Public Health Funding and Policy Committee Meeting

February 8, 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

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 9:07 am and the committee members introduced themselves.

**December 7th Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Lisa Dick motioned to approve the minutes. Dr. Emilie Prot seconded including the suggested change. 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, specifically speaking on the Bivalent booster vaccines. Bivalent booster vaccines continue to move forward in vaccination efforts. Mr. David Gruber added more on long-term care facility vaccinations. These are also moving forward. Mr. Gruber noted a webinar that the federal government would be holding on vaccinating long-term care facilities. DSHS is working with Texas Disabilities Rights to find new ways to get high risk populations vaccinated. Ms. Garcia updated on the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) Vaccine Related Biologics and Product (VRBPAC) committee.

**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.

Dr. Phillip Huang had a question on the increase in Mpox from Central Texas recently. Ms. Garcia answered that this was just a brief uptick and not tied to an event. Ms. Garcia also put a reminder of the TPOXX pills expiring soon and there is a shelf-life extension for them in the works.

**Overview of DSHS Responses to 2022 PHFPC Annual Report Recommendations**

Mr. David Gruber recognized Dr. Jennifer Shufford, DSHS Commissioner in the room. Mr. Gruber proceeded to give an overview of the DSHS Responses to the 2022 PHFPC Annual Report. This overview included various topics such as Core Functions and how to best continue their implementation. Discussion was also held around regional activities and their services provided throughout the state in collaboration with regional Local Health Entities (LHEs).

Mr. Williams asked about a way to make public health services more visible for the future. Mr. Gruber said we are continuing to look for ways to improve for the future of public health. Dr. Huang asked about the document regarding the regional discussions and their findings, if they had been shared? Gruber said yes, they would be shared again.

Dr. Huang continued to state the importance of resources and infrastructure to continue to prepare for other emergencies. Mr. Gruber stated that a key component is to use our ability to get partners together to work through these issues and make progress.

Mr. Gruber continued to go over the DSHS responses to the data recommendation of the PHFPC Annual Report. Dr. Huang asked if the LHEs would have more opportunities to work with DSHS on creating new data solutions. Mr. Gruber asked if we could continue this conversation because this is of importance. Mr. Williams added that this relates to the earlier discussion of overall strategies.

Mr. Gruber continued addressing data recommendations stating the takeaway should be that more discussion should follow this portion of the report. Medicaid and the Public Health Provider-Charity Care Program (PHP-CCP) were also overviewed within the report. Mr. Williams added the importance of also not leaving COVID-19 behind on this and continuing to push an effort for vaccine administration. Mr. Rafael Alberti gave recognition to the Center for Public Health Policy and Practice, for their continuous cooperation in bringing Medicaid Billing and the PHP-CCP to present in these committee meetings.

**Update on the end of the Emergency Declaration for COVID-19**

Mr. Gruber gave an update on the end of the Presidential Public Health Emergency Declaration. We are not operating solely under the Presidential Declaration but also various other declarations including the states gubernatorial declaration. Governor Greg Abbott has stated that we will not be ending the declaration until the legislative session has had a chance to address some of the COVID-19 issues. The Presidential declaration focuses on the following: the coverage, cost, and payment of medical treatment and COVID-19 vaccines, Medicaid coverage and federal match rates, telehealth, Medicaid, and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) flexibilities, Medicare payment and coverage flexibilities, private insurance coverage and flexibilities, and access to medical countermeasures.

General grant guidance will not change but how they will be implemented may be. If funds are received from any Acts, you will need to contact your emergency management person of contact. The emergency declaration will not impact current Emergency Use Authorizations (EUAs) for drugs. Insurance should cover future vaccine costs.

Dr. Huang asked if DSHS is working to give LHEs a supply of COVID-19 vaccines for public health purposes. Mr. Gruber does not have the answer on that, but we can reach out.

Testing services and anti-viral drugs will not remain free. Telehealth services will be phased out as well as we move forward. This will vary state by state. Mr. Williams asked about the School Health Grant. Mr. Gruber answered that the testing grant is set to end in June. Mr. Gruber added that the portion of the Public Health Workforce Grant associated with school nurses has been extended out to 2024.

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

Dr. Cristina Garcia gave an update on the Health Disparities Grant. Dr. Garcia gave further updates on the no cost extension and the Texas Public Health Fellowship program, adding in highlights from the previous quarter. We expect contract amendments to be executed throughout the month of February. The Texas Fellowship cohort has gone through their initial 6-months and have been involved in a multitude of public health and professional development activities. Eighteen sites currently hosting these fellows have applied to be hosts for this program again. At least four fellows are in the hiring process moving into permanent positions with their host sites. We have received over four hundred applications for this year’s rounds which is a significant increase from last year. Screening is currently under way for those applications.

**Update on Senate Bill 73 Managed Care Organization Implementation:**

Ms. Sharonica White gave an update on Senate Bill 73 implementation beginning with an overview of the project and enrollment as a provider type. Because LHEs have a facility enrollment, only the facility will be allowed to be paid for Medicaid covered services. Effective December 21st, 2022, LHEs are allowed to enroll in Medicaid using the new local health provider type. Licensure requirements are not a requirement for LHEs. Manual reviews must be filled and submitted to their local city county who will submit to Texas Medicaid and Healthcare Partnership (TMHP) for review and approval to enroll for Medicaid. Application fees for LHEs are not required. We continue to collaborate with our vendor on the billing and reimbursement piece of Senate Bill 73. Any questions on enrollment should be directed to the TMHP contact center.

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

Mr. Steve Eichner presented an update regarding technology and interoperability. An updated version of the United States Core Data for Interoperability (US CDI) is under review and comment period. There are a few changes that will impact the availably of public health in a positive way. The Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists is working with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention to develop a base case for situational awareness data for future emergency events. This provides a base level of data required to be collected during potential future events. The Texas Health Services Authority is conducting a training session on their Pulse system which is a patient look up system from any electronic health records that is connected in the country. Information on this training is available on [www.thsa.org](http://www.thsa.org). There will also be a national effort in respect to rule making and there will be 60-to-90-day opportunity on this once it is released. The Division for Regional and Local Health Operations is continuing to work on its case management system and the Division for Community Health Improvement is working on a number of internal projects including collaboration with the Division for Laboratory and Infectious Disease Services (LIDS). LIDS is continuing to work on improving electronic case reporting.

Dr. Huang asked if there are any updates on when DSHS is going to declare readiness. Mr. Eichner answered that we are being careful to do this in a methodical way and want to be careful about not interfering with any reimbursement. Mr. Eichner answered that he is unable to give a hard date at this time, but it will be shared once set.

**Public Comment:**

No public comment at this time.

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

The next meeting date is scheduled for April 12th, 2023. Mr. Rafael Alberti updated on the status of the nomination process. Mr. Williams would like to talk more about the regional discussions document and will connect with Mr. Alberti for the other items. Mr. Alberti also added a link to the PFHPC webpage where all meeting materials will be posted.

**Adjourn**

Dr. Huang made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Lisa Dick seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.

Approved:

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Stephen L. Williams, Committee Chair Date