

Teleconference / MS Teams Meeting

Abrams Building, Room 2359

3950 S. Country Club Road

Tucson, Arizona 85714

1. CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Horwitz called meeting to order at 3:03 P.M.

ATTENDANCE:

Mr. Bin An - Absent

Supervisor Matt Heinz – Arrived after roll call

Mr. Rene Gastelum - Absent

Mr. Charles Geoffrion, Vice President

Ms. Mary Lou Gonzales

Dr. Paul Horwitz, President

Mr. Mike Humphrey

Dr. Kathryn Kohler

Mr. Miguel Rojas - Absent

Dr. Gail Smith

Ms. Carolyn Trowbridge

A quorum was established (7)

Non-Board Members

Dr. Theresa Cullen, Pima County Health, Director

Ms. Paula Mandel, Pima County Health, Deputy Director

Mr. Vic Pereira, Pima County Health, Deputy Director

Presenters

Ms. Amanda Monroy, Pima County Health, Health Policy Manager

Ms. Jennie Mullins, Pima County Health, Administrative Support Services Manager

Mr. Andrés Portela, Pima County Health, Health Equity Program Manager

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

3. MINUTES ADOPTION

- Adopted Board of Health November 17, 2021 Meeting Minutes.

The motion was made and seconded (Mr. Geoffrion/Dr. Smith) that the November 17, 2021, Board of Health Meeting Minutes be adopted. The motion carried unanimously.

4. CALL TO AUDIENCE

- No speakers for Call to Audience.
- Suzanne Goodman requested that Supervisor Heinz acknowledge his presence at the meeting verbally to be added to the roll call.

5. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

- Dr. Cullen provided a slide show for the COVID-19 update:

- CASES:

- Pima County remains in a very high transmission phase of 350-400 cases/100K; Arizona overall is at 404 cases/100K;
- Deaths continue to increase - just surpassed 3,000 cumulative deaths;
- Dr. Cullen noted that there are greater risks for the unvaccinated in Arizona: they are 4 times more likely to get COVID, and 15 times more likely to die from it;

- Believe the Omicron variant is in Pima County, and Maricopa County has 6 cases.
- In the process of reviewing early data from the State to confirm current Omicron cases; at this time 99% of cases are still Delta variant;
- In regards to the Epi Curve in Pima County cases, the most concerning aspect is that the curve has not gone down since August 2021.
- In response to Mr. Geoffrion's question about determining the R_0 level for Pima County, Dr. Cullen advised that the R_0 level is based on testing results, which may or may not be provided by folks doing home testing so the data may be incorrect. The current R_0 level for most of Pima County is 1, and that data is run by census tract and provided by the University of Arizona.
- VACCINATION STATUS:
 - 69% of Pima County is fully vaccinated;
 - 32% of 5-11 year olds have received one vaccination shot;
 - Approximately 1.5 million shots have been given;
 - Pima County Health Department (PCHD) is running the Tucson Convention Center (TCC), Abrams Public Health Building and all three PCHD clinics as walk-in vaccination sites;
 - On average TCC is administering roughly 600 shots per day, while Abrams is averaging between 400-450 shots daily;
 - Additional vaccination sites for boosters include CVS and Walgreens pharmacies, as well as hospitals and primary care doctors;
 - The three PCHD clinics – East, Theresa Lee and North – have given over 8700 COVID vaccines since June 2021, with 4200 of those given since November 1, which are substantial numbers for our clinics. These vaccinations have been facilitated by the Medical Reserve Corps. The vast amount of vaccinations being done are on a walk-in basis.
 - All three clinics plus two teams from the vaccine equity team are tackling home-bound vaccinations Monday-Friday from December to January, with approximately 200 vaccinations scheduled so far.
 - The State has given PCHD the ability to sort out booster shots from first vaccination shots, and preliminary data seems to indicate that about 1/3 of those 18 years and older who are eligible for boosters have gotten them, but that data is not yet verified.
- TESTING:
 - As of December 14, 2021, approximately 4,800 tests have been administered with an 8.0-13% positivity rate;
 - Have expanded testing at the Liberty Plaza site to 7 days per week;
 - BinaxNOW home test kits are provided to PCHD through the State, who is getting them from the federal sector, and roughly 40,000 have been given out now;
 - Distribution of BinaxNOW home test kits is being done at all Pima County Public Library sites;
 - Abrams is also distributing BinaxNOW home test kits, as well as providing free surgical masks – provided by the State - at the time of distribution in an effort to move people from cloth masks to surgical masks;
 - In response to an inquiry about PCR testing, the testing protocol is currently being reworked to include some increased availability of PCR testing for people who are traveling or returning from travel.
- HOSPITALIZATIONS:
 - There is limited ICU bed availability. 34% of ICU beds are in use by 121 patients;
 - 4 ICU beds remain available in Pima County at the Veteran's Administration (VA) through the VA's Fourth Mission Agreement, which has been extended through March 2022. These 4 beds can be used by non-veterans as long as there are no veteran's in need of them;
 - Surge bed availability stands at 2% with 36 beds available;

- 50% of ventilators are in use by 111 COVID positive patients;
- Less than 2% of positive COVID cases are breakthrough cases.
- SCHOOLS:
 - Dr. Cullen reported that PCHD is developing a new proposal to institute a “Test to Stay” protocol in the schools, modeled after the protocol used in Ohio where students who are contacts and test negative on days 1, 3 and 5 can stay in the class if an agreement is signed that they stay masked in the classroom for 14 days. The goal of this protocol is to keep students in the classroom, and does not require the entire class to mask, just the contact student(s). School superintendents have seen a preliminary draft of the protocol, and PCHD is in the process of revising it with the hope that it is able to be pushed out in January when the schools return to session.
- SEASONAL FLU:
 - Dr. Cullen noted that seasonal flu rates remain below the 5-year historical average, but could still cause a feared ‘twindemic’ in late December – early January. We are not seeing this yet, but continue to monitor the situation.
- CLINICAL SERVICES UPDATE:
 - PrEP Starter Pack implementation is on track for late January 2022. The goal is that if a patient comes to a PCHD clinic and indicates they are at risk for HIV, they will be started on prophylactic medication, and the clinic will facilitate follow-up. A patient does not need to have access to funding to initiate the starter pack.
- Supervisor Heinz asked Dr. Cullen about staff morale, and staffing levels. Dr. Cullen mentioned that:
 - PCHD and Human Resources (HR) developed matrices for epidemiology, public health nurses and communicable disease investigators to allow for competitive salaries. Two of the three matrices – epidemiology and public health nursing - have been approved; the third, communicable disease investigators, is with County Administration, but there is no indication that it will not be approved as well.
 - PCHD remains at about a 32% vacancy rate with a pretty significant turnover, which is assumed to be sustained.
- Supervisor Heinz asked Dr. Cullen’s opinion on a County-wide mask mandate in light of the continuing surging of Delta and the coming of Omicron. Dr. Cullen noted that she, personally, is in favor of a mask mandate for anything inside, and that there should be an overall County mandate from a public health perspective.
- Mr. Humphrey inquired if there was anything the PCHD could do, from a public health perspective, to institute a mask mandate at mass events like a University of Arizona basketball game. Dr. Cullen believes that because the University is a State entity, a County-issued mask mandate would not apply to them, and Supervisor Heinz agreed that this was his understanding, as well.
- Mr. Humphrey asked what percentage of the Health Department staff has not been vaccinated. Dr. Cullen that the number of people who directly interface with vulnerable populations who are not vaccinated is in the low single digits, and the number of vaccinated staff was 94%.
- Supervisor Heinz asked what additional efforts are being made to distribute vaccinations to the vulnerable populations in areas with higher case rates. Dr. Cullen noted that PCHD has done 3 to 4 clinics every day at schools in high risk areas where people want us to go. Dr. Cullen also mentioned that PCHD has been in discussion with the University of Arizona to see if they will stand up another point-of-distribution (POD) vaccine clinic for us, as well as with FEMA to discuss mobile vaccination PODs.
- Mr. Geoffrion made a motion that the Board of Health (BOH) write a letter to be sent to every Health Department employee commending them for their service under these pandemic conditions. Ms. Trowbridge seconded that motion. There was no discussion on the motion.

Dr. Horwitz called for the vote, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Geoffrion advised Dr. Horwitz that he will assist in composing the letter.

6. COVID-19 UPDATE – STANDING ITEM

- This update was merged with the Director's update.

7. ETHICS COMMITTEE UPDATE – STANDING ITEM

- Ms. Jennie Mullins provided an update on the most recent Ethics Committee meeting:
 - The committee revisited the issue of whether to reinstate administering long-term reversible contraception (LARC) through the mobile teen clinics.
 - The Ethics Committee recommended reinstatement, and a memo was drafted and sent from the Director's office to County Administration for review.
 - The Clinical Services team is currently reviewing the policy and procedures for Family Planning and Teen Services to ensure this practice is being used across the board.
 - The committee also discussed the need to have a better understanding of the hospital crisis standards of care, and providing input into the current situation. The committee is looking for a speaker at the next meeting to discuss how the standards of care are being implemented, and the implications for public health.
- Dr. Horwitz inquired about committee member participation, and when the next meeting will be held.
- Ms. Mullins noted that there are a solid 8-10 regular members from all walks of life in the County who consistently join the meetings. PCHD is currently developing a policy for the external Ethics Committee functions and its roles and responsibilities, with the intent to engage the community members in co-designing that policy, including a review of the membership and recruitment needs. Ms. Mullins also mentioned that the next Ethics Committee meeting is scheduled for January 6, 2022.
- Mr. Humphrey inquired if the Ethics Committee has given any further consideration to paying people to get vaccinated?
- Ms. Mullins recalled that this question was originally discussed in terms of how incentives should be applied, but there are restrictions on how federal grant funding can be used, and the Health Resources and Services Administration has issued tight guidelines on the use of the gift cards being provided. Ms. Mullins also advised that there was early agreement that the incentives should be on a collective basis rather than an individualized basis.
- Mr. Humphrey asked about the possible impact a pending decision by the U.S. Supreme Court on the status of Roe v. Wade would have on PCHD reproductive health programs.
- Ms. Mullins advised that a presentation has been requested from PCHD by one of the BOS districts about the history of reproductive health and rights in Pima County over the past one hundred years, so that is being prepared, and is expected to be shared with the BOH and the Ethics Committee.
- Dr. Cullen advised that if and when there is a Supreme Court decision on reproductive rights that affects Pima County it will be taken up by the Ethics Committee for consideration on the implications for current policy.

8. DECLARING RACIAL & ETHNIC INEQUITIES & INCOME INEQUALITY IN PIMA COUNTY TO BE A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS – STANDING ITEM

- Ms. Amanda Monroy introduced Mr. Andrés Portela, the new Health Equity Program Manager.
- Mr. Portela is very excited to be a part of the Health Equity team and looks forward to finding ways to improve life outcomes in the community, as he is a Tucson native and has extended family in the Western Hills neighborhood.
- Mr. Portela spoke about his background, which includes assisting in establishing the Office of Equity for the City of Tucson under the direction of former Council Member Lane Santa

Cruz. Prior to that, Mr. Portela worked at the Dunbar Pavilion in Tucson. Mr. Portela also has experience in the areas of fair housing and civil rights, and has been a community organizer for quite some time.

9. SUMMATION OF ACTION ITEMS & PROPOSAL OF FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Dr. Horwitz reminded the board members to send him an email and ask to have any items they wish to discuss put on the agenda.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The motion was made and seconded (Mr. Geoffrion/Dr. Kohler) that the December 15, 2021 meeting adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 4:31 P.M.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 19, 2022 at 3:00 P.M.