May 27, 2021

COVID-19 Public Health Southwest Border Operation

In partnership with federal, local and non-profit partners, California is providing critical services to persons arriving at the US-Mexico border that protect public health.

Across three counties (Imperial, Riverside and San Diego) a rapid response network provides temporary shelter and care – including medical and social services -- for newly arrived adults and families to help them safely reach their final destination. To address the complexities created by COVID-19, California is supporting testing, isolation and wraparound services prior to onward travel. Furthermore, a unified command structure was established along the border to coordinate and integrate local, state, federal and non-profit efforts.

On February 25th, Finance identified up to $28 million needed to support these efforts. Given the expanded needs and increased complexity since then, Finance now estimates an additional $360 million is necessary to protect public health by establishing approximately six intake hubs across the three counties (Imperial, Riverside, and San Diego) to serve roughly 2,000 migrants per day for a period of six months. With at least one intake hub in each county, these hubs will serve as a mechanism to augment and expand local capacity as soon as possible.

Consistent with the rapid response model, the intake hubs will serve as a site for migrants after they are released from federal custody. The intake hubs will provide basic wraparound services to protect public health, including testing, medical screenings, and coordination of transportation for onward travel. In cases when local capacity to shelter individuals has reached capacity, the hubs will provide short-term sheltering pursuant to public health guidance.

These funds will be administered by the California Department of Public Health. California intends to seek federal reimbursement for the intake hubs, and is continuing conversations with federal partners regarding these efforts.

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