

Texas HIV Medication Advisory Committee (MAC)
Meeting Minutes
January 12, 2024
1:30 p.m.

Hybrid Meeting:

Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting and Physical Location: Moreton Building, Room M-100, 1100 West 49th Street, Austin, Texas 78756

Agenda Item 1: Call to Order, Welcome, Logistical Announcements, and Opening Remarks

Mr. Frank Rosas, Chair, opened the meeting by introducing himself and welcoming members, agency staff, and members of the public who were in attendance. Mr. Rosas called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m., then introduced and turned the floor to Ms. Jessica Arevalo, Advisory Committee Coordination Office (ACCO), Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). She proceeded with the logistical announcement, called roll, asked members to introduce themselves, and certified a quorum with a count of seven members at roll call.

Table 1: The Texas HIV Medication Advisory Committee member attendance at the Friday, January 12, 2024, meeting.

Member Name	Attended
Adjei, Margaret, M.D.	Yes
Alozie, Ogechika Karl, M.D.	Yes
Heresi, Gloria, M.D.	No
Hillard, Lionel	Yes
Lazarte, Susana, M.D. (Vice Chair)	Yes
Rodriguez-Escobar, Yolanda, Ph.D.	No
Rosas, Frank (Chair)	Yes
Turner, Helen	Yes
Vargas, Steven	Yes
Vacant	
Vacant	

"Yes" indicates attended meeting

"No" indicates did not attend meeting

Mr. Frank Rosas, Chair, acknowledged the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) staff: Ms. Rachel Sanor, HIV Care and Medications Unit Director. Ms. Sanor introduced DSHS staff in attendance: Ms. Christine Salinas, Texas HIV Medication Program (THMP) Regional Manager; Ms. Tina Nguyen, Program Specialist, Communications and Policy; Ms. Imelda Garcia, DSHS Senior Advisor and Lead for Public Health Modernization; Mr. Josh Hutchison, Associate Commissioner of Infection Disease Prevention; Ms. D'Andra Luna, HIV/STD Section Director; Ms. Sylvia Jimenez, HIV Medications Program Unit Manager; Ms. Kati Kieffer, Finance Manager; Ms. Terri Lemuel, THMP Public Health Specialist.

Agenda Item 2: Consideration of July 14, 2023, Draft Meeting Minutes

Mr. Rosas referred members to the draft minutes emailed by the program liaison and called for any edits. Hearing none, Mr. Rosas called for a motion to approve the minutes of the July 14, 2023, meeting.

MOTION

Mr. Lionel Hillard motioned to approve the July 14, 2023, draft minutes as presented. Ms. Helen Turner seconded the motion. Ms. Arevalo conducted a roll call vote, and the motion passed by a majority vote with six yeas (Adjei, Alozie, Hillard, Lazarte, Rosas, Turner), no nays, and one abstention (Vargas).

Agenda Item 3: Public Comment

Ms. Arevalo affirmed no one pre-registered for public comment. ACCO did not receive any written comment either. Ms. Tessa Buck-Ragland, ACCO, affirmed no one on site signed up for public comment.

Agenda Item 4: DSHS Updates

Mr. Rosas introduced Ms. Imelda Garcia, Mr. Josh Hutchison, and Ms. D'Andra Luna to provide updates.

Highlights included:

a. Agency update

Mr. Hutchison provided updates on DSHS organizational structure changes. Laboratory and Infectious Disease Services (LIDS) became two separate divisions: the Public Health Laboratory Division and the Infectious Disease Prevention Division. He congratulated Ms. Garcia on her new position as Senior Advisor and Lead for Public Health Modernization.

b. HIV organizational update

Mr. Hutchison announced Ms. D'Andra Luna as the permanent HIV/STD Section Director. He also confirmed DSHS sent out the new MAC appointment letters. New members will officially join at the next meeting.

c. Budget report

Ms. Luna presented the THMP Financial Report. Overall, there is no change in THMP funding for the medication purchase order (PO). Currently, THMP does not have general revenue (GR) budgeted for 2024. The GR match is the same as what was expended last year. THMP estimates about \$16.4 million for the medication rebate. Federal care grants increased due to increases in the Ryan White award and carryforward funds.

Discussion

Mr. Steven Vargas asked about the unspent federal care grant fund THMP pushed to fiscal year 2024. He asked if the carryforward fund amount higher than usual or around the same amount. He also wondered if THMP could spend the amount by the March deadline. Mr. Hutchison confirmed the amount is about the same. Mr. Hutchison also clarified the Ryan White timeline is April to March, while the state fiscal year is on a different timeline. All THMP does is move the amount forward to make sure the program expends this within the federal grant year.

Dr. Susana Lazarte asked if THMP allocated and spent the \$16.4 million in the first phase. Ms. Luna explained the program is currently transferring the amount. This is the carryforward fund mentioned earlier. Both the \$16.4 million and \$6 million are going to be used for purchasing THMP medications. THMP is working with the DSHS Pharmacy to spend this by March.

Agenda Item 5: Texas HIV Medication Program (THMP) Updates

Mr. Rosas yielded the floor to Ms. Rachel Sanor, HIV Care and Medications Unit Director, DSHS.

Highlights included:

a. TakeChargeTexas (TCT)

- Quarterly TCT Applications Submitted from September 1, 2023, to November 30, 2023
 - ▶ Client Portal
 - ◇ TCT received 363 applications.
 - ◇ Of the 363 applications, 329 were for THMP.
 - ◇ The total number of applications for both care services and THMP was 250.
 - ▶ Agency Portal
 - ◇ TCT received 15,133 applications.
 - ◇ Of the 15,133 applications, 11,349 were for THMP.
 - ◇ The total number of applications for both care services and THMP was 8,189.
 - ◇ The total number of pharmacy order batches was 1,409.
 - ◇ The total number of medication orders was 38,373.
 - ◇ THMP approved a total of 8,515 clients during this period.
- Quarterly TCT Helpdesk Support Issues from September 1, 2023, to November 30, 2023.
 - ▶ There were some login issues in December due to recertifications.
 - ▶ Overall, the total number of issues decreased.
- Annual TCT Applications Submitted from December 1, 2022, to November 30, 2023
 - ▶ Client Portal
 - ◇ TCT received 2,529 applications.
 - ◇ Of the 2,529 applications, 2,315 were for THMP.
 - ◇ The total number of applications for both care services and THMP was 1,844.
 - ▶ Agency Portal
 - ◇ TCT received 60,588 applications.
 - ◇ Of the 60,588 applications, 44,636 were for THMP.
 - ◇ The total number of applications for both care services and THMP was 32,708.
 - ◇ The total number of pharmacy order batches was 5,269.
 - ◇ The total number of medication orders was 139,755.
 - ◇ THMP approved a total of 20,558 clients during this period.
- Annual TCT Helpdesk Support Issues from December 1, 2022, to November 30, 2023
 - ▶ In the third quarter, June 2023-August 2023, TCT system issues were higher than the most recent quarter.
 - ▶ Overall, the number of issues decreased over time.

b. Participating pharmacies and pharmacy shipments

- The THMP participating pharmacies network is set up for clients using the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP). Clients in the State Pharmacy Assistance Program (SPAP) and the Texas Insurance Assistance Program (TIAP) use different mechanisms.
- There are currently 544 pharmacies participating in the THMP.

- Those interested in learning more about THMP-participating pharmacies can visit this link: [THMP – Participating Pharmacy Information | Texas DSHS](#)
 - DSHS Pharmacy staff meet with the shipping vendor quarterly to address shipment issues.
 - THMP staff receive daily shipping reports and monthly batch file error reports.
 - The pharmacy portal rollout date is March 11, 2024.
- c. Projections and demographic information
- The number of THMP medications ordered increased slightly compared to last quarter.
 - The list of the top ten medications ordered remained the same.
 - The number of ADAP clients with medications filled increased slightly compared to last quarter.
 - The number of SPAP clients served increased slightly compared to last quarter.
 - TIAP clients with medication filled also increased slightly compared to last quarter.
 - The ADAP medication cost projection showed slight changes in projection data compared to last quarter. These differences are not from THMP but from a new actuarial firm still reviewing historical data and getting to know the nuances impacting the program for their analysis.
 - The SPAP cost projection is stable.
 - The TIAP cost projection has a slight increase, but it is very minor.
- d. Staffing
- Ms. Sanor welcomed Ms. Sylvia Jimenez as the new THMP manager.
 - The HIV Care and Medications Unit will have a new grant specialist position and a new administrative assistant position, which will be very helpful.
 - THMP Group will have two new Program Specialist III positions. These positions will help with the new pharmacy portal, link applications within the system, and assist with phone support.
 - There will also be two Program Specialist I positions to assist with ADAP application processing.
- e. Application processing
- THMP remains out of the backlog and up to date with processing.
 - Ms. Sanor thanked Ms. Christine Salinas and her team’s hard work and success in ensuring the application processing was up-to-date, especially during the busy holidays.

Discussion

TCT:

Mr. Lionel Hillard asked Ms. Sanor to explain the difference between the number of THMP applications and the number of applications submitted for both care services and THMP. Ms. Sanor clarified people who need only assistance with medication would apply for THMP. People who need assistance for social services such as medical care, case management, food assistance, mental health, and things along that line would apply for Care Services. If applicants want both services, then they can submit one application in TCT. This application will go to both THMP and Care Services for approval.

Ms. Turner exclaimed her happiness when she heard things were getting better with TCT support needs. She also asked for clarifications for the "other" category in the TCT helpdesk support issues graph. Ms. Sanor explained the "other" category on the graph is for issues not specific to THMP but rather for contracts or referrals for the Care Services side of TCT. This is why these issues are in the "other" category since they do not pertain to THMP.

Participating pharmacies and pharmacy shipments:

Mr. Frank Rosas mentioned participating pharmacies used to have the option to charge a five-dollar administrative fee to clients. Mr. Rosas asked if THMP made the change to stop these pharmacies from collecting this fee or if these pharmacies can still charge participants these fees if they wish to do so.

Ms. Sanor confirmed there used to be a five-dollar administrative fee. Pharmacies could charge clients this fee if they wished to do so. However, for the past couple of years, the pharmacies have shifted this fee to DSHS instead of clients. So, participating pharmacies should not charge ADAP participants these fees. If you are an ADAP participant and your pharmacy is requesting that you pay these fees, please let us know so we can address this.

Ms. Turner commended THMP for improving their communications and resolving issues at a faster pace. However, she worried medication is still getting delayed due to return mail and delays in shipments.

Ms. Sanor thanked Ms. Turner for acknowledging the positive changes. She also acknowledged there are still improvements needed. THMP encourages clients and agencies to share their experiences and concerns with the program.

Dr. Lazarte asked for confirmation if THMP had resolved medication shipment delays. Ms. Sanor confirmed better communications between the shipping vendor and DSHS Pharmacy helped THMP learn about shipping issues faster. This resulted in DSHS resolving the identified issues more quickly. Ms. Sanor also mentioned the pharmacy portal rollout should also help identify issues quicker and decrease delays.

Mr. Vargas commended and appreciated the 90-day supply of medication implementation and how this improves quality of life and care for consumers.

Projections and demographic information:

Mr. Hillard asked for clarifications on the categories "Hispanic or Latino" and "Not Hispanic or Latino."

Ms. Sanor explained the clients in the "Not Hispanic or Latino" category identified as not of Hispanic or Latino origin. The clients in the "Hispanic or Latino" category identified themselves as of Hispanic or Latino origin.

Mr. Rosas commented he was glad to see information about ADAP when researching medication for Medicare plans because this information is very beneficial for clients. Ms. Sanor thanked Mr. Rosas for his comment.

Ms. Turner mentioned there was a lot of confusion regarding benefits when a new year starts. She noted we must provide the proper education and information to clients and agencies so they can make better decisions. Dr. Lazarte agreed with Ms. Turner's comment.

Mr. Hillard commented that a lot of clients do not know their insurance has dropped certain benefits until they get notified. These clients are then charged with paying out of pocket for needed medication. Mr. Vargas agreed changes can create uncertainty. Mr. Rosas mentioned the

local Ryan White Council may help with co-pays for struggling consumers.

Dr. Margaret Adjei shared her experience with benefit changes from a pharmacist perspective. She encouraged clients to contact their insurance company to ensure they receive correct and up-to-date information on their benefits. Dr. Adjei also noted there are Patient Assistance Programs that provide co-pay assistance.

Application processing:

Dr. Lazarte thanked and congratulated the THMP staff on their success and hard work. She asked for clarifications on the average time for processing renewals or self-attestations. Ms. Sanor explained with self-attestations and recertifications, the goal is to get them processed before they expire.

Ms. Helen Turner expressed her pleasure in hearing the application processing updates. She shifted topics and expressed her disappointment there were no public comments for this meeting. She asked everyone to work harder to let the public know about the public comment opportunities.

Ms. Sanor thanked Ms. Turner for her comment.

Mr. Vargas also thanked Ms. Turner for her comment. He noted due to the positive progress of the program and since it is the beginning of a new year, these reasons may be why there is no public comment at this time.

Mr. Rosas agreed with Mr. Vargas. He noted the program has improved tremendously.

Agenda Item 6: Sub-Committee Reports

a. Eligibility: Mr. Frank Rosas

- The Eligibility Subcommittee met in August 2023 and November 2023.
- Mr. Rosas thanked the regional liaisons who shared updates from each region; their contributions help keep everyone informed.
- Mr. Rosas noted a representative from El Paso indicated TCT does not have an "other" option available in the financial tab.
- Ms. Sanor acknowledged the feedback and mentioned this comment was more for the Care Services side of TCT and not THMP. She confirmed the Care Services Group is having meetings to identify areas for improvement within TCT.

b. Governance and Data: Mr. Steven Vargas

- The Governance and Data Subcommittee met in September 2023 and December 2023.
- Mr. Vargas welcomed a new member, Ms. Januari Fox, to the Governance and Data Subcommittee.
- Mr. Vargas encouraged more members to join the subcommittee.
- Due to the cancellation of the last MAC meeting on October 6, 2023, the Governance and Data subcommittee recommended adding a bullet item to the MAC bylaws to help with future meeting contingency plans. Mr. Vargas recommended submitting the MAC bylaws to legal to review this proposal.
- Ms. Buck-Ragland explained the MAC bylaws allow committee members to preside over the meeting, not just the Chair or Vice Chair.

- Mr. Vargas admitted the MAC bylaws were not clear. He requested clarifications on the MAC bylaws regarding the Chair or Vice Chair's unavailability to preside over the meeting in person.
- Ms. Cassandra Marx, Director of ACCO, clarified the Texas Open Meeting Act states a member of the committee must preside over the meeting in a location where it is open to the public. It does not require this to be only the Chair or Vice-chair of the committee.
- Mr. Vargas thanked Ms. Marx for the clarifications and withdrew the recommendation.

c. Formulary: Dr. Susana Lazarte

- The Formulary Subcommittee met in July 2023 and October 2023.
- The Formulary Subcommittee welcomed the reinstatement of the 90-day refills.
- The subcommittee recommended reinstating the cholesterol-lowering medication Pitavastatin, which shows effectiveness in reducing cholesterol levels, to the formulary. Dr. Lazarte acknowledged her understanding this is contingent on available funds and approvals.
- Dr. Lazarte welcomed the new Vice Chair, Dr. Margaret Adjei, to the Formulary Subcommittee.
- Dr. Lazarte stated the subcommittee currently seeks to recruit a new pharmacist to join the Formulary Subcommittee. Many recommended a pharmacist from Legacy.

Agenda Item 7: Review of Action Items and Agenda Topics for the Next Meeting

Highlights included:

Mr. Rosas, Chair, asked Ms. Sanor about the recap of action items. She turned the floor over to Ms. Nguyen, who confirmed there are no action items currently on the agenda. Mr. Rosas then asked members to provide additional topics and action items to consider for the next meeting. He also confirmed the next meeting is scheduled for April 12, 2024.

Agenda items for the next committee meeting included:

- Medication cost analysis
- Formulary update

Action items:

- 90-day refills effect on budget
- Six-month recertification requirement
- Explain the process of adding a new medication to the formulary.
- Long-acting injectables' data updates

Agenda Item 9: Adjournment

Mr. Rosas, Chair, thanked the committee members and the members of the public for their attendance and adjourned the meeting at 3:44 p.m.

Below is the link to the archived video recording of the January 12, 2024, Texas HIV Medication Advisory Committee meeting. The meeting can be viewed or listened to for approximately two years from the meeting date. It was posted in accordance with the HHSC records retention schedule.

[Texas HIV Medication Advisory Committee - January 12, 2024](#)