

## **Transcript Town Hall – COVID-19**

### **Col Aguilar:**

Good afternoon team Pete and our Cheyenne Mountain mission partners, on behalf of the 21st Space Wing commander, Col. Tom Falzarano, thank you for tuning into this COVID-19 virtual town hall. I am Col. Kirsten Aguilar, 21st Mission Support Group commander and with me is the 21st Medical Group commander, Col. Chris Vaughn.

We want to thank you for joining us today. We know this is not the typical way we'd like to speak with our community, but given the circumstances we want to take a chance to address some of your concerns. We really appreciate the questions you have provided us in advance and we will get to your questions, but I want to provide a quick overview on where we are at as far as base services, and then I'll turn it over to Col. Vaughn to give an update on medical operations.

Our goal is to provide you with as much information as we have to ensure that all in our community -- military, family members, civilians and retirees -- have the information that we have. We ask for your continued patience as things continue to evolve and as we learn more. In a moment we will provide an update on base services. Some of our base services have changed -- the hours are constantly being updated, so I suggest you stay on top of things on the 21st Space Wing webpage and follow us on Facebook, where we are putting as much information as we have in as timely of a manner as we are able to.

### **Col Aguilar:**

I'd like to provide an update on the current status of base services. In order to ensure long term support to the multiple critical missions supported here on Peterson, at Schriever and up at Cheyenne Mountain, we have temporarily closed the following programs across the base: aquatic center, bowling alley, STARBASE educational program, Airman's attic, Greenside Grill at the golf course, and the library. Unfortunately, we just re-opened our library after a long extended renovation, but due to circumstances it is temporarily closed at this time. The golf course remains open for daily play. Today might not be the best day to golf, but it looks like the weather will be getting better over the next couple days. We encourage you to get out and enjoy the warm weather and you can do that at our golf course.

Our outdoor rec program also remains open and we are still providing rental equipment for those of you who want to take advantage of outdoor leisure activities. Our aero club also remains open at this time. The Peterson fitness center remains open for military personnel only at this time. We have shifted our hours and the hours will be provided to you on our Facebook and our base webpage. The hub, the Colorado pizza and food operations in building 1 and 2 remain open with carry out service only at this time. Military and civilian personnel offices remain open, however we are accepting appointments only. We are not accepting walk ins at this time. Military and civilian personnel, legal and finance are continuing to provide services support virtually.

Our chapel programs and services are temporarily suspended through 27 Mar, however that could change, so make sure to follow us on Facebook to find out what the updated hours are for

chapel programs. Our chapel staff remains available to provide religious accommodations to you and your families.

In order to deliver mission essential care, we have consolidated our child and youth programs and are managing care out of the east CDC. All gates continue to operate on the normal schedule and our visitor control centers at both Peterson and Cheyenne Mountain remain open.

Finally, we've been working closely with AAFES and the commissary, and both remain open with some modified hours to support restocking efforts and allow dedicated shopping times for active duty military. Starting next week, the commissary will have active duty only from 0900-1000, on Tuesday – Friday. The BX will offer active duty only shopping on Monday and Wednesday from 0800-0900. Both will continue to limit the number of items individuals can purchase because those items remain in high demand. We ask all patrons for their continued patience as we know several items are in low supply, but our AAFES and commissary partners are working hard to restock their shelves. Col. Vaughn, over to you for a medical update.

**Col. Vaughn:**

Thank you Col. Aguilar. Good day team Pete, Schriever, Cheyenne Mountain and all community partners. I appreciate the opportunity to provide an update on our medical operations. The 21st Medical Group has an enrollment of approximately 23,500, and this includes service members, family members, retirees and dependents. As a part of the Colorado military health system, we are a key component of a health system that has 125,000 enrollees. We remain in close contact with our partner military treatment facilities at Fort Carson, the Air Force Academy and Buckley Air Force Base, as well as county and state health partners.

Our primary focus is to sustain health care services for our total population and with the incredible support of our installation partners and wing leaders, the 21st Medical Group is doing so. In order to do this, we have made some adjustments, such as increasing the number of virtual or telephone appointments in place of face-to-face appointments for the things that can be addressed in that manner. And just today, we have also initiated a point of testing location on Peterson. This will enhance COVID-19 sample collection for individuals who have been pre-screened based on symptoms, in conjunction with other factors such as recent travel history or close contact with an individual who is confirmed positive for COVID-19. This pre-screening is required, and we cannot take samples for individuals who do not meet these criteria.

Additionally for the medical group, medical supplies are being closely monitored and we are working closely with the defense medical supply chain for our sustainment.

Our pharmacy services remain open and in response to the increase in demand at our satellite pharmacy, which is the primary location for routine refills and new prescriptions from off-base providers, we are switching to a 48-hour turnaround for routine and new prescriptions. However, if a patient meets the medical requirement for a faster turnaround, that will be accomplished. Additionally, normal prescription refills will be adjusted to a 72-hour turnaround time.

For dental services, in order to not exhaust required supplies used during dental care, we are currently providing dental care only for service members in a class III or IV status in support of deployment requirements or in an emergency.

This is dynamic and evolving, and everyone's continued patience is not only appreciated, it helps your medical staff tremendously. It is important that the medical and public health guidance that is provided to our population be followed, and for any questions or concerns please be sure to make contact with our clinic.

**Col. Aguilar:** At this time we'd like to address some of the questions that you have provided to us in advance. We know we will not be able to answer all of your questions at this time, so please make sure you continue to provide those to us, with responding to our Facebook page or responding through our PA channels. We really do want to answer all of your questions, because we know all of our families are struggling through this together. We want to make sure we give you as much information as we have. There may be questions that we don't have the answer to, but we will take those questions and funnel those up through our leadership at Air Force and Space Force headquarters to receive additional guidance. Some of the questions we've received focus on childcare, and specifically our Child Development Center program. One question that was asked was:

**Is the CDC going to follow the school closings until April 17?**

As I mentioned, right now we have consolidated the CDC and school age program care into one facility. Base leadership has not made a decision on when we will make modifications to the CDC and Youth Center programs, but we will continue to provide mission essential care at the East CDC. If you have concerns or questions about your status or your spouse's status, as a mission-essential employee we recommend you work those through your immediate chain of command.

**Question about the fees at the CDC:** Some of you may have noticed the 15th of March your CDC fees were charged automatically. My daughter goes to the main CDC and some people have their fees paid out on the first of the month, some people have fees paid out on the 1st and 15th. Fees were automatically withdrawn on the 15th because the decision was made after the cutoff for those fees. Rest assured, during this period fees have been suspended and anyone who's already been charged will receive a credit, or you can receive a refund. What the credit will do is allow you to apply those fees to care when the CDC and School-aged program re-open for full operations. If you have questions about the CDC, we ask you submit those through our PA channels. We did send emails out to the parents of kids at the CDC explaining what was happening with fees.

Another question was about telework.

### **Will telework be authorized until schools are reopened?**

Telework is authorized at this time. Supervisors are following the guidance we received. If you have specific questions about your circumstances or your unique situation we ask you route those through your immediate supervisor.

### **Col. Vaughn: One question off the bat: Has anyone on base tested positive for COVID-19?**

At this time, no one assigned to Peterson, Schriever, nor Cheyenne Mountain has reported a positive tests for COVID-19.

### **A related question: How many possible cases waiting on test results do we have on base?**

At this time the 21st MDG itself is tracking 17 COVID-19 samples that have been sent for testing. This includes Peterson, Schriever and Cheyenne Mountain. Keep in mind, there are multiple ways a person may have a sample taken for COVID-19, which could be at a Military Treatment Facility or a civilian medical facility, and then the samples are sent to labs around the country. Because of this, data is constantly being updated as tests are sent out, and as results come back. As sample testing capacity expands, we would expect the number of pending results to correspondingly increase.

**Col. Aguilar:** A couple of questions have come up regarding military movements, specifically PCSs as we gear up for the summer PCS cycle. Both Col. Vaughn and I, along with our families are projected to PCS this summer. You may have seen on the 13th of March the Deputy Secretary of Defense issued a stop-movement order for PCSs and official travel. Currently that stop-movement order is in effect until 11 May. We don't know what is going to happen after 11 May, so our recommendation is if you are projected to PCS with a departure date after 11 May, we recommend you continue doing things you need to do to prepare yourself, your family and conduct the out-processing actions so you can PCS on time. As I mentioned, my family is projected to PCS, so what I've shared with them is that we will plan to PCS this summer and take care of the out-processing actions and the training that I need to do to PCS and we'll wait to see what the guidance is. At this time we have no further guidance for a stop-movement after 11 May.

### **The other question has come up about financial support during this PCS delay.**

For those of you who were projected to PCS before that 11 May memo, you may be experiencing some financial hardships. Some folks had already out-processed and were in TLF (temporary lodging facility), or staying in a hotel. Some of you were on leave visiting your family.

Headquarters Air Force and U.S. Space Force are working together and they've published a series of questions and answers indicating where entitlements may be authorized in accordance with the Joint Travel Regulation for service members and families impacted by the stop movement. If you were scheduled to PCS and are impacted by the stop movement order please reach out to the military personnel section to determine if your orders need to be amended. That Q&A sheet is available on our PA team's COVID-19 website.

A question about base legal services:

**Does base legal and pass/ID plan to stay open to facilitate deployment items?**

The Legal Office, the finance office, the military and civilian personnel offices are operating in a virtual status at this time. Trust assured, the legal office remains open to support mission essential operations, which includes legal assistance to active duty military members with emergency legal issues. This includes deployers who need required documents and those involved in PCS but affected by the stop-movement order. So, please, if you have legal issues make sure you make an appointment with the Legal Office.

**Col Vaughn:** Two questions about our healthcare services.

**When will the Peterson Clinic open for normal pediatric appointments and immunizations?**

Right now, the 21st Medical Group is providing all services, including immunizations. However, as we work to sustain health care delivery, we have made some adjustments. Part of this has been to switch some face-to-face appointments to virtual appointments for things that can be handled over the phone, so that someone doesn't have to come in to the clinic. And this helps to maintain social distancing. This remains a very dynamic scenario and we are doing everything possible to continue our full scope of health services, and we will continue to evaluate this in the days and weeks ahead.

Second question regarding EFMP:

**Can someone give me guidance as far as COVID-19. We have a level 4 asthmatic child. What do I do about my husband going to work?**

Per the Centers for the Disease Control, people with asthma may be at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19. If someone in your home is sick, have them stay away from the rest of the household to reduce the risk of spreading the virus in your home. Additionally, please refer to your Asthma Action Plan or update it with your primary care manager. There is no restriction on

family members in these households from going to work, but they should continue with hand hygiene and work with supervision for specific concerns.

**Col. Aguilar:** A few more questions regarding telework and social distancing.

**Most of the guidance we have received is emphasizing social distancing and telework. Other guidance is much more ‘all hands on deck’. What guidance do they follow?**

As I mentioned previously, the President of the US, through the office of personnel management, has approved telework. We know there is plenty of work to be done and there is enough to telework. However, some people – the work they do to support the mission doesn't offer an opportunity to telework. For any 21 SW personnel I will reiterate that we should look at telework where appropriate and where it works for your individual unit's mission. We have adopted an approach where some will telework, some will work from the office and split shifts to limit transmission. We are also bandwidth limited so not everyone can telework. We recommend to unit commanders and supervisors to take a good look at what is happening in your organization and what makes the most sense. If you work in an organization that relies on the network, maybe split shifts makes the most sense. If you have specific concerns please work those through your immediate supervisor and up your chain of command. Leadership is concerned with making sure our workforce is physically and mentally healthy and able to conduct their business in the most effective manner.

Another question came up about our mission partners here at Peterson and Cheyenne Mountain, specifically with the several mission partners that we support. We have two combatant commands we support here and at Cheyenne Mountain. US NORTHCOM is at the center of the COVID-19 response. One of our critical missions is support to NNC, USSF and USSPACECOM, and 52 other tenant units that operate here at Peterson and Cheyenne Mountain. In addition, we partner with Schriever Air Force Base and provide support to many services at Schriever. We are looking at all options to continue long term support for these missions which remain mission essential and we recognize that they cannot stop. Our nation truly depends on us. This means we may ask some personnel to work from Peterson to support critical security, communication, logistics, medical and many other functions key to successful mission accomplishment.

**Col. Vaughn:** Just to touch base on the aspect social distancing and telework, because that is a question we've received at the medical group pretty frequently. I fully agree with the response from Col. Aguilar, and I'd encourage every work center to look at the work that can be accomplished remotely as well as the various shift schedules that can be arranged to support that. For us at the medical group, delivering a lot of healthcare requires that on-site presence. We're largely on duty at the MTF because some of our telework options are more limited. I'd advise every work center to see what works for them that supports social distancing and those protocols while also accomplishing work.

**Col. Aguilar:** A few more questions about our civilian workforce.

**If a civilian worker has a family member at home who tested positive for COVID-19 and they work the front desk at a work center will they be permitted to continue working or will they be put on administrative leave? (Follow up: What is the public health rationale behind answer?)**

Any employee, military or civilian, who is in close contact with someone who tested positive is advised to stay home. Just like with every cold and flu season. If you aren't feeling well you need to stay home. If you have a family member who you are in direct contact with, who has tested positive, I recommend you contact our medical professionals so they can give you advice on your situation. However, in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget, administrative leave has been approved for our civilians in these circumstances. We know that every individual's circumstances are different and we recommend you work with your immediate supervisors and your chain of command.

Regarding our flex employees, we recognize many individuals who work here on the installation, at Cheyenne Mountain and at Schriever are flex employees, whether that's temporary or flex hours. The question was,

**Now that their services have been temporarily suspended, will they continue to receive pay?**

Fortunately we have been given approval for flex pay for our employees impacted by this. There is a formula that calculates how that pay works for each individual. What I recommend is our flex employees get with their supervisors and they can contact civilian personnel professionals and walk you through what that looks like. There's no set standard for our flex employees, because it's dependent on the number of hours each one of you put in. We know several of you have family members and friends in the community, and we recognized that several folks right now, based on the industry that they support, are not being paid. We are very grateful for our leadership within the department of defense and the executive office, that we are able to offer these flexible pay, administrative leave, and telework options during this time.

**Col. Vaughn:** We appreciate everyone's patience and understanding as we work through this together. As we continue to evaluate and assess our operations at the 21st Medical Group, we'll continue to provide updates through the various Facebook pages, but also recommend everyone use the Air Force Connect App.

**Col. Aguilar:** Just a few more items before we close out. A question came up about tuition assistance.

**Will AFPC still be awarding tuition assistance for the foreseeable future?**

There are no changes in the Tuition Assistance Program at this time. Should there be any changes, we will communicate them to you.

**The next question was about haircut regulations.**

At this time, in support of operational requirements, the Barber Shop in the Main BX and Peterson Shopette remain open. The Barber Shops in Bldg 1 and 2 are currently closed. We recognize that many barber shops and beauty shops here locally are closed. Air Force and Space Force leadership are considering making some modifications to dress and appearance and grooming standards. You may have seen that some of our sister services have already come out with guidance regarding grooming standards, so we are awaiting further guidance from the Air Force and Space Force at this time.

We know we did not get an opportunity to address all of your questions. We appreciate the number of questions that came in. We appreciate the time you took to draft your questions. If we weren't able to answer some of your questions, please continue submitting those through our PA team so we have an opportunity to answer them and get the information out. We are trying to leverage all of our social media platforms to push this information out to you. We ask those of you in our military and civilian workforce to please make sure you're bringing this information home to your families. The decision by the wing commander to do a virtual town hall is exactly the reason why we want to make sure we get this information out to our family members. Thank you for joining us. Thank you for sharing this time with us. We will continue to keep you informed with as much as we know. It is in times like these that we see just how strong our community is. We ask you to remember to take care of yourselves, your families and each other. We need you to be built to last. Thanks for joining us.