• Q1 We were told weeks ago that senior living facilities in Travis County were going to have an added layer of protection by isolating COVID infected residents at two dedicated facilities away from other healthy residents and staff members. Why are they not being used? Currently, we have a majority of Travis County deaths coming from 10 different Senior Living Facilities. How is that possible with the isolation plan in place?

A1. It would be great to get an update from Dr. Mark Escott, the interim Austin-Travis County health authority, on the status of the isolation facilities. Tangentially, on April 28, the state released additional guidance for Assisted Living Facilities, and, on May 11, the Governor directed state agencies to test all residents and staff in Texas nursing homes. At the very least, this should grant support to local health efforts to isolate and contain outbreaks in congregant settings where some of our most vulnerable Texans live. Unfortunately, once a case is reported in congregant settings, like Senior Living Facilities, it may be too late to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 among the residents due to the nature of the virus. With proactive testing efforts, such as daily testing of all staff prior to their shifts and periodic testing of all residents, this may allow us to spot positive cases before there is a chance for it to spread, which is exactly when the isolation facilities would be most useful.

• Q2. We are a childcare center in Austin (Wonder Years Preschool). Currently, we are only allowed to take children from essential workers. Will the lists be updated as each sector is allowed to startup?

A2: Yes, childcare is still limited to essential workers. For Austin, that list has been updated [here](#). On May 11, the YMCA partnered with Austin ISD to offer child care for essential workers. The state has set a distinction between re-opened businesses and essential services. Additionally, there is a website set up to check if you are a "frontline parent" and to find childcare. Also, check the City of Austin and Travis County’s orders as they give guidance on childcare services.

• Q3: Will the list of essential workers be updated as different sectors are added?

A3: The state has set a distinction between re-opened businesses and essential services. The state has also utilized the most recent Department of Homeland Security Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce List. As the Governor’s orders have expanded what is opened, they have not reclassified what counts as an ‘essential’ business. Should additional shutdowns be needed in the future, that distinction would likely still remain important.

• Q4. During this time, many private practice mental health providers have continued to see clients in their offices by taking measures to ensure safety and emotional support
through social distancing, sanitizing, and telehealth sessions. What will you do to support this type of small business that does not have a workforce of more than 1?

A4. Mental health is important. These small businesses provide our community with great resources. They must follow the guidelines set by the state and city. Telehealth has been a great way for clients to continue to see mental health providers. It has also been a way for new clients to get connected to the mental health care they need.

- Q5. When will restaurants be told on what will be the SOPs in order to open again? When can we expect to hear from the COA Health Department on this?

A5: The statewide guidance as of May 5, 2020, can be found here. Guidance from the City of Austin as of May 8, 2020, can be found here on page 13.

- Q6. Have you heard any updates on what Governor Abbot or Mayor Adler may be thinking about in terms of the number of people who will be allowed to gather in one location or event?

A6. The City of Austin has an order in place until May 30. It can be found here. Travis County has an order in place until June 15. It can be found here.

- Q7 Did you say the recommendation is to stay "social distancing" until June to keep deaths in Texas below 1k? Will Texas follow the federal government's phased definition, and what phase would be eliminating social distancing?

A7. Unfortunately, Texas has already had 1,000 deaths due to COVID-19. It is unclear when social distancing will be eliminated completely.

- Q8 I have a company that can offer masks in mass and was told by the Governor's task force they are no longer purchasing masks. Then you hear that there is a major shortage of PPE. The messages do not align.

A8. The state has a website to submit a request to donate or sell PPE. The need for PPE changes as the supply chain changes. According to the Texas Department of State Health Services, the PPE supply coming to the state is now more robust. Notably, the DSHS removed the priorities for PPE distribution on April 28, 2020. However, this does not mean that local facilities do not have a PPE shortage. The City of Austin may be able to help connect individuals with PPE supplies to those who need them.