



# **Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Local Perspective**

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# Disclaimer

**The findings and conclusions in this presentation are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.**

# What went well from the local perspective?

- Improved strategies to communicate rapidly changing science
  - CDC science briefs summarizing the literature on key topics
  - CDC summaries of guidance changes to state and local health depts
  - Identifying experts to summarize literature relevant to the response
- Improved strategies for policy makers in the federal government to understand the local perspective
  - Calls with CDC to incorporate state and local input prior to releasing guidance
  - Giving state and locals a “heads up” before releasing new guidance

# Effective strategies identified to decrease disease spread without shutting down

- Masks and mask requirements
- School mitigation strategies, e.g.,
  - Masks
  - Cohorting
  - Increased ventilation
  - Distance
- Business mitigation strategies, e.g., takeout, distance, mask and vaccine requirements

# The CDC Public Health Infrastructure Grant (PHIG)

- Public health needs to have infrastructure in place BEFORE the emergency hits to effectively respond to any threat
- Flexible funding to support critical infrastructure to enable response to local threats is the key to emergency preparedness
- Maricopa County had > 30 consecutive days of temperatures over 110 °F leading to 645 heat related deaths in 2023
- We created a Climate and Health Program with a Heat Relief Coordinator using PHIG funds for this unique local issue



# Opportunities from a local perspective

# Opportunities: Contact tracing

- Contact tracing plays a critical role early in an outbreak/pandemic
- Effectiveness of contact tracing is related to public trust in government and regulatory powers of public health
- Contact tracing thousands of cases per day comes with an opportunity cost and leads to burnout of local public health
- Contact tracing can be automated to preserve resources
- Other population-level strategies to mitigate community-wide disease spread, like mask requirements that use fewer resources and preserve the public health workforce, were more effective in Maricopa county

# Jurisdictional changes during a state of emergency

- State of emergency declaration leads to jurisdictional changes
  - Local public health is not always included in decision making
  - Less opportunities to tailor the response to the local level
  - Resources did not always accompany activities delegated to locals
  - Challenges supporting different local jurisdictional needs with uniform guidance, particularly when they vary broadly



# Opportunities: Communications

## Lessons learned

- Prepare the public for changing information and science: what we know now might be wrong tomorrow
- Provide states and locals an opportunity to review and understand guidance before it is rolled out in the media
  - Having unified messages improves public trust
  - Provides guidance authors a chance to fill in unforeseen gaps
  - Improves the relationships between local, state and federal entities



# Thank You

I want to thank the  
Maricopa County Board of  
Supervisors and CDC for  
their support during this  
challenging response