Public Health Funding and Policy Committee Meeting

October 28th, 2020

Minutes

Committee Members Attending

Stephen Williams, MEd, MPA - Houston Health Department – Chair

Jennifer Griffith, DrPH, MPH – Texas A&M University

Julie St. John, DrPH – Texas Tech University

Lou Kreidler, RN, BSN - Wichita Falls – Wichita County Public Health District

Philip Huang, MD, MPH – Dallas County Health and Human Services

Sharon Melville, MD, MPH – DSHS, Public Health Region 7

Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH - Harris County Public Health

Attendees:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Albert Cheng | Jennifer Smith | Rashandra Hayes |
| Angel Angco-Barrera | Lesley Brannan | Ricky Garcia |
| Carolyn Barrett | Lisa Steffek | Roberto Beaty |
| Christy Havel | Lisa Wyman | Seth Henderson |
| David Gruber | Mackenzie Spahn | Shannon Brown |
| Donna Shepard | Michelle Austin | Shannon Richter |
| Elisa Hernandez | Nancy Ejuma | Shelle Tarbox |
| E. Guajardo | Nora Del Bosque | Sonja Burns |
| Glenna Laughlin | Omar Pena | Steve Eichner |
| Holly Turner | Peter Hajmasy | Todd Kimbriel |
| James Lee | Phil Burrell | Veronica Karam |
| Jayarman Pranau | Rachel Sonne |  |
| Jennifer Sims | Rafael Alberti |  |

Chair, Stephen Williams, called the meeting to order and the committee members introduced themselves.

**October 7th Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Lou Kreidler moved to approve the minutes, Dr. Philip Huang seconded. Motion carried. Minutes approved.

**COVID-19 Funding Allocation:**

Ms. Donna Sheppard presented on COVID-19 Funds and Expenses. Mr. Stephen Williams asked about the total allocation of CARES Act dollars and what the source of the budget on slide five of the presentation is? Ms. Sheppard gave a breakdown by different federal funding categories on a later slide within the presentation.

Dr. Sharon Melville asked how the mobile testing was funded? Ms. Sheppard responded that the mobile testing conducted through Texas Department of Emergency Management (TDEM), Dr. Philip Huang wanted to confirm that the dollar amount on slide thirteen was all Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) money. Ms. Sheppard confirmed this statement. Dr. Huang followed up by asking when PPP funding would end. Ms. Sheppard answered that PPP would continue until December 2022.

Dr. Umair Shah asked if any funding the state had received had gone to the local level, besides the local health departments. Mr. Williams also inquired about the total amount of CARES Act dollars, the state had received. Ms. Sheppard responded that she does not know the exact total that the state received, but what is known is the amount DSHS/HHSC received, and that some funding went straight to local entities.

Dr. Shah asked the amount that had been spent in each category of funding and how the committee could get vision on DSHS/HHSC’s plan for when the CARES Act dollars expire, specifically the planning of vaccine/vaccination dollars. Ms. Sheppard responded that there are many unknowns with the CARES Act dollars, and it is difficult to know what the needs of the state will be when the PPP funding expires in Dec 2022. Ms. Jennifer Sims added that the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) has been primarily used for hospital surge staffing while we await Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding. Ms. Sheppard added that states are using their CRF funding more because FEMA funds are delayed. Ms. Sims stated that the vaccine funding is currently around $14 million which is not enough to fund vaccinations in Texas. DSHS is speaking with the federal government to see if any additional funding is available.

Mr. Williams asked if the low amount of funding is being caused by how the vaccine is being rolled out. Ms. Sims confirmed this question. Mr. Williams asked about a list to be able to pinpoint providers for vaccine distribution. Ms. Sims stated that Ms. Imelda Garcia would send out a list of providers for vaccine distribution. Dr. Shah asked if there would be enough access to the funding for vaccination that is being dispersed and if any of that funding might find its way to the local health departments. Ms. Sheppard answered that an obligation of $1 billion has been set for vaccinations. There are other requests for funding through FEMA which, as stated before, is delayed. There is an expectation that all funding will be spent and what is known is that there is some PPP money that will also be sent for this. Ms. Sims added that there is a plan in place to push funds out to the locals. Dr. Huang asked when this funding would end. Ms. Sims answered December 31st, 2022. Ms. Sims suggests contacting TDEM on the process to accessing funding sources that need to be encumbered by the end of this year. Ms. Sheppard stated that locals can apply for the funding through TDEM website.

Mr. Williams asked if TDEM oversees CARES Act dollars. Ms. Sims responded that TDEM is only helping collect the information for the governor’s office. Ultimately, the CRF funds are coming from the governor’s office and TDEM is just assisting.

Mr. Dave Gruber added that funding is being given to both the public health and medical side. Though the medical side is pulling a lot from the funds, on a routine basis, DSHS is approving any requests for staff extensions and has not denied any requests. Regarding mobile testing, a lot of funding had been put into it before it was shifted over to TDEM contracts.

Dr. Shah asked if they are speaking with other states to see how they are working with locals and spending funding. Ms. Sims stated that DSHS is in conversations with other states, but there are times where information is relevant and non-relevant.

**COVID-19 Response Review:**

Ms. Sims gave an overview of a timeline to show DSHS’ response to the challenges and changes that have varied over the course of the year. Mr. Gruber added that this is not a replacement for the formal after-action report, but an introspective look at what has been going on during the response so far.

Mr. Williams discussed the meetings being held, with Ms. Garcia and various contractors, on data systems where they were able to explore short term opportunities in relation to reporting and technology. He suggested this format for the time being as it may help to get some feedback without having to wait for the formal after-action report. Mr. Gruber responded that DSHS will continue to engage in discussions.

**2020 Annual Report/Recommendations Letter:**

The committee reviewed the recommendations made by Mr. Williams’ staff. Ms. Kreidler asked if HHSC had the authority to require annual training on mandatory reporting requirements. Mr. Williams responded that if they do not have the authority they will be expected to act on it. Dr. Huang made a motion to include the recommendation to the commissioner. Dr. Shah seconded. Motion was carried.

Mr. Steve Eichner provided clarification on data feeds coming from the CDC. The committee reviewed the third recommendation within the letter and agreed to separate the implementation of a standardized data format into its own bullet above its parent recommendation.

Dr. Shah asked about the partnership piece of this letter with LHDs. Mr. Rafael Alberti confirmed that collaboration with LHDs was mentioned within most of the document.

**Public Comment**

Mr. Peter Hajmasy gave an update on the Rider 19 report. The report will focus on key contract which are contracts with a high dollar value or those that impact the largest number LHDs. The report will look at attainment of performance measures in various categories for FY19 due to COVID-19. The report will also include a recommendation that, going forward, DSHS will report LHD contract performance measures on the DSHS website. The report should be submitted sometime in November 2020; the committee had no comments.

**Timelines, Next steps, Announcements and Future Meeting Dates**

The next meeting will be December 9, 2020. Mr. Williams would like to meet with Mr. Rafael Alberti and Ms. Glenna Laughlin to come up with an agenda for the meeting sometime next week. Ms. Laughlin updated the committee on the nominations for the small local health department position.

Dr. Shah asked about the list of people on the Expert Vaccine Allocation Panel (EVAP). Ms. Laughlin stated the list would be sent out after the meeting. There was discussion and speculation on what kind of control and infrastructure the locals will need. Mr. Williams recommended looking at who is signing up to receive the vaccine, which should give a better idea on where the vaccine will be distributed. Ms. Laughlin let the committee know that the Immunizations program will begin having weekly calls with the LHDs, and that the invitations should come from the RLHO mailbox.

**Adjourn**

Dr. Shah made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Kreidler seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Stephen L. Williams, Committee Chair Date