



August 11 PM - Jran Email

Dear Jran Community:

Today, we will look at improved metrics to track Houston's ability to combat COVID19, resources for Jewish communal professionals, how you can help on election day, and the difference between a hurricane warning and watch.

### **COVID19**

Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo is reporting 631 new cases of COVID19 and 12 fatalities, outside the City of Houston. Mayor Sylvester Turner is reporting 311 new cases and 8 fatalities. The Harris County COVID19 Level is still at "[1 – Severe, Stay Home – Work Safe.](#)" The good news is that, inside the City of Houston, we are seeing a decrease in new cases and we are inching closer to the 200-300 new cases per day that Mayor Turner would like to see before school starts. Now, let's turn to the charts.

We are seeing a leveling off of new cases per day no matter what chart you use. The Harris County Public Health/Houston Health Department cases by day appear to [be slightly on the decline](#). The Epi Curve, which measures cases by date of onset (as opposed to date of reporting to the health department) suggests that the City of Houston might have reached its peak back on July 1<sup>st</sup>. The caveat when looking at the Epi Curve is that cases may not have been reported yet and could retroactively shift the curve if there is a large release of backlogged cases.

The Texas Medical Center (TMC) has added [three new charts](#) to its COVID19 update page to reflect better data used in tracking trends. Those charts are the effective reproduction rate (rate at which one person infects "x" number of people), daily new cases, and test positivity rates (how many people test positive of all the tests that were administered). Looking at the [reproduction rate \("R\(t\)"\)](#) is important because this number tells us the story of community spread. If the reproduction rate is over 1.0, that shows that community spread is still prevalent. Today, TMC is reporting a R(t) value of 0.9. Last week it was 1.05. We need to maintain today's rate for 14-days before we can declare control over the spread of COVID19.

Both the Mayor and County Judge have been talking about the importance of bringing down daily new cases to 200-300 per day. When cases are in this range, contact tracers are better able to trace and isolate new cases. Today, [TMC is reporting 1,307 new cases per day](#) (this is

the 9-county region of all TMC institutions, so the number will be different than the public health numbers above). The good news is that last week TMC reported 1,992 new cases per day, so we are heading in the right direction.

Finally, the [test positivity rate](#) is a key metric in tracking how well we are doing combating COVID19 because it shows us whether the virus is spreading (via a high positivity rate) or declining (low positivity rate). Public health officials would like to see our area at 5% positivity rate before further re-openings. TMC is reporting 10.5% today, which is the same as last week.

Officials are encouraging [everyone to get tested](#), including children who are planning to go back to in-person instruction this fall. Officials anticipate that [cases will rise as schools reopen](#), the nature of opening during a pandemic. Our schools are doing the best they can to mitigate the spread by [purchasing PPE](#), reconfiguring classrooms, and training staff on disinfecting procedures. We each can do our part by encouraging children over age 2 to wear a mask whenever they are near others and show kids how to properly wash their hands. We must also be mindful that what we do outside of the school building can have implications inside the building, so it is still necessary to practice social distancing and mask wearing everywhere we go.

Doctors are encouraging parents to ensure their children are current on their vaccinations before in-person school begins in order to prevent outbreaks of other diseases outside of COVID19. Harris Public Health is offering free childhood vaccines for those aged 0-18 and either with no insurance or eligible for Medicaid/CHIP assistance. This program will begin on August 17<sup>th</sup> from 1 pm – 6 pm at the Hockley Community Center in Hockley, TX. You must call 832-927-7350 to book an appointment.

The Jewish Federations of North America have teamed up with the JPRO Network to provide Jewish communal professionals with financial help, emotional support, and career enhancement programs. The [new initiative, RISE, seeks to help](#) those out of work in a way that provides wraparound support beyond government run programs. The City of Houston has opened free [Financial Empowerment Centers](#) to provide professional financial counseling to anyone in Houston.

Harris County Clerk Chris Hollins is looking for [election workers](#) and polling sites for the November 3<sup>rd</sup> election (just the one day!). As schools attempt to control the number of people entering their doors, the County Clerk would like to have as many alternate sites set up for easy access and social distancing. If you would like more information on how your organization can become a polling center, please email me at [jfisherman@houstonjewish.org](mailto:jfisherman@houstonjewish.org). This is free and Harris County will provide all equipment, PPE, and poll workers.

Governor Greg Abbott announced [extended early voting for the November 3<sup>rd</sup> Presidential election](#). In-person early voting will begin on October 13<sup>th</sup> and run through October 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **Hurricane Season 2020**

We are keeping our eye on a development in the Atlantic, Invest 95L. Meteorologists are predicting a 90% chance this will turn into a storm but it is far too early to tell when and where it will head.

As we make our way into hurricane season, we need to be mindful of the terminology used with major storms. Today, we will look at [hurricane watch vs hurricane warning](#). A hurricane watch is when conditions are possible for a major storm. It is typically issued 48 hours before the anticipated onset of tropical-storm-force winds. This is the time to prepare your home, have your kit ready, and plan your evacuation.

A hurricane warning is when hurricane conditions are expected within a specified area. This is issued 36 hours before the anticipated onset of the storm. This is when you can evacuate or should have all your stay-in-place preparations complete.

### **In Other News...(ear buds in, volume up!)**

Popular Israeli group, Koolulam, has found a way to continue their mass singing concerts during COVID19. The group's goal is to create a social-musical movement to help strengthen collective understanding, which can prove challenging in times when singing is discouraged for its ability to spread COVID19 and social distancing is encouraged. Using cell phone videos from across the world, Koolulam covered Cold Play's "[Fix You](#)."

Take care today and remember that, even apart, we are all in this together,

Jackie

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