



2022 PACIFIC PUBLIC HEALTH SURVEILLANCE NETWORK REGIONAL MEETING

*“PPHSN: 25 years of networking and innovation towards
health security in the Pacific”*

Nadi, Fiji, 25-27 October 2022

Guam Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS) Response to the SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond]

Presented by

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From 3/12/2020 to 9/30/2022, the Guam DPHSS and its partners conducted 596,449 COVID-19 diagnostic tests, and Guam had 58,577 COVID-19 cases and 401 COVID-19 related deaths, This was accomplished by moving from manual to automatic extraction at the Guam Public Health Laboratory, which greatly facilitated the number of tests that could be performed daily in from 29 to 133 per day in 2020 to 900 tests per day in 2021 and 1,900 test per day in 2022.

On March 15, 2020, the first three cases of COVID-19 were identified on Guam. At the time, the data systems for collection and reporting of case investigation, contact tracing, and containment information were handled on paper forms and in Excel. COVID-19 case surveillance was primarily manual or in Excel until September 2020, when case investigation data entry shifted to electronic case reporting. A CSTE Applied Epidemiology Fellow at the time of the pandemic allowed for a timely compilation of data and the ability to train people in data entry, data verification and the resultant compilation of data for the COVID-19 dashboard, Daily and then later Weekly Situation Reports.

Existing experienced staff were tapped to train contact tracers and case investigators until people could be hired from current programs: Sexually Transmitted Disease/HIV Branch, TB/Hansen's Disease (Leprosy) Branch, Epidemiology and Lab Capacity program, Immunization Program (once vaccines became available) and nurses from the Bureau of Family Services.

People with the most knowledge of isolation and quarantine (i.e. TB/Hansen's Disease Branch) were mobilized to initially lead and then train others in protocols and procedures, including people from other agencies. This allowed Guam DPHSS to do contact tracing and follow-up of cases during the initial pandemic but also allowed for an expanded, trained workforce that was able to address the surge in cases after August 2020 until the present time, as people were hired with grant monies from the CDC.

Guam's response would not be possible without our partners and funding agencies: Governor & Lt. Governor of Guam, DPHSS leadership, the Physician's Advisory Group (PAG), U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) personnel, U.S. CDC Foundation to hire personnel, the Guam Army National Guard (GUNG), and numerous public and private partners and the entire island community

Guam's COVID-19 transmission was mainly through household spread, with large multi-generational families most at-risk, and the working age population 18-49. Consistently more than one-half of COVID-19 deaths also had diabetes as one of the causes of death throughout the pandemic. Other with high COVID-19 mortality risk were elderly, and people with chronic conditions. There was proportionate mortality among Chamorros and Filipinos, yet disproportionate mortality among Pacific Islanders on Guam (mainly Micronesians from the FSM-Chuuk, Pohnpei, Yap).

To address these health disparities, a CDC funded Health Disparities Survey to address COVID-19 and other infectious diseases is being conducted: The Guam Families Coping During COVID-19 Project-A Community Health Needs Assessment of Vulnerable, High-Risk, and Hard-to-Reach (H2R) Populations for COVID-19 and Other infectious Diseases on Guam. The survey is being conducted by the DPHSS Territorial Epidemiologist/ Office of Epidemiology and Research and Survey Research Team in partnership with the Research Corporation of the University of Guam

through a Memorandum of Understanding. The current 3,040 completed surveys as of September 30, 2022 include: 2,042 household surveys (including houseless/homeless), 259 households from health clearance sites and 748 from the main COVID-19 testing site. The survey will provide information on the social determinants of health relevant for infectious and other diseases (poverty, housing status, household size as well as specific information on COVID-19 such as vaccination status, COVID-19 status).

All pandemic data and reports are available on the Guam DPHSS website:

<http://dphss.guam.gov/covid-19/>

<http://dphss.guam.gov/covid-19-jic-releases-executive-orders/>