Public Health Funding and Policy Committee Meeting

April 12, 2023

Minutes

Committee Members Attending

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

Phillip Huang, MD, MPH – Dallas County Health and Human Services – Vice Chair

Emilie Prot, DO, MPH – DSHS, Public Health Region 11

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

Julie St. John, DrPH – Texas Tech University

Lisa Dick, Brownwood-Brown County Health Department

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

Sharon Whitley – Hardin County Health Department

Todd Bell, MD – City of Amarillo Health Department

Attendees:

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| Aelia Ahktar | Jessica R Hyde | Nicole Knight |
| Amanda Ortez | Joanna Seyller | Noah A Chornyak |
| Ann Jacobo | John Villarreal | Rachel E Sonne |
| Angel Anco-Barrera | Katherine Layman | Rafael Alberti |
| Becky Earlie Royer | Kathryn Kaminsky | Ricky Garcia |
| Brenda Narro | Karla Bautista | Robert Kirkpatrick |
| Carlos Plasencia | Karnes Cliffton | Roberto Beaty |
| Carrie Bradford | Lacey Camp | Rocio Rodriguez |
| Christine Riley | Laura LaFuente | Sarah Hollister |
| Cristina Garcia | Lesley Brannan | Saroj Rai |
| Colin Crocker | Lillian Ringsdorf | Molly Fudell |
| Crystal Biggs | Lindsay Lanagan | Scott Milton |
| Dana Birnberg | Lisa Steffek | Sharonica White |
| David Gruber | Lucille Palenapa | Stephen Pont |
| Denise Grogan | Megan Wolfe | Steve Eichner |
| Desmar Walkes | Micheal DeLeon | Timothy Patterson |
| Emily Rocha | Mohib Nawab | Tom Valentine |
| Glenna Laughlin | Molly Fudell | Veronica Karam |
| Imelda Garcia | Monica Gamez | Yolanda S Cantu |
| Jennifer Smith | Moriah Hernandez | Walquiria Sanchez |
| Jennifer Shuford | Nicholas Ours |  |

Chair, Mr. Stephen Williams, called the meeting to order at 9:00 am and the committee members introduced themselves.

**February 8th Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Lisa Dick motioned to approve the minutes. Dr. Jennifer Griffith seconded. Mr. Rafael Alberti included the suggestion of altering the letterhead to show Dr. Jennifer Shuford as the DSHS Commissioner. Motion approved and carried. Minutes approved.

**Update on COVID-19 Vaccine Administration:**

Ms. Imelda Garcia updated the committee on COVID-19 vaccine administration with a slide presentation. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) updated the letter of authorization for the Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine related to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System reporting requirements. The FDA also authorized a change in Pfizer’s COVID-19 eligibility for children ages 6 months through 4 years. Novavax is now available in a smaller pack size.

Mr. Williams asked about the locals’ role as a safety net provider and the potential cost of the vaccine. Ms. Garcia answered that if the vaccine comes through the vaccine for children program it will be cost free. For the Adult Safety Net (ASN) vaccine, there are still conversations going on with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Dr. Todd Bell asked if federally purchased vaccine that is out in distribution, will be charged or have a cost associated with them. Ms. Garcia answered it depends on the variant of vaccine they have in stock, and it is still in conversation.

Dr. Emilie Prot commented that they saw more vaccine for ASN instead of vaccines for children and wanted to voice that concern.

**Update on Current Status regarding Mpox:**

Ms. Imelda Garcia updated on the status of Mpox within Texas to include information on spread, demographics, and other relevant data. A total of 2,943 cases have been documented to date. The case demographics continue to be the same as is much of the data. We know that it is still circulating, but is declining. There is a continued push for the JYNNEOS vaccine for prevention purposes. A reminder that JYNNEOS is a two-dose series of vaccines.

**Update on DSHS’ COVID-19 Health Disparities Grant Funded Activities:**

Dr. Cristina Garcia gave an update on the Health Disparities Grant. Fifty local and state partners are currently funded and are engaging targeted communities with health disparities to understand needs and priorities. No cost extension amendments are in process, and we continue to work with DSHS Contract Management Section. The current fellowship cohort will complete the fellowship program in May of 2023. Over 40 eligible applications were received and screened for interview. Currently, 41 fellows have accepted the position. Dr. Garcia shared various successes of the grant within the state.

Dr. Prot asked if any being collected from the various projects. Dr. Garcia answered that a lot of the data being collected is qualitative. Many of the contractors have done various focus groups/surveys do identify barriers and needs. Dr. Garcia proceeded to specifically describe some of the data projects being done throughout the grant.

**Update on the Public Health Provider – Charity Care Program**

Ms. Sarah Hollister provided the committee with a brief overview of the Public Health Provider- Charity Care Program, giving a few new updates on how things are progressing. Year one of the cost reports has been completed, year two will close September 30th, 2023. A total of 45 cost reports were submitted to HHSC. Of those submitted 39 reports belonged to Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC) and Local Behavior Health Authorities (LBHA), and 6 to Local Health Departments/Public Health Districts. Year two will have a total available funding of 500 million. Additional training opportunity will be offered in Summer 2023. A new cost reporting tool will be used in with the goal of streamlining the reporting process.

Mr. Williams asked if they had a ballpark figure of how many health departments took the training versus the total amount of LHDs that were eligible? Mr. Alberti stated that RLHO would work with CPHPP to get the answer to that question for the committee. The answer is 36.

**Update on Public Health Information Systems and Interoperability with Local Health Entities:**

Mr. Steve Eichner presented an update regarding technology and interoperability. Work is ongoing on the United States Core Data for Interoperability Standards, forming a core foundation for information exchange. The current version under consideration is in its comment period which ends April 14, 2023. There is a new notice of federal proposed rulemaking focused on Health IT certification. This is to define what constitutes a certified electronic health record system. Public Health is interested in this idea as the certification standards facilitate the exchange of data with public health. Also, at the federal level, work continues the development of the Trusted Exchange Framework and common agreement. This is the latest approach for nationwide exchange of Health information, including support for public health. DSHS programs have been participating in a Texas Interoperability Forum hosted by the Texas Health Services Authority, helping providers to improve their understanding and ability to interface with public health information systems. The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is including in their new submission for federal matching funds ongoing support for the Patient Unified Lookup System for Emergencies. This primarily is there for emergency incidents and can be activated so that authorized personnel can use this network to leverage a variety of data exchange systems.

**Public Comment:**

No public comment at this time.

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

The next meeting date is scheduled for June 7th, 2023. Mr. Rafael Alberti updated on the status of the nomination process. The process is now complete, and Sharon Whitley has filled the vacancy of Medium Local Health Department Representative. Mr. Alberti discussed the committee beginning to discuss recommendation. Mr. Williams answered since many of the topics are ongoing, they will visit then, and another overview of updates may be in order with the possibility of a recommendation. Future agendas will be discussed with Ms. Glenna Laughlin as Rafael has accepted a position with HHSC.

**Adjourn**

Dr. Huang made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Jennifer Griffith seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.

Approved:

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Stephen L. Williams, Committee Chair Date