



**Task Force of Border Health Officials (TFBHO) Meeting
HHSC Virtual Platform
September 9, 2021**

Member Name	Yes	No	Professional Representatives (non-members)
Esmeralda Guajardo, MAHS	✓		
Richard Chamberlain, DrPH(c), MPH, RS	✓		
Steven M. Kotsatos, RS	✓		
Josh Ramirez, MPA, CPM	✓		
Eduardo Olivarez		✓	
Arturo Rodriguez, DNP, MPH, CPM	✓		
Angela Mora, M.A.Ed.	✓		
Emilie Prot, DO, MPH	✓		
Lillian Ringsdorf, MD, MPH		✓	
Rachel E. Sonne, MD, MPH	✓		Arrived during the meeting
State Representative Bobby Guerra		✓	Represented by Jasmine Owen
Senator Eddie Lucio Jr.		✓	

Attendees Present

Francesca Kupper, John Villarreal, David Gruber, Dr. John Hellerstedt, Dr. Allison Banicki, Edith de Lafuente, Adriana Corona-Luevanos, Rosy de Los Santos, Alberto Perez, Tony Aragón, Jasmine Owen, Mackenzie Spahn, and Úrsula Solorzano.

Agenda Item I: Call to Order, Welcome, Chair Remarks, Meeting Logistics and TFBHO Roll Call

Chair Guajardo opened the meeting at 1:07 pm. She thanked HHS production staff and welcomed attendees to the Task Force of Border Health Officials (TFBHO) meeting. Chair Guajardo asked if Dr. Hellersdtedt or any legislative staff were in attendance. Ms. Francesca Kupper confirmed that Jasmine Owen from Representative Guerra’s office had joined the meeting. Chair Guajardo welcomed and thanked everyone for attending and asked Ms. Kupper to continue with the roll call. Ms. Kupper reminded members to announce themselves by stating their name before speaking and to mute their devices when not speaking and read open meeting/virtual platform guidelines and proceeded to the roll call. Only six members were present and seven are required to establish a quorum. Chair Guajardo continued by asking attendees to introduce themselves. Mr. Gruber asked Chair Guajardo if he could introduce Karin Hopkins as the new director for the Office of Border Public Health. Chair Guajardo agreed and noted the voting of meeting minutes would be skipped and continued to Agenda Item III.



Agenda Item III: Update: Announcement and COVID-19 Vaccine
(inverted order)

Chair Guajardo welcomed Mr. Gruber and Mr. Aragon. Mr. Aragon, Immunization Unit Director (DSHS), initiated the COVID-19 Vaccine Update by stating that 16.7 million people in Texas had received at least one vaccine dose to date, equating to about 69% of the population for those 12 years of age and older. Approximately 14 million people are fully vaccinated (two doses of Pfizer or Moderna vaccines or a single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine), which is approximately 29 million doses administered. He also explained that booster vaccines were approved for immunocompromised individuals and asked Mr. Gruber to continue with his update.

Associate Commissioner David Gruber introduced Karin Hopkins as the new director for the Office of Border Public Health. He spoke of her expertise including her master's degree in international public health. Chair Guajardo welcomed Ms. Hopkins on behalf of all members. She then asked Mr. Aragon about any guidance on booster vaccines. She expressed her concern regarding census counts due to high amounts of older residents, known as winter Texans, and uncounted migrant residents. Mr. Aragon confirmed that the official booster guidance was expected on September 20 and reiterated the good news of border counties having higher than average vaccination rates. Chair Guajardo mentioned that she looked forward to learning of the new guidance and thanked both Mr. Aragon and Mr. Gruber.

Chair Guajardo announced that Mr. Josh Ramirez had joined the meeting. Ms. Kupper confirmed that a quorum was reached. Chair Guajardo continued the meeting by returning to agenda item II in order to approve meeting minutes.

Agenda Item II: Consideration of May 20, 2021 and July 15, 2021, Meeting Minutes (inverted order)

Chair Guajardo asked members to review the May 20, 2021 and July 15, 2021 Meeting Minutes. She asked for a request for a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes. Mr. Ramirez provided the first while Mr. Steve Kotsatos seconded the motion. Ms. Kupper initiated a roll call vote to approve the meeting minutes. The motion carried and the minutes were approved for both meetings.

Agenda Item IV: Review Recommendations Narratives (COVID-19) as part of the short-term plan

Chair Guajardo reviewed the COVID-19-related recommendations with members. Members discussed their views related to each recommendation. A motion to add nursing homes to the fifth recommendation was commenced. A motion was made by Dr. Sonne and it was seconded by Mr. Kotsatos. A roll call vote confirmed that the addition was accepted. The short-term plan recommendations are as follows:



- Complete the border surveillance and laboratory capacity assessment and expand it to include capabilities for laboratories to report results and positivity rates directly to local health departments
- Establish and make available local laboratory and testing capabilities available to border public health departments that is regularly available and accessible at low to no cost including university agreements and state labs
- Strengthen and support strategies to improve coordination with Mexico via the Office of Border Public Health
- Involve the School Health Advisory Council in the school response plans to communicable disease reporting/outbreaks, including COVID-19, school ventilation, food/safety preparation and preventative measures
- Conduct a survey on ventilation and air-conditioning in coordination with the Texas Education Agency and Health and Human Services Commission in nursing home and school facilities
- Add COVID-19 surveillance of premature births to the Birth Defects Program at DSHS.

Agenda Item V: Discussion: Long-term Plan Recommendations

Chair Guajardo asked each subcommittee lead to review the narratives of their recommendations as part of the long-term plan.

Border Public Health Infrastructure:

Chair Guajardo started by reading the narrative discussion for Border Public Health Infrastructure. There was a discussion among members, but it did not result in any major edits to the original recommendations.

Communicable Diseases:

Dr. Prot read her narrative discussions regarding Communicable Diseases. She referenced that Recommendation B regarding a multi-disciplinary team was included in SB 1312. Members discussed the topics and decided to edit them with more detailed language. Dr. Prot suggested editing the recommendation specifying the language for Recommendation B to include epidemiological outbreak investigations in response to communicable diseases that would entail the need for bilingual staff, nurses, contact tracers and other staff. Dr. Prot also mentioned that Recommendation D regarding the Adult Safety Net and Texas Vaccines for Children Program was previously suggested by Dr. Ringsdorf. It was moved from Maternal Child Health to Communicable Diseases. She asked members for their ideas on whether to keep, edit or omit the recommendations. Members discussed the matter and members decided to keep it.



Environmental Health:

Dr. Sonne and Mr. Kotsatos lead this subcommittee. Dr. Sonne read the current narrative discussions and suggested minor edits. Mr. Kotsatos suggested adding year-round testing language to Recommendation A2 while Dr. Sonne asked for clarification on testing vs. specific surveillance in certain counties. There was also discussion regarding the implementation of SB 1312. Dr. Prot suggested strengthening Recommendation B by omitting the first part so that it reads "Improve recruitment and retention of registered sanitarians in border public health departments by expanding training and certification to improve response and expansion opportunities with expert personnel to assist with prevention of food, water, vector-borne and zoonotic diseases." Members agreed to revise the narrative discussion and clarify the recommendations language.

Chronic Diseases:

Dr. Prot read the narrative discussions without members suggesting any changes.

Maternal and Child Health:

Chair Guajardo read the narrative discussions submitted by Dr. Ringsdorf. Members discussed the different recommendations without suggestions for edits.

A motion was made by Dr. Prot to continue with final edits of the recommendations. The motion was seconded by Mr. Chamberlain. Ms. Kupper initiated a roll call vote. The motion carried.

Agenda Item VI: Approval of November 1, 2020 Recommendations Report (pending completion of narratives)

Chair Guajardo explained that the final vote to approve recommendations will commence at the next meeting.

Agenda Item VII: Public Comment

Chair Guajardo asked Ms. Kupper if there were any public comments submitted. Ms. Kupper confirmed that no requests for public comments were received. Chair Guajardo continued with closing remarks.

Agenda Item VIII: Closing remarks, thank you and Adjourn

Chair Guajardo asked members if they were interested in meeting in person at the next meeting. She reminded members that the next meeting was October 21 at 1:00pm (CST). She thanked members for attending and adjourned the meeting at 3:47 p.m.