



OURAY COUNTY
DIRECTOR OF OURAY COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY
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June 9, 2020

Please direct responses to tkingery@ouraycountyco.gov

Jill Hunsaker Ryan, MPH
Executive Director
Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment

RE: Ouray County Variance Request from portions of Public Health Order 20-28

Dear Executive Director Ryan,

Please accept this application for a variance from portions of Public Health Order 20-28. Ouray County would like to increase the capacity at local pools, including hot springs pools to 200 people or 75% of the capacity, whichever is less.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has listed 6 key criteria to consider when “transitioning to and maintaining a steady state of low-level or no transmission” as part of their overall COVID-19 Strategy Update (World Health Organization, 2020). We will use this as a guide while considering CDC, CDPHE, and local guidance. We further recognize and concur with the WHO that “the best-case outcome in the short and medium term in the absence of a safe and effective vaccine” is for communities to transition to a controlled steady-state.

Ouray County has reached a steady-state of low-level transmission. We will go through the 6 steps of the WHO recommendations and present the reasoning for our position. We welcome your review, consideration, and feedback.

Per your instructions, the plan must include “a written application to CDPHE certifying that the county has low case counts and/or can document 14 consecutive days of decline in COVID-19 cases reported in the county.”

We certify that we have low case counts in the setting of adequate testing capacity and availability.

Further, we must “include a COVID-19 suppression plan approved by the appropriate local public health authority, all hospitals within the county (unless no hospitals are located in the county) and a majority of county commissioners (or other county-level governing body).”

This application has been signed by the Public Health Director and all county commissioners who also serve as the Board of Health and accompanied by a letter of support from Montrose Hospital.



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World Health Organization's 6 Criteria For Transitioning To And Maintaining A Steady-State Of Low-Level Of No Transmission

1. COVID-19 Transmission Is Controlled

In summary, Ouray County has not seen widespread COVID19 transmission. At this time, we have low levels of community spread with a strong healthcare reserve, adequate testing capacity, high-level data review, effective outbreak mitigation strategies, collaborative and coordinated medical staff, and highly functional teams at Unified Command and Ouray County Public Health Agency that work together to effectively intervene against COVID19 along with the City of Ouray, Town of Ridgway and many community stakeholders.

We will go through how we collect and analyze data.

- a. WHO states that "...new cases should be maintained at a level that the health system can manage with substantial clinical care capacity in reserve."
- b. Collaboration that impacts data and response:
 - i. Early on in the pandemic response, the Ouray County Public Health Director and Emergency Manager formed a four person Unified Command (UC) in the Ouray County Emergency Operations Center (OC EOC).
 - ii. UC is now Public Health and Emergency Management.
- c. How we obtain data as an OC EOC:
 - i. Mountain Medical Center (MMC) in Ridgway took responsibility early on to become the source of testing in Ouray County. MMC testing data is sent to the Public Health Director daily. The data is then shared with UC.
 - ii. UC meets daily to share updates
 - iii. We use a voluntary symptom tracker to give us community level data.
 - iv. We have observationally observed mask use rates in congregate businesses, ie grocery stores.
 - v. Organizations report to UC daily on PPE use and other related metrics.
 - vi. Two local providers also have testing capabilities for their small patient base and report testing to Ouray County Public Health Agency.
- d. What thresholds do we have with the data:
 - i. We have established thresholds with the data that would necessitate a priority and intervention review if one of the following occurs. This does not necessarily mean an action would be taken, but a review would be completed that would consider a response.
 1. Montrose Memorial Hospital (MMH) hospital, who serves Ouray County, has census at or above 40. MMH can maintain normal operations with up



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- to 50 persons hospitalized and can function up to 75 persons with existing infrastructure under strained capacity.
2. Mesa County hospitalizations over 70 persons (per their variance application)
 3. 3 consecutive days of increasing positive cases without logistic or testing delays
 4. Tier 3 Alternative Care Sites (ACS) capacity of 15 beds remaining
 5. 5 or more positive cases in a two week period (two week incidence of 100 per 100,000)
 6. Total testing capacity below 250 viral transport media with an impending supply shortage
 7. Other modeling data relevant to our population that anticipates a surge of existing MMH, Tier 3, testing, contact tracing, or PPE capacity
- e. Modeled Data from Montrose County
- i. Montrose County Public Health has developed a model for predicting hospital demand that considers 4 different public health intervention effectiveness dates (social distancing, mask use, etc).
 1. The model confirms that CDPHE and the Governor's early interventions stopped an impending surge and flattened the curve. That was the goal early on and has been achieved.
 - ii. We recognize that 100% of models are flawed and we are convinced that Montrose County's is not 100% accurate. There are so many variables and so much that the community can do that will impact this. Therefore, we must maintain public health interventions.
 - iii. Yet, our goal early on was to prevent hospital surge. That was also in the context that patients would not be able to transfer out to nearby hospitals if needed. The past 10 weeks have shown that MMH has good capacity and has built up a Tier 2, Tier 3, and non-congregate shelter plan that can be implemented within days if there was a surge AND could not transfer to outside hospitals. That is a scenario that we do not think is likely or probable.



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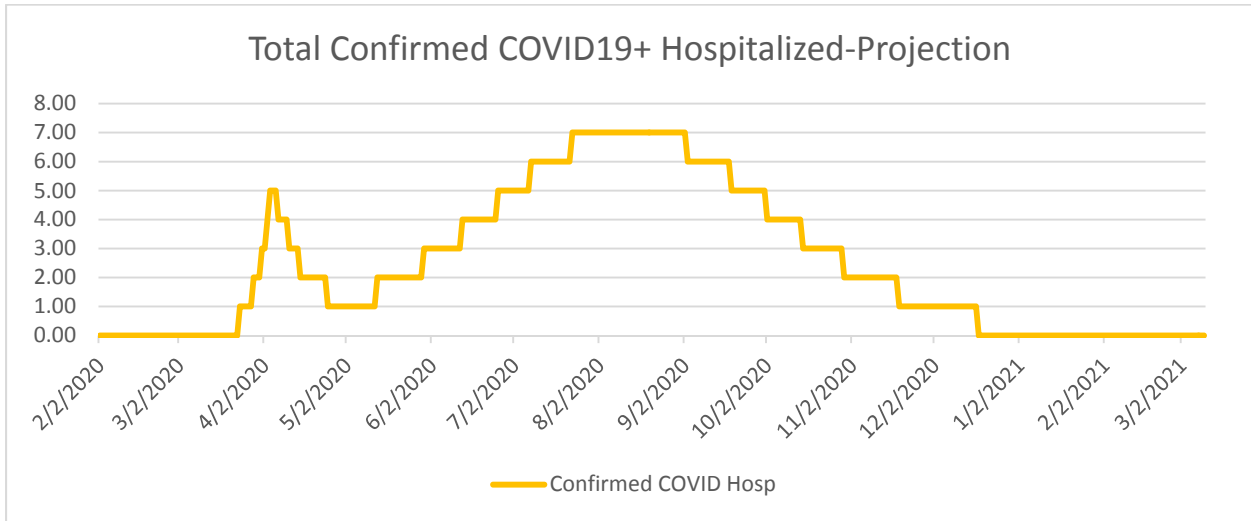


Figure 1. Modeled projections for confirmed COVID19 census at MMH. It does not consider any changes in the fall around social distancing.

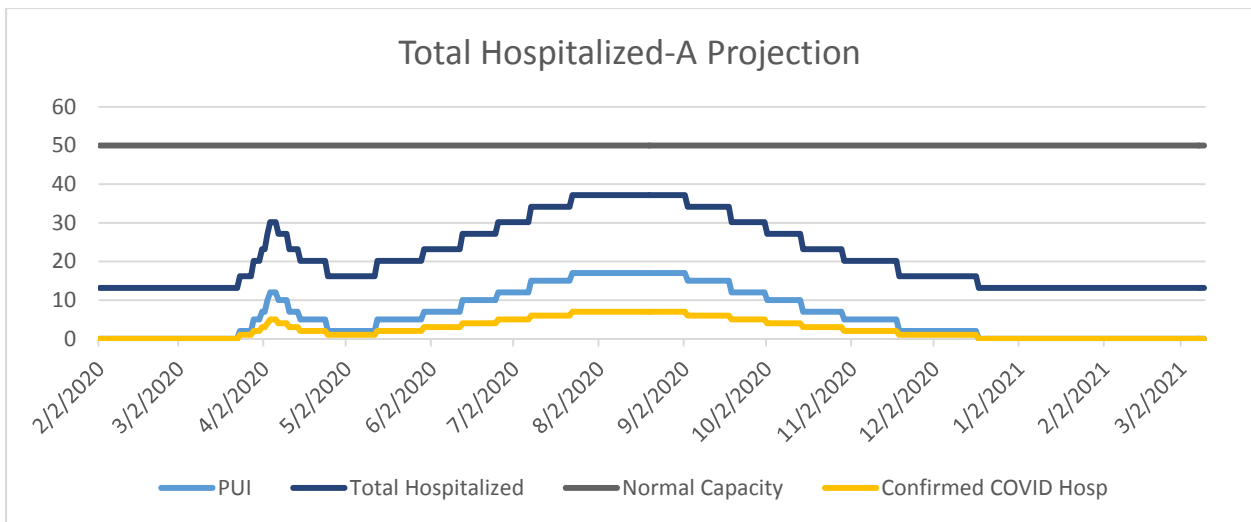


Figure 2. Total Hospitalized Patients-Projection. Note that this assumes 40% public health effectiveness from early May 2020 and beyond without modification for expected relaxation in the fall as the weather cools.



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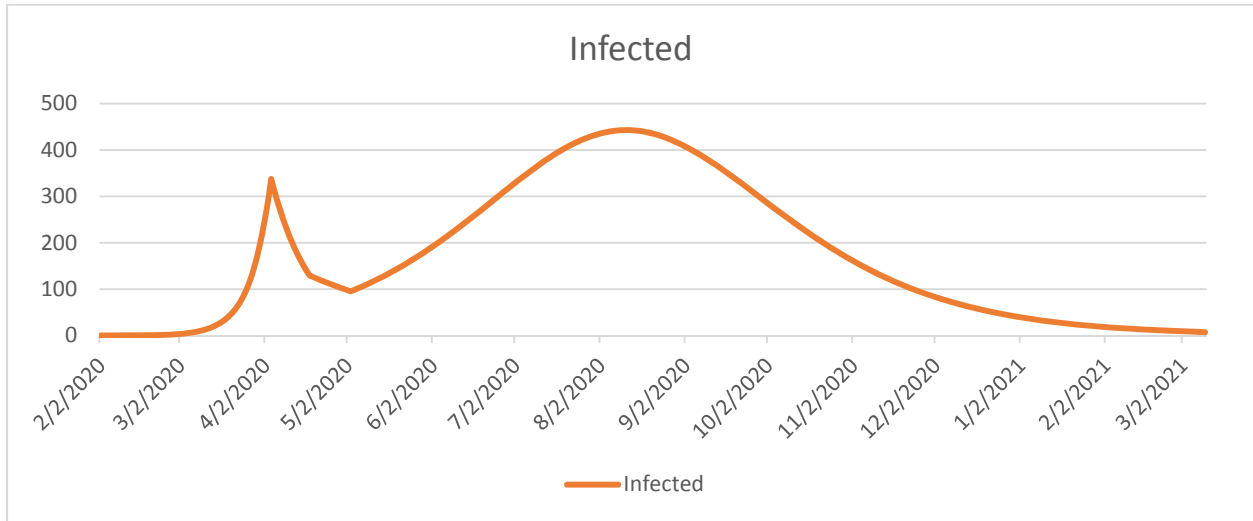


Figure 3. Modeled actively infected person at 40% public health intervention effectiveness from early May and beyond. Note that this is likely to change over time and all models should be interpreted with caution.



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Current testing data and capacity.

iv. Testing

1. Ouray County residents have been tested more and more each day as a ratio of the population.
2. PCR testing using swabs
 - a. Capacity is very good. MMH has 1000 saline back up swab collection kits packaged and ready to go. MMH also has over 500 viral transport media collection kits ready to go.
 - b. Mountain Medical Center has capacity to test acute travelers as well as patients of theirs.
 - c. Because of our relationship with MMH and because MMH is such a regional leader with highly talented leadership and support staff, MMH has maintained at least 500 test kit capacity since the last days of March 2020.
 - d. Ouray County Public Health Agency has 300 test kits.
 - e. There is no anticipated shortage.
3. PCR testing using saliva
 - a. MMH has executed a contract with a private lab that will provide a 24-72 hour turnaround time and will be implemented in situations that PPE use and expose minimization is important
4. Antibody testing
 - a. MMH has made this test available through the Mayo Reference Lab contract they have in mid-April, but the clinical community decided not to take full advantage of this. It has not been heavily used as more is learned about the utility of this test but will be increasingly used to support epidemiologic surveillance.
 - b. Starting in 1-2 weeks, MMH will have 5000 IgG antibody kits in-stock specific to SARS-CoV-2 and it is expected there will be additional antibody testing done and this will help public health and MMH understand the epidemiologic factors relevant to this condition, especially as we learn more about duration and robustness of immunity, if any, with these antibodies.
 - c. Mountain Medical Center is also providing antibody tests for those patients who request them.
5. Criteria for testing



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- a. We have always been capable and have followed CDC testing criteria even when that was looser than the CDPHE testing criteria.
6. Medical staff collaboration around testing
 - a. Medical Providers in Ouray County meet weekly to discuss testing and associated strategies to combat COVID19.
 - b. These providers also join meetings with MMH.

2. Sufficient Health System and Public Health Capacities Are In Place

In summary, we certify that our health care system and the local public health team has capacity.

a. Health Care System

i. Tier 1 Care-ICU Care

1. MMH went from an 8 bed ICU to a 48 bed ICU through the development of a "COVID Unit." This 600% increase in their capacity for ventilator level management is above and beyond the call to action but shows the ability of this hospital to rapidly care for critically ill individuals.
2. MMH has not had a COVID19 confirmed hospital census of more than 5.
3. MMH has ample Tier 1 Care
4. MMH can transfer patients to tertiary and quaternary care sites if the need arises due to an unprecedented surge, if emergent dialysis is required, or if specialty services not available in Montrose is required, such as neurosurgery consultation. Most patients with critical care needs related to COVID19 have been and can be cared for at MMH.
5. MMH has accepted in a 1:2 ratio with St. Mary's Hospital in Grand Junction those acutely ill patients from surrounding counties, such as Gunnison, without taxing our systems.
6. MMH has up to 24 ventilators available and with T-piece and appropriate patient matching, it can go to 48 ventilated patients at one time.
7. The maximum number of persons ventilated at any one time from 4/6/2020 to 5/7/2020 is 2. This is 3.77% of all hospitalized during that time and 36.89% of those hospitalized with confirmed COVID19. Therefore, ventilator capacity at MMH has never been near surge.

ii. Tier 2 Care-Acute Care

1. MMH has a med/surge capacity of 32 and a normal operating procedure capacity of up to 50 hospitalized patients in total.
2. MMH has not had a total hospital census for all reasons above 30, which occurred on 4/7/2020.
3. MMH has ample capacity for Tier 2 Care.



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4. If MMH were to have a surge AND patients could not be referred to other hospitals, which is extremely unlikely at this point as we have learned that COVID19 surge did not happen uniformly across all hospitals at the same time, MMH and the OC EOC have developed plans for a Tier 2 alternative care site with 50 cots already in place and ready to be activated. We do not believe this will be needed, but we have been and are prepared.
 5. A plan has been written for this tier.
- iii. Tier 3-Subacute Care
1. Montrose County and a private skilled nursing facility created a tier 3 resource that would allow for 30-50 persons needing Tier 2.5-3 level care. The site has been vetted by state and local resources including life safety, medical, public health, emergency management, law enforcement, and EMS.
 2. This facility has supply, staffing, and availability if this would be necessary.
 3. A plan has been written for this tier.
- iv. Non-congregate shelter
1. OC EOC ESF 6 lead has negotiated an agreement in principle with a local hotelier that would allow up to 2 rooms to be used if needed to support throughput from Tier 2 to 2.5/3 to shelter in the event people are displaced and cannot return home.
- v. Primary care
1. All primary care clinics are operational, seeing patients in-person and nearly all have implemented televisit options for their patients.
 2. Primary care access is strong.
- vi. Specialty care in Montrose County
1. ENT, neurology, hematology/oncology, cardiology, pulmonology, general surgery, urologic surgery, ob/gyn, and psychiatry are all open for service.
- vii. Emergency Department at Montrose Memorial Hospital
1. Overall use has been reduced.
 2. The number of visits per day has not exceeded the peak of the 2009 H1N1 flu pandemic visits that occurred in 10/2009.
 3. Usual staffing ratios of providers is implemented. For most of April, the ED physicians reduced staffing as there was little demand. As the Safer-At-Home order went into effect, the ED physicians have returned to previous staffing levels as more persons are mobile, active, and request emergency evaluation but this has not been for COVID19 related issues.

b. Public Health



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i. Detection

1. OC EOC has consistently messaged to the community that if a person has symptoms, then they should contact their provider for evaluation and potentially an order.
2. There is testing available. If a patient qualifies for a test based on CDC or CDPHE criteria, the person will get a test.
3. We have created and distributed employee screening protocols and recommendations.
4. Ouray County also operates a hotline staffed 8 AM to 8 PM, seven days a week, where a person can call and be directed if they have questions or symptoms.
5. Voluntary daily symptom tracker used to help identify cases in Ouray County.

ii. Testing

1. As documented above, we have multiple modalities for PCR based testing (saliva, nasopharyngeal swab, and POCT nasopharyngeal swab). Mountain Medical Center has antibody and PCR testing.

iii. Contact tracing capacity for isolation and quarantine

1. We have and will continue to contact all positives and exposed to give isolation and quarantine instructions.
2. We follow-up with all positives for recovery from symptoms.
3. Volunteers are standing by ready to help if need be.

3. Workplace Prevention Measures Are Established

The Unified Command has worked collaboratively to establish criteria for re-opening and cleaning with industry leaders.

- a. Ouray County EOC PIOs have established Westslopeinfo.com. Further, Unified Command has held multiple zoom webinars for specific business industries in the community to support businesses in their understanding of the relevant orders and to how effective strategies can be implemented to keep staff and patrons safe.

4. Risks of Important Cases Managed

- a. Short-term lodging was restricted in Ouray County from March 26, 2020 to May 29, 2020.
- b. 2nd homeowners and seasonal residents were ordered to quarantine for 14 days upon arrival starting April 7, 2020 and ending May 15, 2020.
- c. Tourism has largely been down even with the expiration of the Stay-At-Home Order.



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- d. We communicate regularly with federal agencies who manage land in the County to understand the flux of consumers.

5. Communities are Fully Engaged

- a. Ouray County Board of Health, Ouray County Public Health Agency, Montrose Memorial Hospital, Town of Ridgway and the City of Ouray, along with many other community partners meet in a once to twice weekly televideo conference call focused on community needs with dozens of participants where everything from food, housing, childcare resources, and healthcare access is reviewed.
- b. The school district is in constant communication with our EOC to ensure that school resources are known, optimized, and utilized when needed.
- c. Our EOC includes stakeholders, such as the Center for Mental Health who has a 24/7 mental health support line.
- d. Town, City, and County leadership are all participants on the daily EOC call to ensure clear lines of communication and situational awareness.
- e. Volunteers and others have produced thousands of handmade face coverings and made these available to various businesses that did not otherwise have access to cloth masks.
- f. Ouray County Public Health Agency has spot-checked various congregate businesses, including grocery stores, to ensure staff compliance with relevant mask use orders.
- g. Ouray County Public Health Agency, Board of Health, the City of Ouray, Town of Ridgway, Chief of Police, Marshal's Office, Ouray Fire, Ridgway Fire, Ouray County Sheriff's Office, and other relevant entities are working closely with the school district to ensure safe graduation planning ceremonies that keep social distancing, prevent congregation, and minimize the risk for spread.

We have reviewed the 6 key criteria for “managing a controlled and deliberate transition from a scenario of community transmission to a sustainable, steady-state of low-level or no transmission...” (World Health Organization, 2020). Ouray County Public Health Agency, the Board of Health (made up of the County Commissioners), and the local hospital are in agreement that we satisfy these 6 key criteria and meet CDPHE’s intent of a steady-low level of transmission.

In this next section, we will provide more specific guidance related to public health and business operations.

Public Health Recommendations for all Residents of Ouray County

- a. Maintain physical distancing of 6 feet or more.
- b. Adults 65 years and older and high-risk populations should limit public interactions and stay at home at much as possible.



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- a. We have confirmed that organizations in the County provide delivery services and we have made this known to vulnerable populations.
- b. We have done many press releases, interviews, and videos on the need for the well to support those who cannot leave their home with picking up meds, groceries, and other items in a safe manner that allows the at-risk to stay home.
- c. Use cloth face coverings for interactions where physical distancing is not possible or when entering public places.
- d. Strong adherence to isolation for the sick and contact their healthcare provider via phone and quarantine of those that were exposed.
- e. Wash hands frequently with soap and water. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if hand washing is not available.

Guidelines

In general, we believe that guidelines will help businesses reduce transmission of COVID-19.

- a. Perform frequent environmental cleaning and disinfection (concentrate on high touch surfaces like tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.)
 - a. [Healthcare facilities](#)
 - b. [Other, non-healthcare facilities](#)
- b. Employees and contracted workers whose duties include close contact with members of the public shall wear a non-medical cloth face covering over the nose and mouth
- c. Employees are encouraged to wear a non-medical cloth face covering over the nose and mouth while working, except where doing so would inhibit the individual's health
- d. Maintain at least six feet distance from each other
- e. Monitor workforce for compatible symptoms
- f. Implement or maintain return to work policies
 - a. [Healthcare facilities](#)
 - b. [Critical infrastructure workers after exposure](#)

Specific Guidance

In development of this section, we have considered input from various community stakeholders.

Hot Springs Pools and Swimming Pools

- Pool capacity limited to 75% or 200 people, whichever is less



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- Frequently touched surfaces, shared objects, bathrooms and locker rooms should be cleaned and disinfected every hour
- Staff members will be trained on COVID-19 policies and procedures prior to returning to work



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References

Montrose Memorial Hospital. (2019). *Community Health Needs Assessment and Implementation Strategy*. Montrose. Retrieved from https://www.montrosehospital.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/12.03.19_-_Montrose_Memorial_Hospital_CHNA_Implementation_Report_Final.pdf

World Health Organization. (2020). *COVID-19 Strategy Update*. Geneva. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/covid-strategy-update-14april2020.pdf>

-Signature page to follow-

Application endorsed and signed by:



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Ben Tisdell
Vice-Chair, Ouray County Board of County Commissioners & Board of Health

John Peters
Ouray County Board of County Commissioners & Board of Health

Tanner Kingery

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