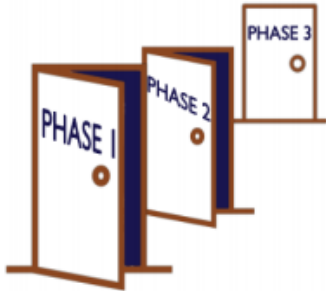


# COVID RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

Regional and National Practice Highlights

Issue 6 – October 26, 2020



Across the U.S., whether one is easing into the pandemic’s equilibrium, or still seeking a sustainable *new normal*, COVID-19’s current universal threat does not discriminate. Its “biggest risk” occurs in settings “where we let our guard down,” cautioned former FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, M.D. (CBS News, Oct. 18). Montgomery County, MD contact tracing evidence supports this warning: **family gatherings as a source of positive cases** is an increasing refrain during weekly updates to the County Council / Board of Health.

Risk persists with impromptu and planned events. At the Council’s Oct. 13 meeting, Deputy Health Officer James Bridgers, M.D., discussed learning the day before of his father’s positive COVID-19 test result. Leading his father in a contact-tracing scenario, his father said he had visited Dr. Bridgers’ 80-year-old aunt, 101-year-old grandfather; and 100-year-old, diabetic and blind grandmother, whose chronic condition predisposes her to risk of a COVID-19 infection. “With my father, we identified all these touch points,” which is what persons who receive calls from contact tracers need to share, “to help mitigate the risk of transmission in our community,” he said.

As families debate Thanksgiving plans, with college students and other adult children possibly returning home for the first time in months, Dr. Bridgers advised that parents insist that returning family members wear a face mask inside the house; and even “go as a family to get tested!” Relatedly, to complement **#MaskUpMoCo**, a new family-gathering-themed public awareness campaign is coming soon, said Earl Stoddard, M.D., Director, Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security. – Lee Rucker Keiser, MSPH, Editor

## SPOTLIGHT: MD’s COVID VACCINATION PLAN

With FDA approval of one or several COVID-19 vaccine candidates possible by Dec. 2020/early 2021, Maryland and other states submitted to the Centers for Disease Control in mid-Oct. their respective dissemination plans. Shortly following approval, a vaccine’s availability may be limited; thus, the [MD Department of Health draft plan](#) (released publicly Oct. 20) identified phased, priority population groups:



### COVID-19 Vaccination Plan

Phase 1 (14% of population)	Phase 2	Phase 3
High-risk health care workers, first responders, nursing home residents, incarcerated persons and staff; persons at very high risk due to certain health conditions	Teachers, staff, child care workers; essential personnel (e.g., grocery stores, public transit); persons at moderately higher risk due to certain health conditions; those in homeless shelters; persons age 65+	Children, youth, and persons aged 18-30 not in other categories; persons aged 30-65 without an underlying health condition.

(Cont. from Page 1) Public health officials are increasingly concerned about Americans’ declining support for getting vaccinated. Gallup reported this month that only half of those polled in Sept. would be willing to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, down from 66% favorability in July. Accordingly, a public communication strategy to boost receptivity is addressed in Maryland’s (and other states’) plan. The MD Dept. of Health will work with trusted community partners, and representatives of vulnerable and priority group populations, to develop culturally-competent messages. Meanwhile, two other COVID-19 vaccine resources may be of interest:

1. FAQs about the Maryland COVID-19 Vaccination Plan, MD Dept. of Health (Oct. 20).
2. A viewpoint published in **JAMA** (Oct. 16), Answering Key Questions about COVID-19 Vaccines by Georgetown University’s Jesse Goodman, M.D., M.P.H. and colleagues. “Providing evidence-based information will be particularly important in an environment of polarization and mistrust,” they said.

## RETURN TO SCHOOL: WHO’S OPEN & FOR WHOM?

In some of the country’s **largest school districts**, the next few weeks mark a literal return-to-school for many previously virtual-only students. Below are seven districts’ prioritized cohorts for in-person learning; virtual options remain, too. (Details were current as of Oct. 26; updates available at districts’ websites.)

School District / Fall 2020 Enrollment	Now Open: In-Person	Coming Soon: In-Person
<b>Orange County, FL</b> / 206,058 (as of Oct. 15) <a href="https://www.ocps.net/">https://www.ocps.net/</a> Detailed series of <u>Case Mgmt. Flow Charts</u> , part of their COVID-19 Response Plans	<b>State mandate:</b> by Aug. 31, all public schools had to open 5 days/week. As of Oct. 15, 42% of students attended in-person	
<b>Fairfax County, VA</b> / 180,151 <a href="https://www.fcps.edu/returntoschool">https://www.fcps.edu/returntoschool</a>	(Opened Sept. 8, virtual only) October: High School career preparatory programs, 1-2 days/week; and preschool autism classrooms	<b>Oct. 26:</b> limited for special needs, and English-learner newcomers; <b>Mid-late Nov.:</b> PK-Grade 2 <b>Jan. 2021:</b> Grades 3-6
<b>Gwinnett County, GA</b> / 177,394 <a href="http://publish.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/gcps/home/public/home">http://publish.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/gcps/home/public/home</a>	As of Sept. 9, 42% of students had returned for in-person instruction, following phased, grade-specific returns in late Aug. and early Sept.	Remote learning continues for those not choosing in-person classes
<b>Wake County, NC</b> / 156,389 <a href="https://www.wcpss.net/">https://www.wcpss.net/</a>	(All-virtual since Aug. 17)	<b>Oct. 26:</b> Pre-K through 3; students with special needs
<b>Dallas Indep. School District</b> / 146,011 <a href="https://www.dallasisd.org/dallasisd">https://www.dallasisd.org/dallasisd</a> <u>Attendance &amp; Enrollment FAQ</u> (Oct. 15) from Texas Education Agency, 40 pps.	<b>State mandate:</b> offer daily, on-campus learning; plus virtual. Grades 9-12: hybrid model, on-site 2-3 days each week	
<b>Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC</b> / 138,356 <a href="https://www.cms.k12.nc.us/Pages/default.aspx">https://www.cms.k12.nc.us/Pages/default.aspx</a>	Since Oct. 12: All Pre-K students	<u>Rotational schedule:</u> <b>Nov. 2:</b> K-5 students <b>Nov. 23:</b> Middle school <b>Jan. 5, 2021:</b> High school
<b>Denver Public Schools</b> / 93,815 (Fall 2019 data) <a href="https://www.dpsk12.org/">https://www.dpsk12.org/</a> Free COVID-19 testing for students (as of Oct. 15)	Since Sept. 8: Early Childhood Education Centers Since Sept. 28/early Oct.: K-1	<b>Oct. 21:</b> Through Grade 5 <b>Mid-Nov.:</b> Grades 6-12, hybrid

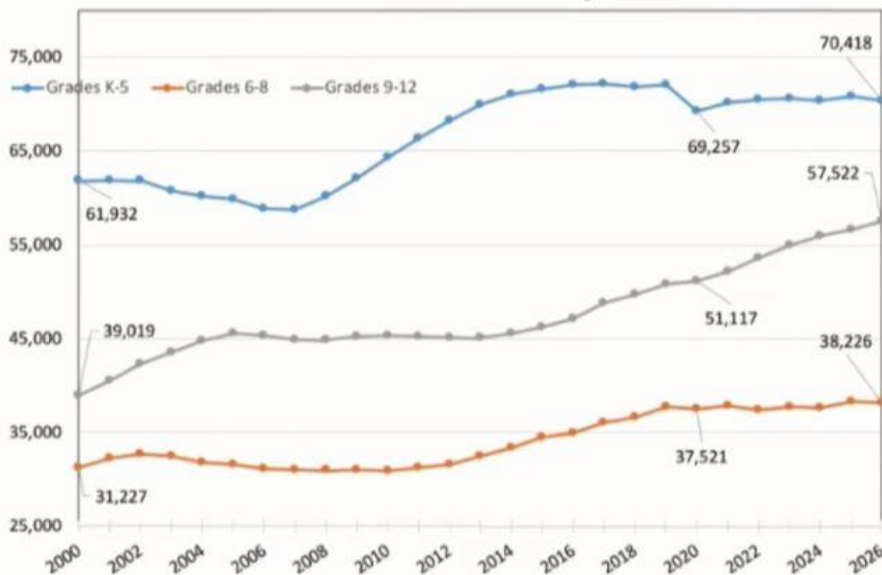
(Cont. from Page 2) One pandemic-induced data point that appears to transcend public school systems is **reduced enrollment**, as previewed in last month’s *COVID Response* newsletter. Most state education departments take districts’ official enrollment snapshot on Sept. 30 or in early October; this fall, some states extended that period, or delayed the date. Regardless, school leaders are already well-attuned to which students have not yet declared “present” for virtual learning.

“Consistent with national trends, Chicago Public Schools [CPS] experienced the largest enrollment decline in more than two decades driven by fewer new students enrolling in the earliest grades, including a 44% decline in Black students enrolled in Pre-K compared to last year,” CPS noted in an Oct. 16 press release. They also reported a 29% decline in Latinx students enrolling in Pre-K versus 2019. Chicago is the country’s third-largest school system, with over 281,000 students in district-run Pre-K-12 schools this fall.

MCPS K-12 Withdrawals, July-Sept. 2019	MCPS K-12 Withdrawals, July-Sept. 2020	Transfer Destination of non-returning students
1,622	1,200	MD public school outside of Montgomery County
1,889	1,674	Public school outside of MD
986	1,189	Private school in MoCo
148	1,018	MD private sch., non-MoCo
252	346	U.S. private school, non-MD
966	770	Foreign country school
74	1,080	Home schooling

**Updated Montg. County Public Schools enrollment: 161,583** versus 165,267 last fall. K-12 stands at 157,895 versus 160,587 in 2019. MCPS Superintendent Jack Smith, Ph.D., presented to the Council’s **Education & Culture Cmte.** (Oct. 5) details on students who had transferred out of the system (table at left).

MCPS Grade Level Enrollment  
Actual 2000–2020 and Projected 2021–2026



Source: Montgomery County Public Schools, Division of Capital Planning, October 2020

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On Oct. 26, Dr. Smith told the MCPS Board that he anticipates this year’s enrollment decline to be temporary, and he released MCPS’ new projection of **170,761 students by the 2026-2027 school year.** MCPS staff stated that capacity projects in the adopted Capital Improvements Program budget, which had been based on pre-pandemic enrollment projections, “are still warranted.” Also on Oct. 26, MCPS issued grade-cohort-specific enrollment projections for 2021-2026 (left, from slide deck).

## NEW LOCAL GRANT OPPORTUNITIES



**Nov. 2** deadline: **Community Action Award** from The Community Foundation, grants of up to \$2,000 to individuals and nonprofits “working to make our region a more equitable and inclusive place.” Details: <https://www.thecommunityfoundation.org/news/voicesdmv-putting-your-ideas-on-the-table>

**Nov. 5** deadline: **3R Initiative** from the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation, grants of up to \$5,000 (funding or business counseling) for restaurants and retailers. These grants will support service delivery fees, delivery-related auto insurance costs, and inventory and e-commerce solutions. Assistance in determining eligibility for the county’s “Reopen Montgomery” grants (up to \$5,000 per applicant) may also be provided. See: <https://thinkmoco.com/3r-grant>

## FURTHER AFIELD PRACTICE HIGHLIGHTS

San Francisco’s Economic Recovery Task Force, which released its final report in October, issued 41 policy recommendations to support long-term economic recovery and development, vulnerable communities, and business operations. Several recommendations **support artists**, such as a new universal basic income pilot program; and funding artists to paint public health-themed murals. Read the full report here: <https://onesanfrancisco.org/covid-19-recovery>

New York City’s public schools opened on Sept. 21 for in-person instruction; currently, 54% of its nearly one million students participate exclusively remotely. **Free, in-school COVID-19 testing** began in October. Each month, between 10%-20% of a school’s population (students and staff) will be tested, selected randomly. Families must sign a testing consent form in order for their child to be eligible for this free program. Details: <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-year-20-21/return-to-school-2020/health-and-safety/covid-19-testing>

Denver Public Schools announced free **COVID-19 testing** for symptomatic students, available at any of four Denver Health-hosted testing sites. Same-day appointments, including on Saturdays, are available, with a 24-hour turn-around. The new program was announced October 15: <https://www.dpsk12.org/dps-dph-free-covid-19-testing-for-students/>

Wake County, NC high-school students can access free, one-hour, virtual sessions with **county librarians** to discuss college application and financial aid processes, interviewing skills, and general navigation tips. The program, launched as a pilot this summer, is called “Level Up: To College and Beyond.” Details: <http://www.wakegov.com/libraries/Pages/default.aspx>

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