



Building Trust for Local Public Health



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South Central Public Health District
Idaho



South Central Public Health District

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Question for the Viewers



*Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:
Public health is a highly political topic in my community.*

- A. Agree
- B. Disagree
- C. Other (please type in chat)

South Central Idaho in Context



COVID-19, Politics, and Its Consequences



Building Trust for Local Public Health





South Central Idaho in Context

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South Central Idaho (known as the Magic Valley), is an area with common geographic, economic, and cultural features.

The Magic Valley is:

- Largely rural, with a population of around 200,000 people
- Economically driven by agriculture and food processing industries
- Mostly white, with significant Hispanic population
- Politically conservative

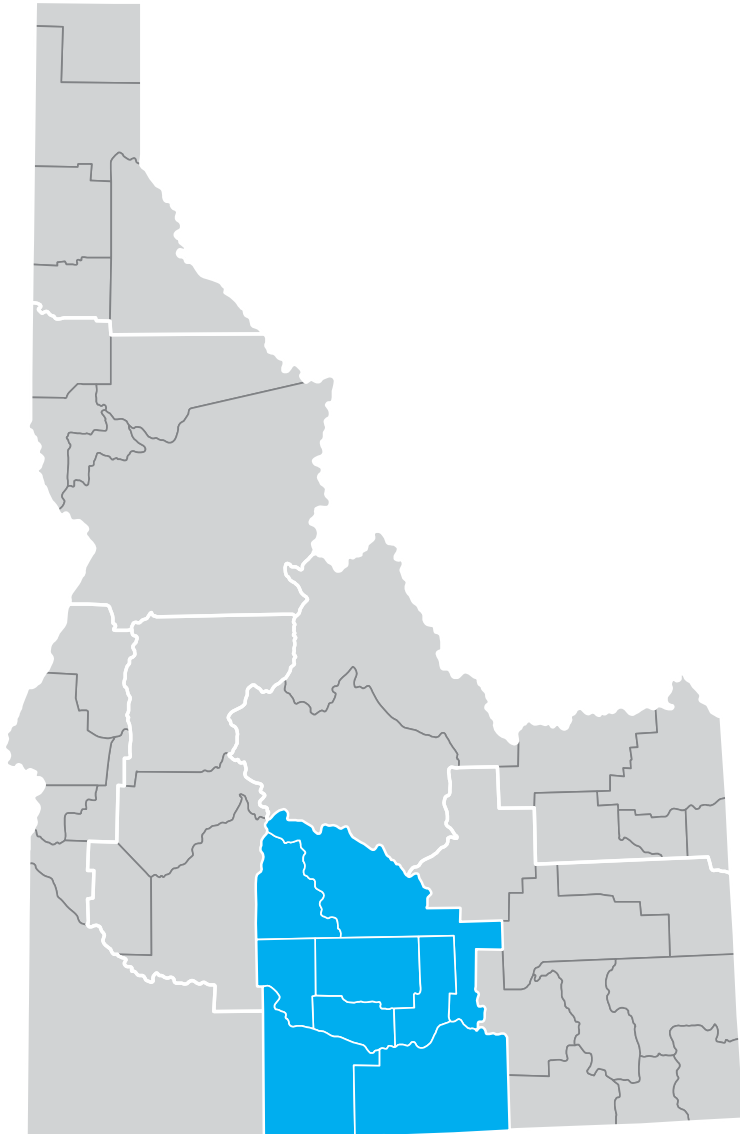


Blaine County in Focus



Blaine County, with fewer than 23,000 residents, is a popular tourist destination and home of Sun Valley

South Central Public Health District



South Central Public Health District (SCPHD or District 5) covers the 12,000 square mile South Central Idaho region.

District features include:

- 68 full-time and 32 part-time employees
- Board of Health Governance
- Incident Command Structure
- One main office, four satellite offices, and one clinic

Board of Health Governance

South Central Public Health District Board of Health Breakdown:

- Each board of county commissioners appoints a board member
- Eight board members and one medical consultant who is a physician licensed in Idaho
- Board members are either community appointees or commissioners—4 commissioners and 5 appointees
- Interest in public health and in promoting the health of the residents and public health
- Members serve five-year terms without term limit
- Majority rules



Source: South Central Public Health District: <https://phd5.idaho.gov/>

COVID-19, Politics, and Its Consequences

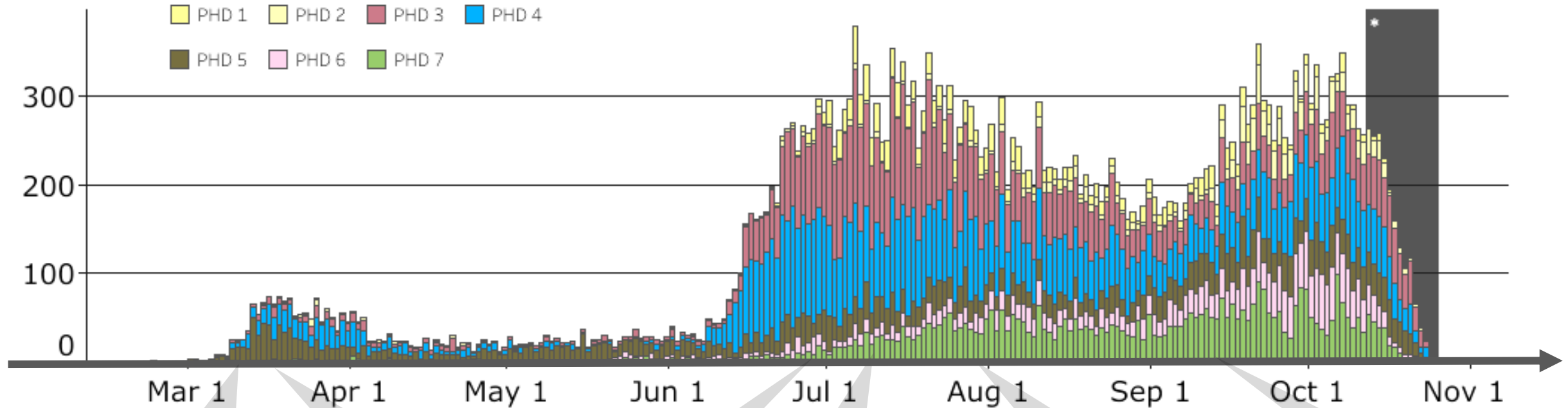


THE WORLD IS
TEMPORARILY CLOSED

COVID-19 in South Central Idaho: A Timeline

Cases by Date of Onset and Public Health District

Source: Idaho DPH COVID-19 Dashboard: <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/>



Early March

PHD5 launches information campaign, including COVID-19 resources website

Mid-March

Blaine County is site of first confirmed case in PHD5; stay-at-home order issued

Early July

Blaine County announces mask mandate

Mid-July

Public protests against mask mandate intensify

Early Aug.

Remainder of counties reject mask mandates; case rates climb; Board adopts district-wide risk level plan

Mid-Sept.

Department works with Blaine elected officials to finalize more stringent risk management plan

Heightened Emotions and the Public Response



- The COVID-19 pandemic brought out a range of emotions in South Central Idaho—namely frustration and fear of the unknown.
- Diverging views on masking emerged.
- Lack of enforcement authority and strongly-held personal views discouraged the board from making the mask mandate.

Challenges of Staff Morale



- Responsibility for investigating an increasing number of cases, leading to staff working overtime over a long period of time
- PH staff feel they are not making a difference despite their heroic efforts, leading to additional stress and burnout

Vulnerable Populations Remain Affected



The populations most affected include:

- Essential workers at food processing plants
- Hispanic population (has accounted for more than 50% of cases in half of counties)
- Long-term care residents
- Inmate population in county jails

Question for the Viewers



How would you rate your community's level of trust in local public health?

- A. High
- B. Moderate
- C. Low
- D. Other (please type in chat)



Building Trust for Local Public Health

Keeping Communication Lines Open

Magic Valley Adaptive Recovery Community Collaborative (ARCC) Members:

- Regional hospital, local Chamber, City officials, education, businesses, Hispanic community liaison, and SCPHD

Blaine County Adaptive Planning Committee Members:

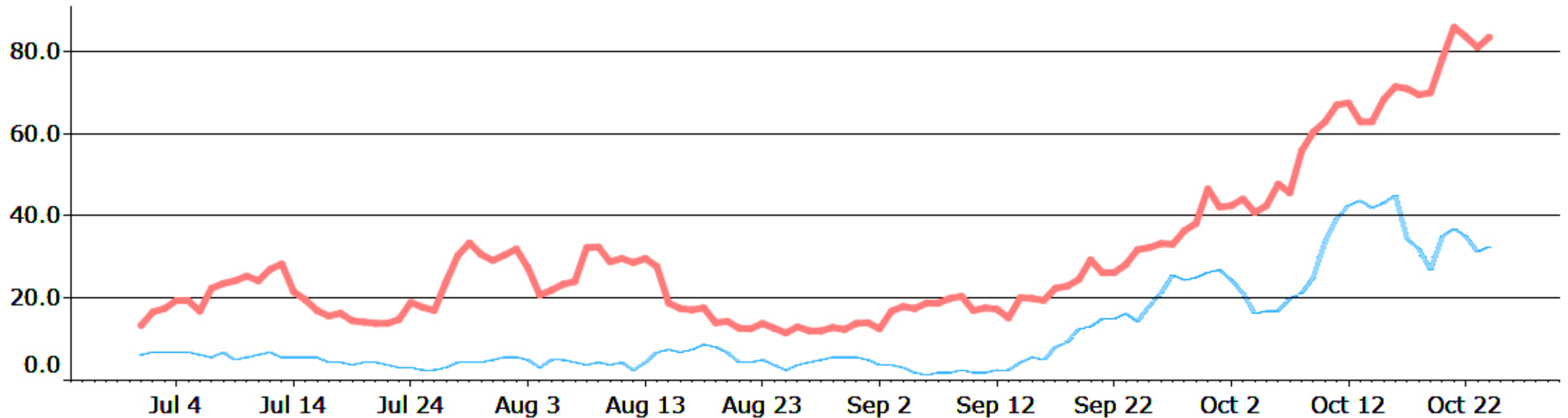
- Blaine County, local hospital, Visit Sun Valley, Blaine school district, The Hunger Coalition, and SCPHD



Frequent communication has strengthened partnerships and amplified the groups' voices.

Working Proactively in Blaine County

Blaine County's mask mandate showed proactive leadership, and helped reduce the spread of COVID-19:



Cases by County, Moving Average Incidence Rate Per 100,000 Population

— Twin Falls County

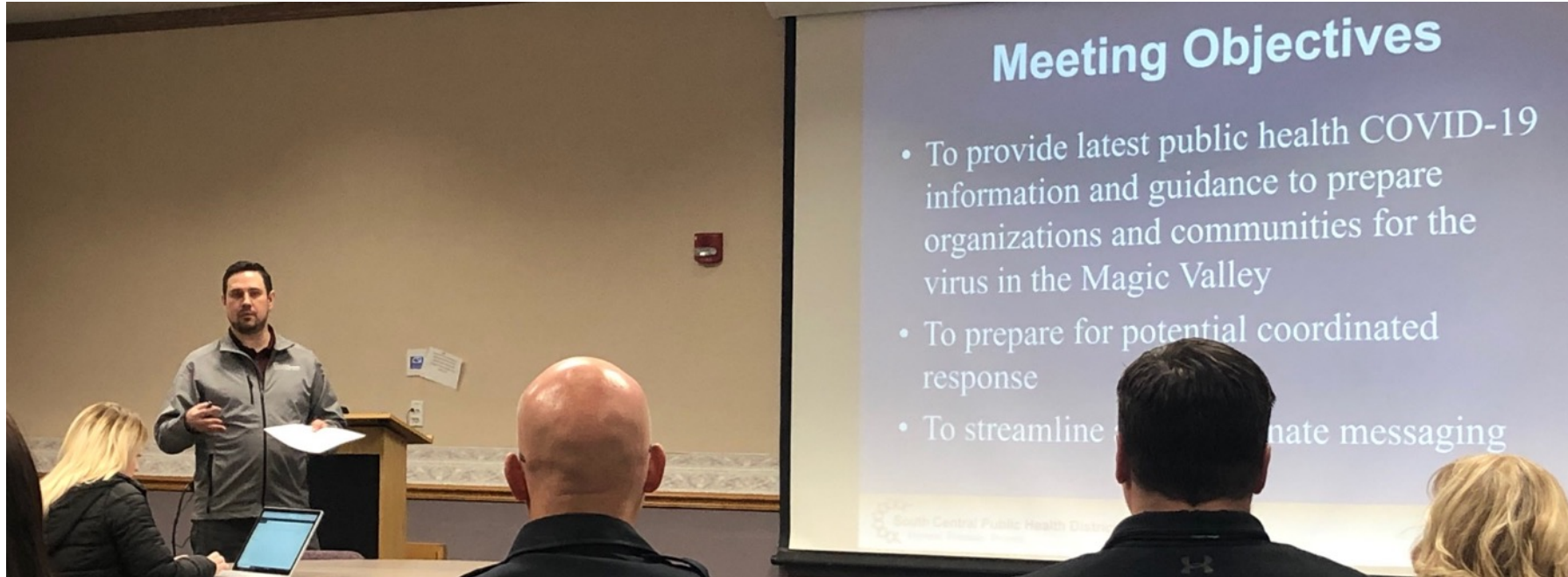
— Blaine County

Taking Care of Our Staff and Workforce

- Encourage staff to take time they need and work from home
- Ask, “how am I caring for myself as a leader?”
- Plan ahead for the reality of workforce changes



Managing Politics in Public Health



- Fear-based reactions can be managed through information and good communication
- Education of elected officials is key—clarify the role of public health and its responsibilities
- Dispel misinformation: Keep elected officials updated

Focusing on Your Community

Be transparent to your community about any key news or changes to policies—and leverage your partnerships when you do



Key Takeaways

- ✓ Communicate with your partners – continue to strengthen cross-sector partnerships, in particular
- ✓ Be proactive and lead by example
- ✓ Take care of yourself and your staff – and plan ahead
- ✓ Manage political pushback in a thoughtful, respectful way
- ✓ Engage your community continually

A Chat with Melody Bowyer



Allene Mares



Melody Bowyer

QUESTIONS?

To ask a question, please click the



icon in the Zoom toolbar to open your Q&A Pod.

deBeaumont Foundation

National Poll: More Voters Recognize Value of Local Health Departments

<https://www.debeaumont.org/news/2020/poll-more-voters-recognize-value-of-local-health-departments/>

Harvard Global Health Institute

Key Metrics for COVID Suppression

<https://globalhealth.harvard.edu/key-metrics-for-covid-suppression-researchers-and-public-health-experts-unite-to-bring-clarity-to-key-metrics-guiding-coronavirus-response/>

Herrett Center for Arts and Sciences - Forum Lecture Series

COVID-19 and Its Effects on Magic Valley

<https://herrett.csi.edu/herrettForum/index.asp>

South Central Public Health District

Coronavirus Resources

<https://phd5.idaho.gov/coronavirus/>