August 5, 2022

TO: Chamber of Commerce
              Business Owners and Operators

FROM: Wilma J. Wooten, M.D., M.P.H.,
              Public Health Officer,
              Public Health Services

RE: **SAN DIEGO COUNTY MONKEYPOX PLANNING AND RESPONSE EFFORTS**

As the Public Health Officer of the Public Health Services (PHS) department (i.e., the local health department), in the County of San Diego (County) Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), I am sending you this communication to update you on the local monkeypox outbreak. This global incident has been very visible in the news, with events rapidly evolving from day-to-day.

Outbreak Overview

The first U.S. case was reported in Massachusetts, on May 20, 2022. The first California case was reported on May 27, and the first San Diego case was reported on June 15. On July 23, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the spread of monkeypox to be a "public health emergency of international concern," which is its highest alert level. On August 1, Governor Newsom declared a state of emergency to respond to the monkeypox outbreak. This action allows for the availability of personnel, such as pharmacists and emergency medical technicians, to administer vaccines; to utilize state resources; and to leverage the public health infrastructure related to testing, case investigation and contact tracing, and community outreach and engagement developed during the COVID-19 pandemic response. Lastly, on August 4, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared the ongoing spread of the monkeypox virus a public health emergency.

Monkeypox outbreaks have been reported globally, nationwide, statewide, and locally. Globally, as of August 5, 2022, there have been [28,220 cases reported, in over 88 countries](#). Nationwide, there have been [7,510 confirmed or probable cases in the United States](#) (U.S.), including [1,310 in California](#) and [71 in San Diego County](#). With the rapid evolution of this public health threat, it is important for Chambers and related organizations, as well as business owners and operators, to follow updates on the local response efforts related to the monkeypox outreach.

Globally, monkeypox cases have been detected predominantly in gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, but not exclusively. The County is dedicated to reducing stigma among the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) community. No single community is responsible for the spread of this virus. Monkeypox can impact any segment of the population, as the virus spreads through prolonged skin-to-skin contact, respiratory secretions, and shared towels or contaminated bedding (i.e., fomites). Those who may be at greater risk during this current outbreak includes those who reported having contact with a person or people, either with a similar appearing rash, or who received a diagnosis of confirmed or probable monkeypox. However, it is important to remember the monkeypox virus can infect **anyone**!

What Can Your Chamber or Business Do?

As a governmental entity serving vulnerable individuals, the County is asking you to share this information with your employees, volunteers, clients, contractors, and community members. As additional guidance is developed, this information will be posted on the County website. You should also follow information on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website. Additional CDC topic-specific websites include the following:

- Prevention | Monkeypox | Poxvirus | CDC
- Considerations for Monkeypox Vaccination | Monkeypox | Poxvirus | CDC
- Treatment | Monkeypox | Poxvirus | CDC
- Monkeypox Facts for People Who are Sexually Active | Monkeypox | Poxvirus | CDC
- Congregate Living Settings | Monkeypox | Poxvirus | CDC

The County encourages the leadership, employees, and partners of local Chambers and businesses to:

- Stay informed with information from the County Monkeypox website, which is updated daily weekdays, Monday to Friday.
- Develop or update policies and procedures regarding sick leave and telecommuting.
- Provide educational materials to protect your workforce from monkeypox, (Note: Respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene should be encouraged, as well as routine cleaning of commonly touched surfaces –these are the same recommendations for COVID-19 and other seasonal viruses).
- Sign up to get County News Center stories emailed directly to you here, and encourage your staff and community to do the same.
- Encourage staff, clients, and community members to sign up for the County's Monkeypox Text Messaging Alert System to receive real-time information about monkeypox in the region. To sign up to receive the messages, text COSD MONKEYPOX to 468-311.
- Review and disseminate the County Monkeypox Fact Sheets to your staff and community.
- Encourage clients and community members to use Tell Your Partner to anonymously notify partners about sexually transmitted diseases in a safe and secure way through **text** message or email.
- Encourage clients and community members to call 2-1-1 San Diego for any questions.

Prevention, Vaccination, and Treatment Efforts

The County has an established preparedness and response system to monitor, evaluate, and test persons suspected of monkeypox infection; provide education; and vaccinate those who are at risk of acquiring this infection. The County encourages all San Diegans to practice the following prevention strategies:

1. **Know** the signs and symptoms of monkeypox infection.

2. **Limit** close skin-to-skin contact with multiple partners.

3. **Obtain** the monkeypox vaccine if you are exposed, or at high risk.

At this time, the federal vaccine supply for Monkeypox is limited. This supply goes to the states, and then to local health departments. As of August 5, the County has received 4,687 doses from the California Department of Public Health, based on a formula allocation, which can be found on the County Monkeypox website. Doses are being distributed to hospital systems, federally qualified health centers, and County clinics, as well as utilized for County mass vaccination events. Until the vaccine supply increases, eligibility for the vaccine is provided on a prioritized basis: those who have been exposed to a confirmed or probable case (*post-exposure prophylaxis*) **and** those who have underlining medical conditions, which increases one's risk for severe disease, or increased work-related risk (*pre-exposure prophylaxis*).

In addition to providing vaccines for prevention efforts, treatment with the antiviral Tecovirimat (TPOXX) is available. TPOXX is prescribed for more severe infections or ones that could progress. As of August 5, the County has distributed about 170 treatment courses to hospital systems, community clinics, and County clinics. The central pharmacies of these facilities are alerting their providers to the availability of TPOXX for prescribing treatment. Again, anyone can get monkeypox. It is important to contact your healthcare provider if you are experiencing symptoms.

Everyone Has a Role

Everyone can contribute and play a role to protect the public and prevent the spread of this virus in a respectful, equitable, and transparent manner. I want to commend you for decisive leadership, action, and support during the COVID-19 pandemic response. These same principles are essential to containing this infection, as well.

For additional information and guidance about the monkeypox outbreak and associated resources, please reference the links mentioned above. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at MOC.PHO.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support to keep the residents of San Diego County healthy, safe, and thriving. Your efforts are greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

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Public Health Officer & Director,
Public Health Services

cc: Helen Robbins-Meyer, County of San Diego, Chief Administrative Officer
        Nick Macchione, County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Director