



DATE: October 24, 2024

TO: Southern Nevada District Board of Health Members

FROM: Fermin Leguen, MD, MPH, District Health Officer *FL*

SUBJECT: District Health Officer Report

Substance Use Dashboard

The Southern Nevada Health District has launched a new data dashboard and a test strip mail order program as part of its ongoing efforts to reduce overdoses. These programs provide harm reduction resources and education to Clark County residents.

The Substance Use Dashboard — available at www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org/programs/substance-use-and-overdose-prevention/data/ — offers information on fatal and nonfatal overdoses in Clark County. It includes overdose rates and maps that show areas with the highest incidence of overdose. The dashboard also displays findings from the Health District’s drug checking program, where clients can submit used paraphernalia or drug refuse for analysis to find out what substances may have been cut into the drug they used. Additionally, the dashboard provides a list and map of harm reduction resources throughout Clark County.

The Health District also announced a new mail order program, known as “The Strip Club,” which offers free fentanyl and xylazine test strips that are mailed to valid Clark County addresses. The test strips, which include easy-to-follow instructions, can detect fentanyl and xylazine in a substance. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is 80 to 100 times stronger than morphine. Xylazine, also called “tranq” or “tranq dope,” is a non-opioid animal sedative or tranquilizer that is not approved for use in people. People interested in requesting test strips can contact the Health District for information and training at www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org/programs/join-the-strip-club/.

In 2023, there were 692 drug overdose deaths reported among Clark County residents, with opioids (both prescription and illicit) accounting for 68.1% of these deaths. From 2020 to 2023, drug overdose deaths in the county increased 23.6%, and opioid-related deaths rose by 23.9% during the same period. The highest opioid death rate in the county was in the 89101 ZIP code, with 69.91 deaths per 100,000 residents.

Fentanyl remains a significant public health concern in Southern Nevada, driving the increase in opioid-related deaths. From 2020 to 2023, fentanyl-related deaths in Clark County increased 92.7%.

COVID-19 and Flu Vaccine Clinics

Updated 2024-2025 flu and COVID-19 vaccinations are now available at Southern Nevada Health District clinics. The Health District is reminding the public the vaccines can be administered at the same time and recommending everyone eligible get their updated vaccines to protect against more serious illness from COVID-19 and flu this upcoming respiratory season.

Flu Vaccine Recommendations

The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. It is especially important for those at higher risk of developing serious complications from the flu. This includes people 65 years of age and older, as well as people with underlying medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, lung disease and compromised immune systems. It is also important to protect people more likely to be exposed to both flu and COVID-19, including health care workers and essential workers who interact frequently with the public. A complete list of people at higher risk is available on the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/index.htm.

There were 88 deaths, and 1,403 hospitalizations attributed to influenza in Clark County during the 2023-2024 season, far more than the 2022-2023 flu season, which recorded 48 deaths and 859 hospitalizations. During the 2023-2024 season, 47.8% of the flu hospitalizations and 79.5% of the deaths were persons 65 years of age or older. Flu surveillance in Clark County for the 2024-2025 influenza season begins September 29 and runs through May 17. The weekly Influenza Surveillance Snapshot and Influenza Report by Age Group will be available on SNHD's [website](#) beginning in October.

The Centers for Disease Control and Protection (CDC) recommends getting vaccinated before flu viruses begin spreading in the community, because it takes about two weeks after vaccination for the antibodies to develop and provide protection against the flu. However, people can be vaccinated anytime during flu season. People should follow the recommended schedule for all vaccines and refer to current guidelines from the [CDC](#) and the [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices](#).

COVID-19 Vaccine Recommendations

Everyone 6 months of age and older should get at least one dose of an updated COVID-19 vaccine. The two mRNA vaccines, Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech, have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration. The updated vaccines are expected to work well against currently circulating variants of COVID-19.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is always changing, and protection from COVID-19 vaccines declines over time. Updated vaccines provide the best protection from the strains of the virus that are currently circulating. For information about staying on track with vaccines, visit [Staying Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines | COVID-19 | CDC](#).

The COVID-19 and flu vaccines are covered by most health plans, including private insurance, Medicare plans and Medicaid plans. Uninsured children and uninsured adults also have access through the [Vaccines for Children Program](#) and State 317 Adult Vaccine Program, respectively. Flu and COVID-19 vaccines are available at Health District public health centers by appointment. To make an appointment go to www.snhd.info/immunizations or call (702) 759-0850. Clinic locations include:

- Main Public Health Center, 280 S. Decatur Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89107
- East Las Vegas Public Health Center, 2950 E. Bonanza Rd., Las Vegas, NV 89107
- Fremont Public Health Center, 2830 E. Fremont St., Las Vegas, NV 89104
- Boulevard Mall (in El Mercado), 3528 S. Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, NV 89169
- Henderson Public Health Center, 220 E. Horizon Dr., Suites, A & C, Henderson, NV 89015
- Mesquite Public Health Center/Jimmie Hughes Campus, 150 N. Yucca St., Suites, 3&4, Mesquite, NV 89027

For more information about Health District public health center hours, locations and available services, go to www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org/about-us/maps/. COVID-19 and flu vaccines are also available at pharmacies and health care provider offices throughout Southern Nevada. To locate a COVID-19 vaccine clinic, visit [COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution – Southern Nevada Health District | COVID-19](#).

The Health District also recommends preventive measures to help people mitigate the spread of flu, COVID and other respiratory viruses:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and running water. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Stay home when sick and limit contact with others.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Throw the tissue away after using it.
- Take a COVID-19 test if flu-like symptoms develop.
- Take antiviral drugs for flu if prescribed by a doctor.

For more information about respiratory illnesses, visit [Respiratory Illnesses | CDC](#).

National Gay Men’s HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

On September 27, National Gay Men’s HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, the Southern Nevada Health District highlighted the ongoing and disproportionate impact of HIV on gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men. They emphasized efforts to end the HIV epidemic through expanded testing, prevention, treatment, and the reduction of stigma.

In 2021, an estimated 32,100 new HIV infections were reported in the United States. Clark County reported 488 new HIV diagnoses in 2022; of those, 243 were associated with male-to-male sexual contact. Approximately 1.2 million people in the U.S. have HIV, and about 13% of them are unaware of their status. From 2015 to 2019, the number of new HIV infections among gay and bisexual men in the U.S. decreased from an estimated 26,900 to 24,500. However, gay and bisexual men accounted for 67% of new HIV diagnoses in 2021.

Disparities persist among Black and African American and Hispanic or Latino gay and bisexual men, who receive more new HIV diagnoses than those of other racial and ethnic groups. Young men aged 13 – 24 with HIV are more likely to be unaware of their HIV status than men of different age groups.

HIV testing is readily available in Southern Nevada:

- The Health District offers express testing at no cost from 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m., Monday through Thursday at its Main Public Health Center, 280 S. Decatur Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89107.

- No-cost testing is available at the Fremont Public Health Center, 2830 E. Fremont St., Las Vegas, NV 89104, from 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. each Friday. No appointments are needed, but clients must be asymptomatic.
- HIV testing is available at no cost in the Arleen Cooper Community Health Center at The Center, 401 S. Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, NV 89101. Hours are 9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. Monday – Thursday and 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. Appointments are preferred, but walk-ins are accepted.
- The Health District’s Collect2Protect program offers free at-home HIV tests, giving people a convenient and private option for testing. The kits can be requested through the [Collect2Protect](#) page.

Same-day HIV testing and treatment services are also available in the Southern Nevada Community Health Center, 280 S. Decatur Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89107. HIV services include testing, medical, behavioral health, nutrition, case management, pharmaceutical, and educational services, including PEP and PrEP navigation and treatment for those who test negative. Services are offered for insured and uninsured patients. Sliding fee scale discounts are available to all self-pay patients who qualify.

Community Meetings

Week ending 09/29:

Monthly:

- Participated in the Southern Nevada District Board of Health meeting
- Participated in the District Health Officer (DHO) Succession & Planning Committee meeting

Annually:

- Participated in the annual required meeting with representatives from Forvis Mazars, the Health District’s auditors

Professional Development/Conferences:

- Attended the Big Cities Health Coalition (BCHC) Fall 2024 Meeting
- Attended the Nevada Primary Care Association (NVPCA) Annual Healthcare Conference
- Attended the “Misuse and Abuse of Controlled Substances; Prescribing of Opioids” webinar facilitated by the Clark County Medical Society

Week ending 09/22:

N/A

Week ending 09/15:

Monthly:

- Attended the Big Cities Health Coalition (BCHC) Monthly Member Call

Media/Interviews/Panelist/Presenter/Events:

- Facilitated the New Board of Health Member Orientation for Dr. Brian Labus and Dr. Susan VanBeuge
- Attended the Hispanic Heritage Kickoff Celebration

Professional Development/Conferences:

- Attended the in-house Leadership and Development training facilitated by FutureSync

Ad-hoc Meetings:

- Participated in a meeting with Ryan Falk, medical student, regarding potential research in evaluating immunization programs
- Participated in the meeting with members of the Health District and Melissa Jones, Executive Director with Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative (BARHII)

Week ending 09/08:

Quarterly:

- Attended the State Board of Health meeting

Media/Interviews/Panelist/Presenter/Events:

- Attended the Southern Nevada Health District Sexual Health Education & Testing Fair

Ad-hoc Meetings:

- Participated in the Joint Meeting of the Clark County Board of Commissioners and the Southern Nevada Health District