

For the second day in a row, state health officials Wednesday reported record numbers of new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, raising concerns ahead of the Fourth of July holiday weekend.

The Texas Department of State Health Services reported 8,076 new COVID-19 cases, marking the first time Texas crossed the 8,000 threshold for new cases in a single day. The new cases jumped by more than 1,000 from Tuesday's record-setting number.

In addition, the 6,904 lab-confirmed COVID-19 patients in Texas hospitals hit a record high for the third day in a row.

The continuing spike in cases and hospitalizations came as Texas has seen a surge in younger people testing positive for the coronavirus and increased outbreaks in child care facilities. It also came a day after Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick criticized one of the nation's top infectious disease experts as overly partisan and frequently wrong.

Gov. Greg Abbott has raced to lower the coronavirus numbers — closing bars, limiting restaurant occupancy and halting elective surgeries in eight counties to free hospital space for COVID-19 patients — while rejecting calls for a statewide mask mandate.

Last week, interim Austin-Travis County Health Authority Dr. Mark Escott said more than 70% of the area's new cases since June 8 were among those between 20 to 39 years old.

State health officials also reported a significant rise in infections at day care facilities.

A Texas Health and Human Services spokeswoman Wednesday said there were 1,098 positive cases of COVID-19 at child care facilities — 745 staff members and 353 children.

It was a big jump from a little more than two weeks ago, when state health officials reported 210 COVID-19 cases in child care operations, [according to KVUE](#).

Responding to the spike in child care center infections last week, Abbott directed the Health and Human Services Commission to issue guidelines for those facilities. [The updated guidelines](#) did not require staff members to wear masks or socially distance.