



*Williamson County
Commissioner
Terry Cook*

N E W S L E T T E R

July 2021 Volume 5 Issue 7

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The Message



COVID-19 - The Delta Days

Yep Yogi, it's déjà vu all over again – or is it?

1. The onset of symptoms has dropped from 6-10 days to 4 days.
2. The symptoms with the Delta variant don't include loss of taste nor smell but are more cold-like (sneaky).
3. The virus load in the nasal passages of this variant is far higher in infected people (please don't pull masks down to be just over your mouth!).
4. The Delta variant is 64% more transmissible than the 2020 variants.
5. Infections with the Delta variant are 80% more likely to send a person to the hospital.
6. Delta is the dominant variant in the US just as anticipated.
7. It aggressively finds the unvaccinated people.
8. Outbreaks tend to last 10-12 weeks as virus burns through the primarily unvaccinated population.
9. Has hit hard in the eastern and northern sections of Wilco where the vaccination rates are the lowest.
10. Majority of those in ICU are 20 – 60year-olds, those who procrastinated or resisted being vaccinated.
11. Available ICU beds are the lowest in central Texas since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in 2020.
12. Vaccinated people can become infected, have milder symptoms, but can transmit it to others.

So what's a variant? Viruses mutate all the time. Those with major impacts such as being more deadly, or having different, significant impacts on a host (in this case, us), are declared variants and the World Health Organization names the variants using Greek letters. Delta will probably not be the last mutation that is declared a variant of the COVID-19 virus unless we collectively can get its occurrence down to the green phase throughout the world.

We have been in the red phase, uncontrolled spread, since July 19. The data below is why.

Dates	New Cases	Incidence Rate/100k	Deaths	Hospitalization Rate %	Phase	% Eligible Population Vaccinated	% Total Population Vaccinated	Notes	
6/21 - 6/27	91		1		Yellow Orange Red				
6/28 - 7/4	126	3.07	0						
7/5 - 7/11	253	6.17	0	2.47				rates doubled 1 wk after holiday	
7/13	101	7.86	1					WCCHD resumes reporting daily	
7/14	50	8.47	0						
7/15	82	9.81	0						
7/16	57	10.47	0						
7/19	306	14.54	2	4.65				incidence up 6.5X since end of June, mostly 18-30 year olds	
7/20	42	13.11	0						
7/21	97	14.25	0						
7/22	209	17.35	1						
7/23	122	18.94	1						
7/26	466	22.84	1						
7/27	156	22.84	1						
7/28	313	30.90	1				61.22%	51.13%	not close to herd immunity
7/29	229	31.38	2				61.32%	51.21%	

A reminder of the criteria for the COVID-19 Phases:

WCCHD COVID-19 PHASED GATING STAGES

DECREASING TRANSMISSION RATE				
	GREEN MINIMAL COMMUNITY SPREAD	YELLOW MODERATE COMMUNITY SPREAD	ORANGE HIGH COMMUNITY SPREAD	RED UNCONTROLLED COMMUNITY SPREAD
GATING CRITERIA	INCIDENCE TREND and	Flat or decline over previous 14 days in phase, with no rebound*	Decline over previous 14 days in orange phase, with no rebound*	Decline over previous 14 days in red phase, with no rebound
	INCIDENCE RATE and	Incidence during previous 14 days stays below 1.2 per 100,000	Incidence during previous 14 days stays below 7 per 100,000	Incidence during previous 14 days stays below 12.7 per 100,000
	POSITIVITY RATE and	Testing positivity rate stays below 5% for previous 14 days	Testing positivity rate stays below 10% for previous 14 days	Testing positivity rate stays below 15% for previous 14 days
	TSA-O HOSPITAL TREND	Flat or decline over previous 14 days in yellow phase	Decline over previous 14 days in orange phase	Decline over previous 14 days in red phase
*If 5 days of consecutive increase occurs, then this jurisdiction has met the criteria for rebound until it is higher in a downward trajectory				
INCREASING TRANSMISSION RATE				
	GREEN MINIMAL COMMUNITY SPREAD	YELLOW MODERATE COMMUNITY SPREAD	ORANGE HIGH COMMUNITY SPREAD	RED UNCONTROLLED COMMUNITY SPREAD
GATING CRITERIA	INCIDENCE TREND and	No increase over previous 7 days	Increase over previous 7 days while in green phase	Increase over previous 7 days while in orange phase
	TSA-O HOSPITAL TREND	No increase over previous 7 days	Increase over previous 7 days while in green phase	Increase over previous 7 days while in orange phase

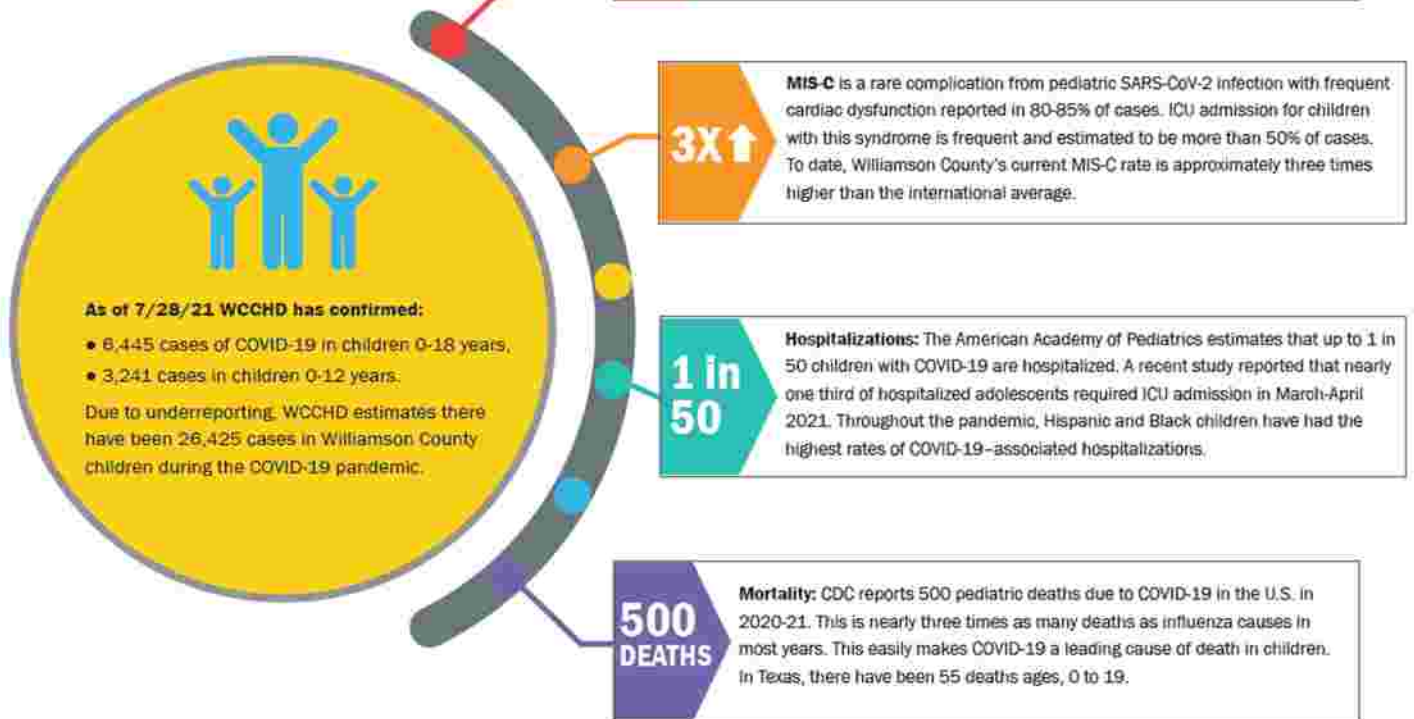
Our governor has dug in his heels about mask-wearing and social distancing requirements. Clearly half of those eligible, but not vaccinated, are in public without masks. We know that the vaccinations, masks and social distancing proved their worth in minimizing any flu this year and with slowing the spread of the virus prior to the Delta variant. Common sense has not been equitably distributed and sometimes edicts are necessary.

We know those of us fully vaccinated can both become infected with the Delta variant and transmit the disease to others. We also know the cases reported for these vaccinated persons have been mild – yay.

So what about schools opening up. Apparently an ISD can request mask wearing but can't mandate it. If you have a child complaining about the masks being uncomfortable (as many with the ear loops are) – try other styles. My most comfortable ones are the ones I sewed using the Covid Rangers pattern, <https://covidrangers.com/assembly/one-stop-shop/>. I modified the pattern for a smaller face and to fit higher on the bridge of my nose. Use 200 thread-count fabric or higher. It ties at the crown of your head to keep it from dropping as you talk.

What do we know about kids and COVID-19?

Children and COVID-19



* Data Sources can be found in the whitepaper "Children and COVID-19" at www.wcchd.org/COVID-19

Williamson and County and Cities Health District
www.wcchd.org/COVID-19



Our anxiety is lower with this pandemic now because we know how it's spread and how to lower its spread. If everyone could get fully vaccinated if eligible, wear masks anytime you are around others, continue with frequent handwashing, and avoid crowds (sigh), we can beat this disease.

One more note, many people reacted to their vaccinations – some with first shot, some with second. There are three reactions. I got explanations from Dr. Caroline Hilbert of our Williamson County and Cities Health District.

Mild Allergic Reaction: An allergic reaction would include immediate symptoms like hives, rash, itchiness, vomiting, but also something as mild as tingling and itchiness of the mouth and throat.

Severe Allergic Reaction: A severe allergic reaction would be full-on anaphylaxis – difficulty breathing, swelling of tongue and throat, difficulty talking, etc. This is when you, or someone, call **911**.

Strong Immune Response: A strong immune response to the vaccine is the flu-like symptoms so many of us felt hours after receiving the second dose.

Be careful out there.

School District Student Start Dates

August 11 Bartlett ISD

August 12 Florence and Leander ISDs

August 17 Austin and Hutto ISDs

August 18 Coupland, Jarrell, Round Rock, Taylor ISDs

August 19 Georgetown and Liberty Hill ISDs

TRAFFIC LIGHTS!!!

O'Connor

Supply chain disruptions still hitting this project. Ugh! Also, this office just found out that we are dealing with two different power companies in providing the electricity to these traffic lights– Oncor and Pedernales Electric Cooperative and power line for one corner of Liberty Walk is not where documented.

Pedestrian signals at all three intersections are being installed. Make sure you look for an additional temporary stop sign in the westbound O'Connor median and additional stop ahead signs in all directions at the Liberty Walk intersection!

Sam Bass Rd.

The contractor received the signal head assemblies for the protected left turn lane from Sam Bass at Great Oaks . It is anticipated that that installation will begin during the first week of August.



Williamson County JP 3 Earns National Achievement Award for Financial Literacy Program



The Williamson County Justice of the Peace Precinct 3 Financial Literacy Program has been recognized with an Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo). The awards honor innovative, effective county government programs that strengthen services for residents.

NACo recognized the Financial Literacy Program for a 2021 Achievement Award in the category of Criminal Justice and Public Safety. The Financial Literacy Program is a program designed to allow driving offenders – those who received citations for No Driver's License, Driving While License Invalid and No Insurance – the option to enroll in a financial education class in lieu of paying fines.

Congratulations Judge McLean!!!



IN COMMISSIONERS COURT

The Texas Historical Commission received 175 annual reports for the 2020 year of service from county historical commissions (CHCs) across the state. 84 of those CHCs were approved for a Distinguished Service Award, and the Williamson County Historical Commission was awarded one! This is quite the accomplishment given the challenging year last year.



Congratulations to Eloise Brackenridge, Chair of the Williamson County Historical Commission, and the rest of the commissioners for a job well done!



On July 24, LifeSteps, in conjunction with Rock Springs Hospital, sponsored a free and fun event called Family Summerfest, where families came out for food and games. Kelly McCaffrey, LifeSteps Executive Director, came to commissioners court beforehand to invite everyone to attend.

Youth ages 7-15 are at a unique and formative time. They are experiencing multiple physical, emotional and social changes, including exposure to poverty, abuse, or violence, which can make adolescents vulnerable to mental health problems.

Some adolescents are at greater risk of mental health conditions due to their living conditions, stigma, discrimination or exclusion, or lack of access to quality support and services.

Adolescents with mental health conditions are in turn particularly vulnerable to social exclusion, discrimination, stigma (affecting readiness to seek help), educational difficulties, risk-taking behaviors, and poor physical health. Many risk-taking behaviors for health, such as substance use, start during adolescence. Risk-taking behaviors can be both an unhelpful strategy to cope with poor mental health and can severely impact an adolescent's mental and physical well-being.

There is an old saying that goes: families that play together, stay together. We all know that quality time with our family is paramount in building stronger relationships. Family bonding time builds confidence, teaches youth about interacting with others, and create wonderful memories that last a lifetime. Studies show that when families spend quality time together, the chance of youth getting involved in dangerous activities drops dramatically. Family Summerfest will be an annual event!



Last Saturday, in the heat of the day but good, stiff breeze, Commissioner Cook attended LifeSteps Family Summerfest. Every sponsor had a game and goodies available to families to encourage playful family time and prizes, even a dunk tank where a young son was elated at dunking his dad! LifeSteps is planning to repeat this annually and fill the parking lot at Rock Springs Hospital.



Velcro Man



Attempting to walk that straight line with goggles simulating more than 2x legal blood alcohol level – yes he’s laughing at me.



Community Partners Resources:



IN THE NEWS

Williamson Co. Commissioner Cook: Emphasis on improving outcomes for those with mental illness

[Williamson County Commissioner Terry Cook: Emphasis on improving outcomes for those with mental illness \(statesman.com\)](#)

I have written about the work of our Mobile Outreach Team assisting those in mental crisis situations who now works in concert with Bluebonnet Trails Community Services for 24/7 coverage throughout the county.

I've written about the mental health work in our courts, balancing the law with an individualized approach to best suit the accused suffering from mental illness.

Soon, coming to us all will be the response "911, do you need police, fire, EMS or mental health services?" I'll write about this later this year.

Six months in, how has our sheriff's office evolved to appropriately work with those suffering from mental health challenges?

Individuals with mental illness are inordinately represented in arrests and incarcerations in our country's jails.

Mike Gleason campaigned in 2016 to be our sheriff as the candidate with a demonstrated background of compassionate mental health work both inside and outside law enforcement. Has that translated into a kinder workforce in Williamson County's patrols and jail?

Below is a letter from an inmate with mental illness to his mom that she shared with Sheriff Gleason and allowed me to share here:

ok mama heres my letter, now just sayin, idk the sheriffs name but here we go,

to the sheriff of williamson county, ... i am an inmate of the county jail and at the time of this letter i will have been here 37 days, i must give praise where it is due sir/ ma'am, this is my 2nd stay in your facility however i am extremely surprised that it has changed so much since my 1st visit. during my st stay, which was 88 days, i witnessed 18 people get tazed, not that im able to say they deserved it or not but this time im glad to say that not 1 individual has been tazed, your CO's and deputeys have more compassion and patience now and are waaaaay more understanding of mental illness, i am one of these inmates that has mental illness.

2ndly id like to bring to your attention a short list of your officers who in my opinion deserve acknowledgement and praise

1, (Corrections Officer) Radke - for being very empathetic bout my mental well being and that fact that ive been smocked out for 37 days.

2, CO Hargrove- for reminding me that im still human, for being friendly, for being kind, for being respectful too

3, Deputy Ortiz, for making sure i stay safe not just from myself but from other inmates due to my charges.

And last but in my opinion the top tier officer CO mcbeey (micbey??) for saving my life during an autistic suicidal rage, he kept a close eye on me for 4 hours, checkin in on me every 5 minutes and when i had calmed down enough to talk, had very compassionatly and kindly treated me with care and tenderness, he saved my life and i am extremely grateful for it, i know you dont hear the good things about your officers, just the bad, so i hope this reaches your heart, and notifys you that you have amazing staff here, and i know i am under safe care and watch.

I had an emotional response to this letter, typos and all. The letter represents not only the sheriff's leadership but his emphasis on training, requiring appropriate responses to inmates' needs and providing compassionate leadership by hiring Kathleen Pokluda.

Pokluda returned to the sheriff's office in 2020, bringing an extensive background in mental health work with those incarcerated. Employed for three years with the Texas Commission on Jail Standards, she traveled throughout Texas as a mental health trainer and assisted in creating the curriculum for the state-mandated course Mental Health Training for Jailers.

The course instructs jailers to appropriately deal with inmates experiencing mental illness, mental impairments and intellectual developmental disabilities – whew! What a difference she is making.

As for patrol, while the previous administration decimated the Crisis Intervention Team, this sheriff rebuilt that important group of 10 officers who responds to mental health calls, along with other professionals in the field, around-the-clock.

The absence of this CIT team for four years was an experiment in self-sufficiency of local forces. Now, besides the county's and Bluebonnet's mobile teams, our residents with mental health crises have another critical countywide resource.

I sponsored and took the free Adult Mental Health First Aid training a few years ago at the Jester Annex, now offered by Bluebonnet Trails Community Services. I always remember the statement, "1-in-5 people experience mental illness." As you sit at a soccer match, T-ball game or church this summer, look around you: 1-in-5.

Visit tinyurl.com/yb9pkdrc or email mh.fa@bbtrails.org to sponsor or take the training.

It's well worth your time.



Where is Commissioner Cook?

Rattan Creek Neighborhood Parade

On Sunday, July 4th, Commissioner Cook joined in the Rattan Creek parade that weaved through the neighborhood. Our intrepid Constable 1 officers and a representative from the Sheriff's Department both lead the parade and managed traffic flow throughout the event. Neighbors gathered in front yards, some with brunch laid out to cheer us on. The rain held until we were 75% thru the route, then cleared in time to remove our decorations! YAY for umbrellas!



Walking the parade route on bridge over Brushy Creek - parade route over one mile long with many, MANY float entries. Not a scorcher as years in the past. Great celebration.

Round Rock Parade on July 3



ROAD UPDATES

620 at Railroad/Chisholm Trail (TxDOT with primary contractor Bridges and Roads LLC)– Column forms for the overpass continue to be set, and drill shafts have been completed. Wall panels are being erected. The area changes frequently, so please be alert as you drive through there.. Go [HERE](#) to learn more. Estimated completion date is summer 2022.

Great Oaks Bridge at Brushy Creek Rd. (Contract has been awarded! Contractor: DeNucci Constructors LLC)– As usual, we are still waiting on utility relocations, as Charter and Grande are now saying that they will move their lines by end of August. I guess we'll see. Construction anticipated to begin September 2021!!! Estimated cost is \$11.2M. Learn more [HERE](#).

Brushy Creek Rd. Safety Improvements (Contractor: DeNucci Constructors LLC)– Learn more about this project at this [website](#). Paving and striping are done. Anti-graffiti coating to the front face of the retaining wall across from Brushy Creek pool has been applied. By the way, the parking lot is accessible. Guard fence and guardrail continue to be installed. This is a 100% county job with estimated cost of \$4M.

Hairy Man Rd. (Contractor: DeNucci Constructors LLC)– Road closure (during weekdays 6:00AM—5:30PM) began during the week on June 16 and has been extended to August 13., hope to be largely done just in time for RRISD to begin on August 18. Drainage work continues, and asphalt and curbing are being laid. Substantial completion is anticipated in early 2022. This widening project is part of the Brushy Creek Safety Improvements.

Pond Springs Road Area Drainage Improvements– This is a regional drainage management project where county wants to share drainage pond with Austin and TxDOT—so much review is necessary. 60% complete design plans for the project are under development and will be submitted to TxDOT next month and to City of Austin for their review process. Construction slated to begin late 2022. County project with estimated cost of \$4.17M.

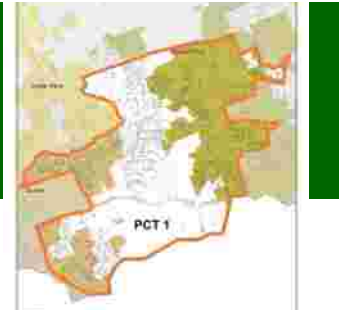
Forest North Drainage Improvements Phase III (Contractor: DeNucci Constructors LLC) – Storm sewer pipes and lines continue to be installed, and hopefully with our break in the rain, this project will move forward more quickly. This is a county job with an estimated cost of \$4.8M. Substantial completion is still anticipated in early 2022.

University Blvd. widening from IH-35 to just east of Sunrise Rd. (Contractor: DeNucci Constructors LLC)– *Stay off University if you possibly can!!!* Storm sewer work on westbound and placing of sidewalk and curb and gutter on eastbound is happening. At the east end of the project around Sunrise Rd the traffic lanes have been restored much to the relief of all. This is a City of Round Rock project for which the county has contributed \$5M. Project is slated to finish in early 2022.

Wyoming Springs @ Smyers Lane—A left turning lane is planned in the median for turns into Walgreens per original City of Round Rock plans. However, now that so much commercial development has occurred between Smyers Lane and RM 620 the dynamics of traffic flow has changed. More vehicles are using Smyers Lane however that intersection is too close to RM 620 to introduce traffic signals. Driving defensively is the actual (and free) solution to the increased safety threat. Eliminating much of the intersection traffic crossing Wyoming Springs Drive from Smyers Lane is one approach to make this intersection safer. Options are being planned and will be presented to both Arbor Place HOA and Fern Bluff MUD residents. As for now, we wait.



The Mission, Vision, and Value Statements of the Williamson County Commissioner Precinct 1 Office



MISSION

To lead pro-actively on the Williamson County Commissioners Court while advocating for the constituents of Precinct 1 and the county at-large from a foundation of collaboration and respect.

VISION

To transform Williamson County government into a more accessible, responsive, transparent, and well-managed organization for our residents, so that we become the community recognized as the best in Central Texas to live and enjoy.

VALUES

Accountability, commitment, integrity, and respect form the values that guide the Williamson County Commissioner Precinct 1 office.

CONTACT US!

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SEE US ONLINE!!!

Williamson County's Website! - www.wilco.org

Our office's web site- [Terry Cook, Commissioner Pct 1](#)

Non-Emergency Phone Numbers

Austin Fire Department
512-974-0130

County Judge Bill Gravell
512-943-1550

Jollyville Fire Department (ESD 1)
512-258-1038

Round Rock Fire Department (ESD 9)
512-218-5590

Sam Bass Fire Department (ESD 2)
512-255-0100

Williamson Central Appraisal District
512-930-3787

Williamson County Landfill
512-759-8881

Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter
512-943-3322

Williamson County Sheriff's Office
512-864-8282

Want to know even more
about what's happening in
Williamson County?

Sign up for the WILCOunty
Line E-newsletter! Click
[here](#) to sign up!

Commissioner Cook
keeps meeting with many
MUD Boards and HOAs.
To invite her to your
meeting, contact Doris at
doris.sanchez@wilco.org

In case of
Emergency
DIAL 911