



**Task Force of Border Health Officials (TFBHO) Meeting
HHSC Virtual Platform
December 8, 2022, Meeting Minutes**

Member Name	Yes	No	Professional Representatives (non-members)
Esmeralda Guajardo, MAHS	✓		
Richard Chamberlain, DrPH, MPH, RS	✓		
Steven M. Kotsatos, RS, CPM	✓		
Shannon Harvill	✓		
Eduardo Olivarez	✓		
Arturo Rodriguez, DNP, MPH, CPM	✓		
Hector Ocaranza, MD, MPH	✓		joined meeting during agenda item 3
Emilie Prot, DO, MPH	✓		
Lillian Ringsdorf, MD, MPH	✓		
Rachel E. Sonne, MD, MPH	✓		
State Representative Bobby Guerra		✓	
Senator Eddie Lucio Jr.		✓	

Attendees Present

Francesca Kupper, John Chacon, Karin Hopkins, John Villarreal, Dr. Allison Banicki, Edith de Lafuente Gomez, Guillermo Zenizo, Úrsula Solórzano, Alberto Perez, Tony Aragon, Jose Muñoz, Luis Salazar.

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

Chair Olivarez welcomed attendees to the Task Force of Border Health Officials (TFBHO) meeting. He opened the meeting at 9:01 am. He asked Ms. Francesca Kupper to initiate the roll call. She introduced production staff, provided logistical announcements, proceeded with the roll call, and confirmed a quorum. Chair Olivarez continued with the meeting and asked for attendees to introduce themselves. He welcomed members, attendees and noted appreciation to the Office of Border Public Health for their work with the timely submission of required reports and moved on to the next agenda item.

Agenda Item II: Consideration of October 13, 2022, Meeting Minutes

Chair Olivarez asked members to review the October 13, 2022, Meeting Minutes, and asked if any edits were requested. He requested for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Dr. Chamberlain initiated a motion to approve the minutes; Dr. Sonne seconded the motion.



Chair Olivarez asked Ms. Kupper to initiate a roll call vote to approve the meeting minutes. The motion carried and the minutes were approved. She turned the meeting back to Chair Olivarez.

Agenda Item III: Update: COVID-19 Vaccines and boosters

Chair Olivarez introduced Mr. Tony Aragon, Immunization Unit Director (DSHS) who provided the COVID-19 Vaccine and booster update. He provided his update of Covid-19 vaccines and boosters. He mentioned that there continues to be an increase with the completion of vaccines, noting that border counties continue to do very well. Some border counties continue to be at 99 percent of fully vaccinated residents, especially for residents that are 65 years of age and older. Other age groups still show vaccination rates above 80 percent. Booster doses can use improvement statewide, including border counties. Generally, booster doses drop by half for all age groups. Pediatric ages groups also drop considerably. Mr. Aragon stressed the importance of promoting booster doses.

There are two significant events that are coming up, which include the expansion of the bivalent vaccine for children 6 months to 5 years of age for both Pfizer and Spikevax (aka Moderna) which should be approved tomorrow. Providers should receive the vaccine by next week. Monovalent vaccines are still being used to start series and finish booster doses with the bivalent dose. Monovalent vaccines will eventually be replaced with the bivalent. We're waiting to learn from the CDC if monovalent vaccines will expire or expiration dates will be extended. It may become a seasonal vaccine much like the flu vaccine, which may be either one or two dose series.

The Vaccines for Children Program provides free vaccines to children up to 18 years of age; it's a major staple within the Immunizations Program. Covid vaccines be included in the program in the future. We're waiting to learn from our federal partners on more news about that.

The Covid dashboard web site has been decommissioned recently. We're working to get it on the Immunization Program web pages. County details may not be available on the dashboard but let me know if you need county specific data and I'll be glad to provide that data. He concluded his update and asked members if they had questions.

Chair Olivarez thanked him for the update and asked if future Covid vaccines will be independent of flu vaccines. Mr. Aragon confirmed that he understood that to be true, but some manufacturers were working on producing a combined flu/Covid vaccine but single doses of either flu or Covid would still be available.

Members asked other questions ranging from federal Vaccines for Adult Programs and school district vaccine requirements to bilingual messaging about seasonal vaccines. He answered their questions regarding agency support depending on state and federal guidance. Chair Olivarez thanked Mr. Aragon and moved to the next agenda item.



Agenda Item IV: Overview: Office of Border Public Health Community Health Worker Training Center

Chair Olivarez asked Ms. Hopkins to introduce Ms. Ursula Solorzano, the Community-based Healthy Border Program Coordinator and the team lead for the Community Health Worker (known as Promotores de Salud in Spanish) Training Center. Ms. Solorzano conducted a presentation about past, current and future trainings, and other data on related topics. She asked if members had any questions.

Members provided questions and comments regarding promoting Community Health Workers (CHWs) and support for paid positions and compensation, understanding they are the trusted source in the community. They also spoke of trust vs reimbursement and connecting more of them to different wellness strategies within the healthcare system, including community solutions and health outcomes. They also commented about a curriculum for motivational interviewing skills for CHWs. Members also mentioned that the healthcare system noticed the effectiveness of CHWs during the pandemic and the continued need for their role in rural areas of the border region.

Chair Olivarez commented about the partnership with Texas A&M CHW Training Center and how beneficial it is to support a technical/vocational track and a community-based track. He also offered support for CHW compensation. He also explained the importance of public health charity care programs because many local health departments conduct this type of work without credit. It would be a great opportunity for the DSHS CHW Training Center to produce a curriculum for public health charity care programs that many professionals are required to take. Hundreds of hours are spent with pre-chronic care prevention and other related topics. It's also important to bridge the gap from community professionals, such as paramedics, fire departments, etc. with communities that have challenges with access to health. This can bridge both the technical/vocational work with a community-based focus to enhance public health outreach and training.

Dr. Sonne commented on the support for hybrid training models to offer CHW trainings both in-person and on-line. It's difficult to balance but it has many benefits. Dr. Ocaranza mentioned his support for non-traditional partners to bring us to the next level in bridging public health to first responders. Community professionals are experts in response while we're experts in public health training; combining the two is a win-win for everyone. He expressed the need to find ways to fund CHWs and the need to partner with first responders, such as volunteer fire departments, as part of public health infrastructure.

Dr. Rodriguez also noted the model of how fire stations are placed according to community vulnerability in low-income areas. He recently took over an old fire station and converted it to a community clinic. It would be good for cities to utilize community resources to convert into public health facilities.

Chair Olivarez initiated a 10-minute break at 10:37 a.m.



Agenda Item V: Strategic Planning Session

Chair Olivarez reconvened the meeting at 10:47 a.m. Ms. Kupper called roll and confirmed that a quorum was established. He informed members of revisiting the current five border public health priorities to open a strategic planning discussion. He asked Dr. Rodriguez to begin this discussion, since he led the pre-planning efforts of this discussion.

Members shared their views about border public health priorities and subcommittee work. After an in-depth discussion, a comment was made regarding public health issues that are classic versus those that are trending. Members approved to restructure the current five priorities to two over-arching priorities [Public Health and Population Health (wellness and diseases)]. There will be sub-priorities that fit under them with the understanding that there will only be two subcommittees based on the two over-arching priorities.

Chair Olivarez announced that they'd be breaking for lunch at 12:01 p.m. He reconvened the meeting at 1:15 p.m. and Ms. Kupper conducted a roll call vote and confirmed a quorum. Chair Olivarez continued with the meeting whereby members approved to restructure border public health priorities as follows:

Public Health Infrastructure

- Environmental Health
 - registered sanitarian retention/expansion
 - tire abatement efforts
 - work with TARC/COGS
 - compliance and enforcement
- Binational Initiatives
 - strengthening binational community health coalitions
- Health Information Exchange
 - policy implementation/changes (2022 recommendations)
 - provide funding or way for LHDs to be part of HIE at little/no cost
- Human Resource Infrastructure
 - mental health resiliency

**Population Health
(Wellness and Diseases)**

- Communicable Diseases
 - TB
 - Flu
 - STDs/STIs/HIV
 - pandemics
- High Morbidity and Mortality Conditions
 - diabetes
 - cardiovascular diseases
 - obesity
- Maternal Child Health
 - vaccine hesitancy
 - DSHS collaborations
- Community Mental Health
 - coping skills and resiliency

Chair Olivarez asked Ms. Kupper to initiate a roll call vote on the restructuring of border public health priorities (two subcommittees) as noted above. The members voted with eight members in favor and two absent. Chair Olivarez asked members about next steps to focus on short and long-term goals. Dr. Rodriguez mentioned that he'd like to discuss Ms. Guajardo's comment of adding communication goals and values to the framework in future meetings.

Mr. Villarreal asked who would lead each subcommittee. Members decided that both subcommittees should be led by two members as co-chairs. Therefore, Chair Olivarez and



Dr. Rodriguez would lead Public Health Infrastructure while Dr. Prot and Dr. Sonne would lead Population Health. Chair Olivarez and members agreed that this restructured framework creates more agility for the group and provides more flexibility for future subcommittee work. Chair Olivarez suggested that each subcommittee meet prior to the next meeting on February 9, 2023. Ms. Kupper reminded members that subcommittee meetings must have less than six members to ensure there are no quorum issues. Chair Olivarez asked if anyone on-line had any comments about the restructuring of the priority topics and handling communication and values at the next meeting. Dr. Sonne suggested that we invite DSHS and HHSC nursing staff to present at a future meeting. Chair Olivarez agreed, thanked all members, and proceeded to the next agenda item.

Agenda Item VI: Public Comment

Chair Olivarez asked Ms. Kupper if any public comments were submitted. She confirmed that no public comments were submitted and proceeded to closing remarks.

Agenda Item IX: Closing remarks, thank you and adjourn

Chair Olivarez acknowledged the work that Senator Lucio did in his more than 30 years of public service, including forming this task force. He also thanked the members and attendees for taking part in the meeting and adjourned the meeting 2:17 p.m.