

June 11, 2020

**TO: Chairwoman Sandy Hart, Lake County Board
Strategic Advisory Group, Lake County Board**

FROM: Lake County United (22 Member Institutions)

**RE: Lake County United Recommendation for COVID-19 Recovery
and Beyond**

As much as we all would like this pandemic to be over, we are still very much in the middle of it. How the County uses resources to address the current needs and prepare for the future is critical.

Reviving the economy must be long-term. While stimulating the economy with cash or grants will result in necessary, short-term benefits, we must prioritize reducing exposure to COVID-19 and prepare for a second wave if we are to succeed.

TESTING AND CONTACT TRACING MUST INCREASE especially among essential workers, assuming first responders are tested regularly by their employers.

1. Community-Based Mass Testing

Massive increase in testing. The only clear path to managing the spread of COVID-19 and securing the economy is to increase testing on a massive scale. The estimated increase in the number of tests required varies. At the only Lake County test site over 750 tests are available daily, but only 450-500 people are tested per day. Harvard University's latest report, "Pandemic Resilience: Getting It Done" calls for 2500 tests per day per death.

Establish Mobile Testing Sites now at trusted community-based institutions. Our experience in other communities has been that people will go to a site they trust and can easily access.

Make tests accessible. No required referral or ID. Currently at the Waukegan site, IDs are not required, but IDs are *requested* upon testing, which may be viewed as a requirement.

If these barriers are not removed, the most vulnerable communities will not access testing and jurisdictions will not have the scale of testing required to fully, safely reopen.

2. Contact Tracing Must Be a Relational Strategy

Relationships matter. If it's not a trusted voice, its effect will be limited to none. Phone-based contact tracing alone will not be effective. Safe, relational, door-to-door, person-to-person contact tracing is needed. In some communities, if tracers cannot locate a person by phone, the police go knock on the door. That will not work in many communities.

First and foremost tracers have to be hired from impacted communities.
Request: Prioritize hiring at over 50% of the contact tracers and support specialists, over the next 18 months, from distressed neighborhoods to reflect the communities most impacted. This employs people from the community and provides income in the most distressed neighborhoods.

Build on any existing, successful Community Health Worker employment model rooted in communities and anchored by area hospitals.

Hire already trained proven contact tracers into permanent employment generates savings for hospitals by decreasing recruitment and training costs and increasing preventive care to address underlying health conditions and disparities.

Provide financial support and sites for isolation & treatment

Pandemic Preparedness: It's time now to plan, strategize and act with hospitals, nursing homes, homes for the developmentally challenged, and all of our institutions to prepare for the next surge and/or pandemic.

America needs a simple standard, a gold star to show its institutions are pandemic resilient and at what level. Residential and commercial buildings are rated environmentally responsible and cost efficient based upon their LEED certification, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. LEED is used world-wide. It provides a "framework for healthy, highly efficient, and cost-saving green buildings.

Lake County needs something similar to a LEED certification for pandemic resilient institutions. Hospital and local health officials must ask themselves what they are learning, and what they need to do to be prepared:

- # of ventilators
- # and types of PPE - The Covid Local Study conducted by NTI cites PPE reserve for 90 days.
- # of contact tracers – National Association of County and City Health Officials recommends 30 per 100,000 in population.
- ICU capacity - 30% existing ICU capacity is available to accommodate surge without resorting to crisis standards of care
- IT infrastructure/Digital records for local health departments
- # of community health workers
- Level of community based care to address health inequities

Internet Access: Another critical piece to recovery is internet access for both e-learning and telehealth. This also is an important part of our infrastructure and economy. The county can be an important partner in expanding access in key underserved areas.

Mental Health Resources – Jail and prisons have been the default destination for those with mental health conditions - 25% of the Lake County Jail inmates had a mental illness. Many non-violent inmates were released from the County jail to prevent the spread of COVID-19. There needs to be a priority to press the Governor to expand Medicaid reimbursement to allow non-med-surge hospitals or non-profits

to qualify in order to establish a crisis stabilization unit (CSU) for police drop off or a priority to partner with a med-surge hospital to establish a CSU.

Essential Housing for Essential Workers – Access to quality affordable stable housing is an important part of maintaining a strong workforce. The County has both land, funds and the ability to expedite permits, etc. to contribute to significantly increasing affordable housing for essential workers (grocery store, retail, restaurants, delivery services and warehouse, healthcare, EMTs, etc).

LCU is strongly recommending a Lake County plan that concretely reflects these needs.