COVID19 PR 2020-08-10 Statewide Data System Error

PRESS RELEASE
Statewide Data System Error in COVID-19 Reporting System Causes
Uncertainty for San Benito County

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San Benito County, California-late last week, it was revealed a state-wide data system error led to the underreporting of COVID-19 test results. This problem was estimated to have caused hundreds of thousands of health records in California to go unprocessed therefore impacting the California Reportable Disease Information Exchange (CalREDIE). All California counties rely on the CalREDIE system when updating local data dashboards, including San Benito County. State officials report that the software problem has been corrected and all backlogged cases should be entered by the end of this week.

"While we are not sure the effect this will have on San Benito County as total number of reported cases are still unknown, it's clear that on a larger scale, somewhere between 250,000 and 300,000 health records, which included tests for the novel coronavirus, went backlogged because of the technological problem," stated San Benito County Interim Health Officer Dr. David Ghilarducci.

"We have been encouraged by a recent slowing rate of new cases, but we have yet to determine the impact of this backlog on our numbers," states Public Health Deputy Director Lynn Mello.
"The State data system failed and that failure led to inaccurate case numbers and case positivity rates," she added.

California State Health and Human Services Agency Secretary, Dr. Mark Ghaly said Friday, "no counties have been taken off or added to the monitoring list since last Friday, because the state paused changes to the list in order to make sure its data was accurate before moving forward." San Benito County has been on the monitoring list since July 7, 2020.

"We apologize," Ghaly added in closing, emphasizing how the state's antiquated data records system has failed the people and made containing this "uncontainable" disease even harder. [The people of California] deserve better, the governor demands better of us, and we are committed to doing better."

To address the data system error the state is putting into place new protocols and notifications when any systems changes are made to CalREDIE, upgrades have been made to the servers to ensure they have extra capacity, there is now a redundant system to validate data and reports and oversight and monitoring has been strengthened so case data is complete, timely, and validated. Finally, the Governor has directed a full investigation of what happened, and they will hold people accountable.

"On the local level, we work closely with our Emergency Department and health care providers that are increasing their capacity to report COVID-19 cases. It is fortunate that we are small and have built strong public health relationships allowing for work-arounds and alternate reporting strategies," said Tracey Belton, Health and Human Services Director.