

October 2020

Washington County and Covid-19

Tricia Mortell, RD, MPH
Public Health Manager



Healthy People, Thriving Communities



WASHINGTON COUNTY
Public Health



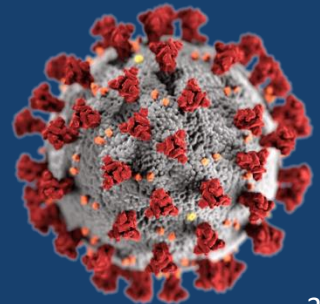
Washington County Experience

- First identified case
- One of first counties with case in a school
- One of first counties with outbreak in a long-term care facility
- One of first counties to identify disparity in disease rates in LatinX communities



Different Yet Familiar – The Disease

- Disease transmission didn't follow past known scenarios – led to many of our challenges
- This pandemic did require a Public Health and Emergency Operations collaboration



Different Yet Familiar - Equity

- Disease rates did impact populations differently and amplified what we know about social determinants of health and health inequities
- Access to testing, care, resources did vary across populations
- This public health crisis did need us to focus on equity – in a significant way



Different yet Familiar - Communication

- PH risk communication framework didn't fully meet our needs
- Press and public did demand information
- Protection of individual's privacy did get challenged by need for transparency
- People did judge the messenger before they trusted the message



Different Yet Familiar – Community Engagement

- Engagement with community did require dedicated resources
- Community partners didn't always have time to engage
- Community partners did uplift important issues for their communities



Different Yet Familiar – Public Health Systems

- Developing state and local systems, policies, procedures didn't always happen in timelines needed
- Local public health agencies did often need to step out first
- The public health system did come together to set many new policies/procedures



Innovations

- Created Equity Officer position on EOC Leadership Team
- Partnered with Oregon Public Health Institute to recruit, hire and train bi-lingual/bi-cultural surge capacity staffing
- Developed “strike teams” to support disease mitigation in various sectors



Prioritized our Values

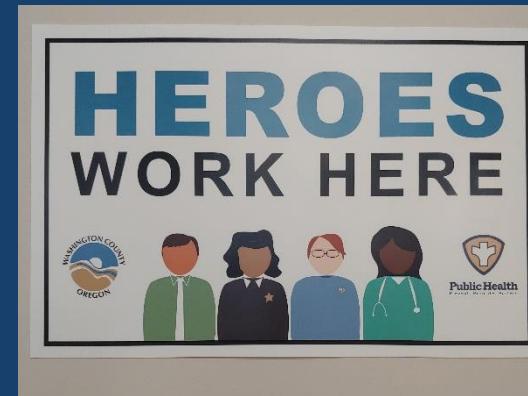
- Focused collective efforts on supporting migrant and seasonal farm workers
- Uplifted an equity lens in distribution of County CRF funds
- Created essential needs hubs
- Ensured basic needs financial support for those in isolation and quarantine
- Funded local CBOs
- Partnered with Housing on homeless strategies





What Will Continue

- Focus on equity and eliminating health disparities
- Collaboration with Community Based Organizations
- Flexible approach to address current and urgent issues
- Communication strategies



What Will the Future Hold?

- Educational opportunities for contact tracers to advance into medical and other careers
- Trusting relationships between governmental public health and community partners
- Greater appreciation for public health
- Funding for our PH system

We all have the capacity to be more courageous — Human Impact Partners

