

Sacramento County Public Health Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

September 2, 2020, 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM

Meeting Location

Zoom Meeting (Open to the Public)

Moderator: Dr. Farla Kaufman

Scribe: Steven Orkand

Board Attendees: Jennifer Anderson, Jofil Borja, Sandy Damiano (ex-officio), Paula Green, Steve Heath, Olivia Kasirye (ex-officio), Farla Kaufman, Barbara Law, Steven Orkand, Sonal Patel, Phil Summers, Annie Tat, Jack Zwald

Board Members Excused: Jeff Rabinovitz

Board Members Absent: Emanuel Petrisor, Tina Slee, Kathleen Wright

Guests: Peter Beilenson

Meeting Opened: 12:03 PM

Welcome and Introductions: Dr. Kaufman welcomed all Board members and guests. There are no vacancies on PHAB

Department of Health Services Update:

Dr. Peter Beilenson reported on progress in his Department. In Sacramento County there have been just over 18,400 cases of COVID-19, with 127 in the last day. On a daily basis, there are approximately 7/100,000, which is the threshold to move to a less restrictive tier in the State's ranking system. There are fewer than 200 COVID cases in the hospital, and 55 in the ICUs. These are both much improved from the beginning of August. There have been 309 deaths from COVID in Sacramento County, and we are still losing several per day. There is evidence of definite improvement.

The Governor introduced a four-tier color scheme for rating counties. Sacramento is in the worst category, which is purple. The critical metrics are % positive tests and the case rate per 100,000. We need to show progress or stability for 3 weeks before moving to a less proscriptive level. Details of the rules that govern workspace safety are on the State website: www.covid19.ca.gov. In general, Sacramento follows the State's guidelines.

Dr. Beilenson feels that the State opened up too quickly in early summer, and this caused the major spike that we've experienced in the summer. Recent cases have predominantly been in younger people, ages 20-49. There is much more understanding of the disease, so current guidelines are based on our accumulated knowledge of the last 6 months. The importance of masks, outdoor vs indoor gathering, social distancing, and other factors have become clear.

Dr. Beilenson would have added hospitalization rate to the metrics used by the State. Death rate follows hospitalizations by 3-4 weeks. He feels that the Governor's guidelines are reasonable.

Sonal Patel, Jofil Borja, Annie Tat, and Farla Kaufman have been working on a social media campaign. Money is available for this project. Farla explained that the logo for the project has been approved, but that the content remains to be approved. Steve Orkand explained that Dr. Beilenson will be doing an online public forum to discuss COVID-19 and Public Health's directives.

Public Health Update

Dr. Olivia Kasirye reported on the activities of her Division. The Board of Supervisors recently appropriated \$45 million for COVID-related public health projects. Almost \$20 million will go to community groups that are partnering with the County to provide services. Contracts are being prepared. Some of the money will go to Housing for the Harvest, which temporarily assists agricultural workers who need to isolate due to COVID-19. Other programs will assist other disadvantaged groups.

The State released guidelines for school opening. There are many restrictions for counties in the purple tier, and most education in Sacramento County will be by distance learning. Certain schools, K-6, may request waivers. So far, the County has received 13 applications from private schools, and they are being reviewed. The State has also made provision for schools to create programs, utilizing small education “pods” supervised by an adult, that might serve students with special needs, the homeless, and others. The County is helping the schools with COVID testing of staff.

Jofil Borja asked if the County could help with hand-washing stations. Dr. Kasirye asked him to send an email with details. Home Key is a State housing program to assist the homeless during the pandemic. The County is cooperating with current efforts. Unfortunately, the Board of Supervisors voted against financial participation in that program.

Dr. Kaufman asked if Public Health is getting what it needs to successfully pursue their projects. Dr. Kasirye joked that we need more TIME. She said that the new appropriation will help tremendously. Dr. Orkand asked if the County will allow new hires for the recently awarded STD grants. PHAB sent a letter to support this. Dr. Kasirye has not yet heard of a change in the hire freeze policy. Dr. Orkand also asked if Public Health funding for non-COVID projects is secure. Dr. Beilenson reported that budget discussions would resume in September. Health Services will receive \$6 million less, but much of this comes from Behavioral Health which needs less because of decreased utilization. Going forward, Health Services growth requests for 21-22 are looking good. The Primary Care center is generating significant revenue. They are hiring new physicians and nurses. Correctional health is in good shape because of funding to support the consent decree. Public Health will do well if it can maintain current levels of revenue.

Dr. Kaufman asked about contact tracing. Dr. Kasirye noted that the rapid rise of cases in the summer overwhelmed the contact tracing program, but this is improving. Hiring and training continue. Data collection remains a problem. The County still must prioritize in contact tracing. Testing availability is improving. The turnaround time has improved. The Cal Expo testing site continues to be maned by a mixture of employees and volunteers, including the National Guard. Dr. Summers asked if the cooling centers are set up for social distancing, masks, symptom screening. They are.

Primary Health and Correctional Health Update

Dr. Sandy Damiano reported on activity in her Division. The Correctional Health Report was distributed to PHAB earlier and is available on the website. The efforts to control COVID are ongoing. Since March, the Jail has consistently found cases in their intake housing quarantine units. Positive cases are moved to isolation pods where they receive care. People with suspected COVID, those with symptoms before diagnosis, and new transfers are also isolated until their status is confirmed. Mobility around the Jails and to the outside is limited, and this has helped to control the spread. There have been 3495 COVID tests. There have been 80 cases, all detected during the intake process. There are currently 17 cases in the Jail. There has been no spread within the Jail and no deaths. COVID data is being posted on the Sheriff's Department website. The Sheriff did not want to post COVID data on the Beneficiary and Family Centered Care (BFCC) website because he did not feel the numbers adequately represent the full picture. The BFCC website does not request the numbers of COVID tests, and the Sheriff felt it should, since our number of cases, relative to the numbers tested, is striking.

The Consent Decree, the remedial plan required by the Court, requires improvements in access to health and mental health care, improvements in HIPPA compliance, staffing, and ADA compliance. Each area addressed is huge, very time intensive, and will require major changes in practices. This represents a culture change for staff. The work is being done. Custody staff is also involved, complicating the issues. The combined rated capacity of the Jails, according to the BFCC, is 4005. The combined jail population in March was 3,542, and this went down by May. There were many releases related to COVID. Many of these releasees were within 30 days of the end of their sentences. Regarding intake, law enforcement made fewer arrests. The zero-bail schedule is being maintained, which allows more arrestees to be sent home. Currently, there are 2800-2900 inmates, but this will probably rise. Dr. Damiano is part of a high-level group, primarily law enforcement, working on inmate reduction strategies. The State will likely release some of their inmates to the counties, and this won't help with census. There are plans to renovate the Jails and to build a new downtown annex which will house mental health and drug treatment areas. This project will take several years. Despite approval from the Grand Jury, the Board of Supervisors has voted to not accept potential funds for a buildout at the RCCC facility. The BOS seemed to be responding to the advocates who are urging population reduction. Despite this vote, the County will need to comply with demands of the Consent Decree.

Dr. Summers asked about the status of medically assisted therapy (MAT) for substance abuse disorder in the Jail. There is a contract with WellSpace Health and there is a substance abuse councillor in the Main Jail who can provide care and/or followup. There is an arrangement with Core Medical Clinic to have methadone delivered to the Jail. There is a new X-wavered provider at the Jail who will be able to provide this specialty service.

Dr. Kaufman asked about efforts to improve continuity of care. The County is now providing 30-day prescriptions on discharge for dischargees. This may be extended to the pre-sentence population. Efforts are being made to provide

followup for inmates with serious mental illness upon discharge. For chronic health conditions, Sacramento Covered will assist people to obtain or reactivate Medi-Cal upon discharge and re-link them to care.

The new budget request may need to be scaled back because of budget pressures.

Proposed Letter to Board of Supervisors Regarding Use of CARES Act Money

A letter was prepared by Steven Orkand and Farla Kaufman regarding the recent controversy over appropriation of CARES Act funds. This letter was included in materials for today's PHAB meeting. It requests more focused leadership on how these funds are utilized, and greater transparency. Given the way CARES Act funds were handled, Phil Summers was skeptical of the actual intentions of the County Executive and the BOS. He felt that the Supervisors should be kept to their promise of full disclosure in the future. He would like periodic updates as an accountability mechanism.

It was moved and seconded to accept the letter and send it to the Board of Supervisors. It was unanimously approved.

Initiative for Young People to Wear Masks to Prevent COVID-19 Transmission

At an earlier meeting, Dr. Beilenson asked members of PHAB to help expand Public Health's anti-COVID campaign to a younger audience. Annie Tat reported on her work with the group, Youth in Action. They will begin advertising our wear a mask message on Instagram. A small budget request will be sent to Dr. Kasirye's office. There will be a 3-month social media campaign showing youth wearing masks. This will include the Sac County logo and health-related messages. The messages will be on Instagram.

Jofil described a social media campaign involving RT, Sac City, Sac Kings, Sac Republic, and a number of athletes and elected officials. This has been on Twitter, has been on marquee boards, and includes a variety of promotional items.

Public Comment

There was none

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:23 PM.

Submitted by Steven Orkand, Scribe.