent of foreign-born TB cases	72	72	72
Suspected TB cases treated preventively	128	48	28
HIV co-infections (cases only)	5	3	3
Drug-resistant cases (TB)	3	2	5
Directly Observed Therapy doses administered in the field (TB)	10,730	12,895	10,729
DOPT doses administered (TB)	2,448	1,322	1,802
Contacts investigated (TB)	970	2,022	369
Total on therapy (TB)	87	98	94
Total with latent TB infection	353	324	116
Food establishment inspections	7,711	6,345	6,781
Swimming pool inspections	1,199	902	849
Onsite sewage facilities permitted	317	350	320
Mosquito pools tested for WNV	5,064	6,347	5,803
Milk and dairy lab tests performed	17,834	17,501	15,637
Water lab tests performed	19,169	18,345	17,171
Medical Reserve Corps volunteer hours	1,457	1,357	3,098
Nurse-Family Partnership graduates	34	28	36

\*No data available

\*\*Transitioned to new information system, data not available.

## Funding Sources



1115 Waiver Funds	\$37,568,552
State Grants	\$15,844,304
Local Government Funds	\$14,570,567
340B Funds	\$12,968,336
Local Fees	\$2,974,523
Federal Grants	\$1,901,117
Local Private Funds	\$90,987

**= \$85,918,385**



**Tarrant County Public Health**

Accountability. Quality. Innovation.



A healthier community through leadership in health strategy

