

Pima County Board of Health Minutes
September 23, 2020
Teleconference / MS Teams Meeting / In-person
Abrams Building, Room 2359
3950 S. Country Club Road
Tucson, Arizona 85714

1. CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Horwitz called meeting to order at 3:00PM

ATTENDANCE:

Mr. Bin An - Absent
Ms. Betty Villegas
Mr. Rene Gastelum - Absent
Mr. Charles Geoffrion, Vice President (Arrived after roll call)
Ms. Mary Lou Gonzales
Dr. Paul Horwitz, President
Mr. Mike Humphrey
Dr. Kathryn Kohler
Mr. Miguel Rojas
Dr. Gail Smith
Ms. Carolyn Trowbridge

A quorum was established (8)

Non-Board Members

Dr. Francisco García, Deputy County Administrator, Pima County - Absent
Dr. Theresa Cullen, Pima County Public Health Director

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Due to Teleconference Meeting the Pledge of Allegiance was not conducted.

3. MINUTES ADOPTION

- Adopted Board of Health Minutes August 26, 2020

The motion was made and seconded (Mr. Rojas / Ms. Gonzales) that the July 22, 2020, Board of Health Minutes be adopted. Dr. Horwitz noted there were minor typographical errors on page 3. Mr. Rojas noted there was a typographical error in the number of people who passed the motion to adopt the Board of Health (BOH) Minutes for July 22, 2020. The number should be 9, not 10, as there were only 9 people at the meeting. Dr. Horwitz noted that nothing of the meaning changed with these small typographical errors. The motion to adopt the BOH August 26, 2020 minutes carried 8 – 0.

4. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

- Dr. Cullen provided an update on COVID-19 cases specifically around the University of Arizona, which began increasing 3-4 weeks ago.
 - Pima County Health Department (PCHD) got involved through the Greek system after deciding to quarantine some houses with a positivity rate greater than 10%. The first house was quarantined on August 30, 2020.
 - Subsequently started to see a real agitated spread of COVID-19, and worked with BIO5 to do some predictive modeling and census tract data. The census tract data showed some areas where the R0 value had gotten up almost to 3, which was the highest the R0 value had been anywhere in the community to date.

- The decision was made on September 14, 2020 between PCHD and University of Arizona officials to issue a shelter-in-place self-quarantine for the area enclosed within 10th Street-Helen Street-Campbell Avenue-6th Street. In addition, roughly 40 pools and spas within that defined geographic area were closed if they had more than 10 undergraduate students, and remain closed today with 100% compliance.
- The shelter-in-place allows going in and out with certain limitations, while the voluntary quarantine means no going anywhere. The voluntary quarantine was also invoked for the Greek system, although arrangements were made with many of the Greek houses to allow their food preparation folks to come in to cook for them and then leave.
- PCHD also asked the University of Arizona to publish caseloads on their dashboard; that process began on September 21, 2020.
- The City of Tucson has been working very closely with Tucson Police Department as well, and there have been a few suspensions and a lot of Red tags issued, and names of students have been referred to Dr. Kendal Washington White, Vice Provost for Campus Life & Dean of Students at the University of Arizona.
- Testing continues to not be a problem. Approximately 20 screening groups were added in town, in the West University area as well as in facilities identified by people who are serving vulnerable populations in the area. El Rio opened testing at their El Pueblo site, and the City of Tucson is paying for that using their CARES Act funding while PCHD is helping coordinate. Still doing primarily PCR testing.
- Hospitalizations continue to decrease
- PCHD does not seem to have any issues with PPE or any of the medications that are being used to support COVID.
- Dr. Smith asked what percentage of University students are symptomatic, and are sick students being hospitalized?
- Dr. Cullen said there have been one, maybe two, hospitalizations. The students' report that they are not ill, but then during case investigation about 68% of the students indicate they have symptoms, they just don't report them as symptoms because they think they're not sick if they have a sore throat, or a little cough. University of Arizona Campus Health does the tests for symptomatic students on campus, and off-campus students can go there to get tested, we just don't know how many are off campus seeking evaluation at other places.
- Dr. Horwitz asked about the turnaround time for the PCR test results, and if testing is being run on Sundays now. He also inquired about how contact tracing is going.
- Dr. Cullen advised that Sunday testing is being done as a third shift had been opened. She also noted that the current test results goal is 24 hours. Contact tracing is up to about 52% within 48 hours. There is a decrease in the number of contact people are providing.
- Dr. Cullen mentioned that she and Brian Eller recently spoke to both Sunnyside and Catalina Foothills school boards about reopening concerns, school cases and testing. Sunnyside School District requested testing, and PCHD plans to do that again, and hopes to do flu vaccines at the same time.
- Ms. Gonzales asked what number, or percentage, must be reached for herd immunity?
- Dr. Cullen stated that the number is probably 85%, but we don't really know how long immunity lasts because there is no good data on this at all. The CDC indicates that after 90 days you should not assume that you have immunity.
- Mr. Humphrey asked what PCHD is doing about contact tracing with the immigrant population in Pima County. Dr. Cullen indicated PCHD is working with the IRC to inform the testing process for that population, but does not believe anything special is being done as regards contact tracing. PCHD does have access to a translation phone, and 40% of contact tracers are bilingual.

- Mr. Humphrey asked what infection rate or criteria was used by Pima County to reopen bars. Dr. Cullen emphasized that Pima County does not control the reopening of businesses, that Governor Doug Ducey does, so the criteria that were used is based on the Governor's criteria. Dr. Cullen noted that the bars are not reopened, but that restaurants in certain classes that have bars are reopened because the caseload lowered to moderate transmission with a positivity rate of less than 10%. PCHD has the ability to influence schools, but does not have the ability to influence businesses.
- Dr. Cullen stated that PCHD has a contract with Passport Health in Moline, IL, to distribute up to 100,000 immunizations. There was a really positive immunization event last weekend at Sells, on the Tohono O'odham reservation, where almost 350 people were immunized. PCHD hopes to work with the Tucson Indian Center as well. The Pascua Yaqui have their own program planned so do not seem to need help from PCHD.
- Dr. Cullen advised that PCHD has reopened all clinics, although some do not have the traditional hours they had before. We are guiding our clinical providers to include three new priorities in the clinics. Those three things are hypertension screening on all clients; colorectal cancer screening, evaluation and referrals; and screening for intimate partner violence. These three priorities are based on looking at the mortality data for Pima County from 2019 to 2020.
- Dr. Cullen mentioned that PCHD runs a large WIC program, which is going to continue to be virtual because it's been highly effective as WIC enrollment is up about 15%.
- Dr. Cullen also advised that the PCHD has phased out the Emergency Operations Center over the past 2-4 weeks. Logistical support remains, but staff has been physically moved back to be part of the PCHD community, and so they can be more coordinated in their approach to what they're doing.
- Mr. Rojas asked about what tasks the Public Health Nurses are doing now, such as if they are home visiting yet.
- Dr. Cullen noted that Public Health nurses are not home visiting at this time, but many are back in clinic. Some are still supporting the emergency response. The long-term care program is going to continue. And many of the empty positions have been filled; we used to have 6-7 open, but now there are only 3 open.

5. STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE

- Dr. Cullen indicated that PCHD is embarking on a multi-sector process for the new strategic plan. PCHD will be using a human-centered design approach, and is identifying 20-25 national, regional and local leaders to help inform us about what we should be doing.
- Phase one is to survey staff internally and the community externally, and will be a 2-3 week accelerated process. The survey will ask what are we doing well, and what aren't we doing that we should be doing? The survey will include topics like violence prevention, racism, climate change and heat issues, and then try to get a prioritization from people about what really matters. A group of statisticians has been hired to develop, distribute and evaluate the surveys.
- The information will be combined into a report that will include information about Healthy People 2030 and the mortality data, as well as the new accreditation guidelines that came out about 6 months ago.
- We hope to have survey data within 3 weeks. There is some urgency to complete the survey because the results will be used to inform the supplemental budget request that Mr. Huckleberry asked PCHD to prepare for presentation to the Board of Supervisors in December.

- The supplemental budget request is a half-year supplemental that will be utilized to address those issues that we need to be paying attention to now, but the goal is for a continuation of those funds as base-budget funding, because the public health budget should not be a rounding error. There will also be a request in the supplemental for permanent funding for data infrastructure.

6. CDC/U.S. DIGITAL SERVICE PROPOSED WORK

- Dr. Cullen informed the BOH members about the opportunity presented by NACCHO to work with U.S. Digital Services and the CDC in creating a data hub for Pima County at no cost other than standing up a data repository. This opportunity was originally only presented to states to participate in, but Dr. Cullen asked that Pima County be considered for selection.
- Dr. Cullen is familiar with U.S. Digital Services and its administrator, Matthew Cutts, from her work with healthcare.gov.
- Pima County was selected to participate after U.S. Digital Services contacted the State of Arizona for approval; the State agreed to let Pima County participate. Pima County is one of two counties in the nation selected for this opportunity; the other county chosen was Harris County, where Houston, Texas, is located.
- U.S. Digital Services will be visiting PCHD next week. The goal of the program is to help Pima County figure out how to do integrated data for the Epidemiology response with the private labs, with the community health centers, with the hospitals, with the County, and with the State. They will be going to talk to Tohono O’odham and Pascua Yaqui, and will also go to El Rio, Sahuarita, Tucson Medical Center, and University Medical Center.
- Dr. Horwitz asked is U.S. Digital Services a private company, or non-profit, or government?
- Dr. Cullen replied that they are federal government; she said to think of it as being similar to a Peace Corps for tech people in that they come in on a 2-4 year term of service. Dr. Cullen asked Dr. Horwitz if he would like to have a virtual meeting set up for BOH members to have some time with the U.S. Digital Services representatives while they are in town. Dr. Horwitz agreed that it would be nice to try to arrange something with them.
- Dr. Cullen also noted that the CDC/U.S. Digital Services work aligns 100% with the new electronic lab integration (ELC) grant that PCHD received. The ELC will allow PCHD to do data sharing through labs, so that our lab data will come in electronically, as well as to help facilitate the establishment of a clinical platform that will allow PCHD to integrate social determinants of health data, clinical data and public health data for use in care management.

7. RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

- Supervisor Villegas reminded the BOH that one of the goals of putting out the report “Shining the Light on Social Inequities” was the belief that Pima County should declare that racism is a public health crisis. Research indicates that right now 90 localities, 26 counties, and 3 full states have declared racism a public health crisis, and that those localities and counties cover 20 states. This is significant, and her group is working on a resolution that will declare Pima County a public health crisis; that resolution is being vetted through Administration and through Dr. Cullen’s office and her staff, and will be presented to the BOH when it’s ready.
- Supervisor Villegas noted that it is really important to understand that this is structural racism, structural inequities that have gone on in the entire country since the beginning, rather than people being racist.
- Supervisor Villegas stated that PCHD, as the public health authority, needs to look at structural racism from a public health perspective when looking at housing, transportation,

planning, zoning and education – all the things that socially impact the community. PCHD needs to look at equality versus equity, and what is the difference between those two things?

- Supervisor Villegas mentioned that the City of Tucson has been working on an equity plan for their budgeting, and for different programming, and they are in the process of setting up an equity office.
- Dr. Cullen agreed that this is a structural issue, and that it is appropriate for public health departments to be in the lead on this and embrace it, but that somebody besides the Public Health department needs to help state it.
- Dr. Horwitz said he sees the issue more broadly than just as racial inequity, that this involves income inequality as well as economic and educational disparities, so asked for an example of structural racial inequality so he can better understand the issue.
- Supervisor Villegas responded that during her career in affordable housing, there were many instances when loan or mortgage programs were not advertised in the neediest communities, but targeted to more well-to-do areas and individuals.
- Supervisor Villegas also mentioned that the testing obstacles reflected by the dive her team did into the census tracts to research COVID-19 hotspots in the south-side community is another example of structural racism. Supervisor Villegas pointed out how often pop-up testing and mobile testing were requested, and the response was always that PCHD is not equipped for that. But suddenly the University of Arizona had an increase in COVID-19 cases and testing mobilization came quickly to every corner. So when you're talking about equity versus equality, that's exactly what it is. It was also noted that with Dr. Cullen's help there has been more testing available in the south-side communities, but not at the same level as elsewhere.
- Mr. Humphrey suggested that Supervisor Villegas reach out to Laura Conover, the new Pima County Attorney, as she will have a lot to do with addressing issues of structural equity, racism, and equality in the work she will be doing. Supervisor Villegas agreed and mentioned that the public health issue of criminal justice reform is yet another area that needs to be discussed.

8. SUMMATION OF ACTION ITEMS & PROPOSAL OF FUTURE ITEMS

- Ms. Trowbridge asked that the Ethics issue be brought back at the next meeting. Dr. Smith suggested that since Ethics is probably going to be an ongoing conversation, could that possibly be an ongoing part of the agenda. Dr. Horwitz agreed that this is a good idea.
- Dr. Horwitz reminded the Board to send him any future items for the agenda by email.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The motion was made and seconded (Dr. Smith / Ms. Gonzales) that the September 23, 2020 meeting adjourn. Motion carried 9-0.

The meeting adjourned at 4:21PM

The next meeting is scheduled for October 28, 2020, at 3:00 P.M.