Public Health Funding and Policy Committee Meeting

December 11, 2024

Minutes

Committee Members Attending

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

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

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 – Amarillo Public Health Department

Attendees:

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| Alma Allen Johnson | Noah Chornyak | Clifton Karnes |
| Michael Comfort | Betsy Cox | Colin Crocker |
| Michael DeLeon | Steve Eichner | Debra Fisher |
| Dr. Jennifer M. Griffith | Daniel Knapp | Christina Kubenka |
| Lindsay L. Lanagan | Glenna Laughlin | Dr. Scott Milton |
| Christine Murphy | Claire Niday | Dr. Lilian Peake |
| Dr. Carlos Plasencia | Laura Ryon | Monica Rodriguez |
| James Gray | Katherine Wells | Crystal Biggs-Pope |
| Dr. Varun Shetty | Dr. Saroj Rai | Dr. Cristina Garcia |
| Zena Hooper | Courtney Dezendorf | Amanda Brant |
| Imelda Garcia | Dr. Stephen Pont | Molly Fudell |
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Chair, Mr. Stephen Williams, called the meeting to order at 9:00 am and the committee members introduced themselves.

**December 11, 2024, Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Lisa Dick motioned to approve the minutes. Dr. Philip Huang seconded. Minutes approved.

**Emerging and Infectious Diseases Update:**

Dr. Varun Shetty provided an update to the committee on infectious diseases and the interactive dashboard as of December 11, 2024. The Texas Respiratory Illness Interactive Dashboard was launched approximately a year ago, with recent additions including reporting for influenza, COVID-19, and RSV. A new Statewide Snapshot has been incorporated into the landing page to track emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and deaths. Hospitals are mandated to report these metrics on a weekly basis. The dashboard includes updates from the CDC regarding immunizations and other infectious disease developments.

The first confirmed case of Clade I Mpox in the United States was reported in California on November 15, 2024. The CDC assessed the overall risk to the population as low.

Regarding H5N1, there are currently fifty-eight confirmed cases in the United States. The rate of influenza infection in Texas is consistent with that of the rest of the country. The CDC has issued updated information on prevention methods and new Spanish-language handouts. Healthcare providers have been requested to assist in increasing the submission of influenza A specimens for subtyping, as well as submitting "un-subtypeable" specimens to public health laboratories for further identification.

Aelia Akhtar, Associate Deputy Commissioner for the Infections Disease Prevention Division, presented updates on Congenital Syphilis and Immunization Data Sharing. She reported a 1% increase in Congenital Syphilis cases from 2022 to 2023.

Every contracted Local Health Entity (LHE) with an immunization section will have its own Tableau dashboard. Statewide coverage rates will also be included on the dashboards once the information is collected. The addresses will not be included.

**Legislative Session Update:**

Ms. Amanda Brandt, the Legislative and Policy Coordinator for the Division for Regional and Local Health Operations, presented the committee with an overview of the upcoming legislative process. There are 150 members in the Texas House of Representatives and thirty-one members in the Texas Senate. The first date to file bills was November 12, 2024, and the deadline for filing a bill is March 14, 2025. Approximately 7,000 pieces of legislation are filed during each session. As of this year, the identity of the House Speaker remains unknown. The House Speaker will be responsible for appointing committees to discuss the various bills that have been filed. DSHS will analyze bills impacting public health and monitor the exceptional items/legislative appropriations requests put forth.

**Data Modernization/Public Health Data Sharing Updates:**

Ms. Imelda Garcia, Chief Deputy Commissioner, advised that during the pandemic, a question was posed to the Local Health Entities (LHEs): What are the biggest needs for data sharing, and what gaps are there? The general feedback highlighted vital statistics, immunizations, STD, and

[National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS)](https://www.dshs.texas.gov/national-electronic-disease-surveillance-system)

provisional data as critical needs. The following efforts are in response to feedback from LHEs:

* Vital Event Data is being displayed as line-level data via Snowflake and aggregate data through Tableau dashboards.
* Regarding Texas Health Care Information Collection (THCIC) data sharing, line-level data is accessible via Snowflake, but no new dashboards have been created for this purpose.
* Trainings for Vital Event and THCIC data sharing are scheduled to be held later December 2024 and in January 2025.
* For Immunization Data Sharing, ImmTrac2 data will be standardized for the LHEs' contract service area.
* NEDSS Provisional Data Sharing is set to go live later this week, providing line-level data through Snowflake data views.

**Community Conversations on Health Grant Updates:**

Dr. Steven Pont, Deputy Commissioner for the Center for Public Health Policy and Practice (CPHPP) addressed the committee and shared their goal of collaborating with community partners across the state to identify health challenges and assist in finding solutions. He mentioned the importance of providing support to contractors, conducting evaluation, and offering public health support.

Dr. Cristina Garcia provided information regarding LHE funding. She noted that additional Community Conversations on Health (CCOH) funding was available to all LHEs that had an active CCOH contract. A public roundtable involving the CDC and LHEs was mentioned, emphasizing the need to continue finding resources to launch new programs.

Ms. Jessica Hyde addressed the committee regarding a roundtable event held by the Texas Department of Health Foundation and the Texas Department of Agriculture’s State Office of Rural Health on November 18, 2024. Various presenters and experts discussed the implementation and sustainability of community models aimed at facilitating change within communities. The Public Health Partnership Advancement initiative seeks to proactively engage with foundations, nonprofits, and other state agencies to identify opportunities for resource sharing or mission alignment with DSHS programs and other partners.

Ms. Courtney Dezendorf presented updates from the Office of Practice and Learning, which encompasses internship and fellowship programs designed to enhance the relevance of education to public health practice. Her presentation highlighted efforts to facilitate connections, communication, and trust between academic institutions and public health departments. The statewide objective is to prepare, educate, and train the public health workforce while supporting public health careers and accelerating the translation of research into practice. Additionally, the Texas Public Health Fellowship is a one-year, paid training program focused on professional development and building a public health workforce pipeline. These fellows are hosted by DSHS Public Health Regions and LHEs.

**Annual PHFPC Report Preparation:**

Ms. Glenna Laughlin stated that the finalized PHFPC annual report and recommendations have been posted online to the DSHS legislative reports page.

**Public Comment:**

No public comment at this time.

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

The next meeting date is scheduled for February 12, 2025. Three committee positions are expiring this year: Dr. Emily Prot, Dr. Julie St. John, and Mr. Steven Williams, whose terms will expire in February. An all-call for nominations has been sent out, with names due back by mid-January.

**Adjourn:**

Dr. Philip Huang made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Sharon Whitley seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.

Approved:

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Stephen L. Williams, Committee Chair Date