

Public Health Advisory Council (PHAC) Meeting Minutes

June 14, 2022



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.



ATTENDING: Sonja Ackman, Rachel Arnold, Robin Bousquet, Nicole Bowles, David Eppelsheimer, Commissioner Nafisa Fai, Andrea Lara, Dick Stenson, Annie Paulsen, Leticia Vitela, Madhavi Bharadwaj, Nicole Bowles, Jennifer McElravey, Afam Okoye, Hemi Pariyani, Larysa Thomas

ABSENT: Eileen Derr, Julie Scotland

STAFF: Dr. Marie Boman-Davis, Alex Coleman, Lainie Clem, Mary Sawyers, Amy Sturgeon

GUEST PRESENTERS: Adrienne Donner, Cynthia Valdivia, Gaby Rodriguez, Yera Castaneda

Welcome

Jennifer McElravey started the meeting with introductions and an ice breaker.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The April and May 2022 minutes were reviewed. Hemi Pariyani motioned to approve the minutes. Larysa Thomas seconded the motion. All were in favor and none opposed. The motion was passed.

Public Health Emergency Preparedness

PHAC members received an overview of public health emergency preparedness to understand the role of the Public Health Division in an emergency and how we engage with community to help them prepare for emergencies. PHAC members also learned how we are working to update our emergency plans and frameworks using an equity lens and community engagement. See PowerPoint for more details.

1. **PH Emergency Preparedness 101 & Engaging Conversation** (Adrienne Donner)

- Public Health Preparedness differs from Emergency Management in that it focuses on public health emergencies, with an *equity* lens, ensuring that Washington County can respond as an organization at an individual level.
- Focuses on public health responses with an equity lens.
- CDC outlines 14 National Standards for State, Local, Tribal and territorial Public Health Capabilities:

▪ Community Preparedness	▪ Emergency Operations Coordination
▪ Emergency Public Information & Warning	▪ Fatality Management
▪ Information Sharing	▪ Mass Care
▪ Medical Countermeasure Dispensing & Administration	▪ Medical Material Management and Distribution
▪ Medical Surge	▪ Nonpharmaceutical Interventions
▪ Public Health Laboratory Testing	▪ Public Health Surveillance and Epidemiological Investigation
▪ Responder Safety Health	▪ Volunteer Management

- a. **Hazards, Outreach & Training Efforts** (Cynthia Valdivia)
 - Analysis of the most common hazards in Washington County.
 - Preparedness Outreach and Training at Community Events such as Fairs, Cultural Centers, Safety Town Children, Veterans, and Senior Centers.

- b. **Public Health Modernization** (Gaby Rodriguez)
 - Works to integrate Public Health, Healthcare, and Community Level Health.
 - Focuses on achieving “a high standard of health for *all* Oregonians, regardless of income, race, ethnicity or geographic location.”
 - Public Health Modernization Manual: https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/About/TaskForce/Documents/public_health_modernization_manual.pdf
 - Fact Sheet: Task Force on the Future of Public Health Services: Recommendations to Modernize Oregon’s Public Health System <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/ABOUT/TASKFORCE/Documents/Future-of-Public-Health-factsheet.pdf>

- c. **Health Equity and Plan Updates** (Amy Sturgeon)
 - Applies a Health Equity Lens.
 - Considers “The Social Determinants of Health” in addressing inequities.
 - Involving Community Members, Subject Matter Experts and Stakeholders in Planning Strategies.

- d. **Public Health Responses** (Adrienne Donner on behalf of Jack Nuttall)
 - Plans Require Flexibility and Scalable Responses (Incident Management Team vs. Emergency Operations Center)

Q&A for PH Emergency Preparedness 101 & Engaging Conversation:

Q: How do you work with the school districts for emergency preparedness?

A: We have worked to bring food to those in need through the schools, we have been present at some high school career fairs, invited to participate in many active shooter trainings, and invited to do a “Pillowcase Preparedness for 3-5 graders. We would definitely like to engage more with schools.

Q: I have heard of some Beaverton schools that have performed earthquake drills in which the kids are told to get out of the building(s) after a 3-minute warning drill and to “not look back.” They focus on escaping the building rather than the duck-and-cover method common to other schools. Are other districts performing these new drills?

A: Beaverton works really closely with their CERT group, and has had advanced emergency and hazard training. Hillsboro has made strides to build its newest schools to be earthquake ready (and has retrofit many), but the message varies in districts that have a lot of older buildings. For instance, in Portland where a larger portion of the buildings are old, the concern is for falling stones and debris from the building itself, so the method of duck and

cover is safer. The general message to kids there is focused on staying indoors, getting under something, and covering their heads.

Q: Are emergency preparedness classes only taught in English and Spanish, or are they taught in other languages?

A: We are currently working on getting emergency alerts in more languages. Spanish is primary, but it has also been translated in Chinese and taught in Chinese once. We are working on doing this more often.

Q: In an emergency, how do people know where to go for shelter and/or help?

A: If the emergency is a residential house or apartment fire, the Red Cross is oftentimes the most logical resource. For an earthquake? We have been looking at long-term shelter plans and as well as where to go for assistance. This is one of the reasons we've been working on utilizing emergency alert systems, so we have a way to get messages out to the community.

Q: In the case of an earthquake, does FEMA step in?

A: We need to plan that for the first few weeks, we are on our own. We will rely on prepared community members like our active CERT team, then the federal support will start to come in. But when it comes to "The Big One"—Cascadia? The entire west coast is expected to experience major damage, so we will be on our own for much longer...it will be more difficult *logistically* to bring aid to us if major roadways and bridges are disabled. If it's the West Hills Fault? It would involve a smaller area, so we would probably get help a little faster as it would be more focused.

Q: With what is happening in Ukraine, it brings to mind what we would do in a war – what would we do in a nuclear war?

A: We are much more limited in getting help to people in a nuclear war. The best thing we can do is to distribute particular medications that protect specific organs. Via the CDC, Public Health has access to some medications, but the rest will be public messaging on how to help ourselves.

Q: What about our houseless population? How do we get messages and help out to this group during an emergency?

A: We have some experience this from when we had dangerous air quality from wildfires, when COVID was first peaking, and when we had extreme heat days in 2020. We work primarily with the people who are already working with these populations. We rely on connecting with our community partners who are interacting on a regular basis with these folks and have already established a level of trust or familiarity with them.

Q: Alert messages are focused on communicating information and instructions to adults...can they be tailored to younger a younger crowd too? So many of our younger population have phones, have we looked at providing age-appropriate communications, directions, warnings, etc.?

A: GREAT feedback! Currently, Everbridge is our alerting software for emergencies. We also use regularly use social media, tailoring the messaging to certain groups, and pushing messages out via schools. We have also done outreach at teen fairs and gatherings of unhoused both at regional and at the county level. We've tried some early teen comics produced by Dark Horse to get messaging out as well.

COVID-19 Update

PHAC members received an update on the status of the County's COVID response from Public Health Division Manager, Dr. Marie Boman-Davis.

- On June 9th Public Health was invited to the Board of County Commissioners Round Table. They requested that a COVID-19 Pandemic Projections Update summarizing the CDC community levels, Washington County levels, common questions, and planning considerations. We are still *in* a Pandemic, but we are *out* of the emergency phase. What has stabilized? We utilize community-level metrics from the CDC that focus on the COVID-19 case counts as well as our hospital admissions. This is what the CDC is primarily looking at, currently:
 - The levels are Low, Medium and High and have associated measures that are recommended for each level.
 - We are in the third wave of COVID-19 home tests, and we are getting those out via schools and partnering organizations. We are in a phase of *test-to-treat*. What access to treatments do we have? Look for test-to-treat resources available in the community on our website.
 - The County is still in Medium level, and our numbers are updated once a week on Thursday evenings on the CDC website.
 - Cases and hospitalizations are up currently, but we don't know yet if it's high enough to push us into High level. The CDC recommends COVID-19 boosters, and they have just recommended the vaccine for ages 6 months to 5-years old population.
- We are still following our everchanging Investment Guidelines from the OHA. As the data shows (see accompanying presentation slides), being vaccinated and boosted makes a significant difference.
- Over time we are seeing winter, spring, fall and summer surges. Fall and especially winter, seem to be bigger.
- Projections from Dr. Gravens from OHA still prove to be very reliable. We expect we are at the peak right now, and expect that cases will go down.
- We are still very much monitoring our vulnerable BIPOC population.
- We've had multiple diseases to deal with simultaneously: the norovirus, tuberculosis, and other communicable diseases.
- We are hopeful that the severity of COVID-19 will go down, but there is no guarantee.
- The trans-theoretical model in Public Health—how we look at the stages of health behavior—we hope that we are in the Preparation Phase, where people know where to go for information, where they can get PPI, where they can get groceries, and are being prepared for being impacted by disease.
- When the state stopped requiring schools to require masks, we have seen cases go up. We are seeing infections and reinfections, but people seem to be recovering faster for large numbers.

Q: What are the County's plans for COVID-19 treatment for the future? For B4 and B5 variants?

A: We need to connect with Mary Sawyers and Eva Aguilar for communications. We are working with Virginia Garcia to help them set up their COVID center, where they are offering services at a population level, not just their clinic patients. There will be vaccinations and treatments there as well.

Q: Schools are taking recommendations from Washington County Public Health, according to [his] daughter...how will schools prepare for the fall uptick in cases? What is will the messaging be for the schools?

A: OHA works closely with Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to determine what the plans will be. Over the summer, our team will be working with the CD committee on guidelines that will come from state. We will endeavor to align ourselves to the state recommendations. We want to encourage them to make masks a permanent fixture, but they are also giving them the option to wear masks.

Budget Update

PHAC members received an update on the FY 22-23 budget cycle from Public Health Division Manager, Dr. Marie Boman-Davis, and voted on submitting testimony at the June 21st Board meeting.

- The budget committee passed the balanced budget, so it will go to the BCC this month.
- Later this year we will see our state public health policy option package for public health modernization, which we hope OHA will be moving forward with to the state legislature. The request is for 100 million, but we might be asked to cut that in half. Currently, Oregon and Kentucky are leaders in the nation for having our state legislature involved in funding for modernization.

Q: Marie, how is the Beaverton School District weekly COVID-19 testing program funded? Is it funded by County Public Health? The school district sent out an email saying that weekly testing would not continue in the fall, and I am wondering why that decision was made even though we might well be in another surge in the fall?

A: It's a state program. The federal government is not interesting in adding more dollars for COVID, so we are working on funding for this from the state.

Q: Which variant is the deadliest, the Coronavirus, Delta, or Omicron?

A: There are so many variables now, that [Marie] needs to get an update from our team of epidemiologists to answer that.

June 21st Budget Board Meeting

Do we want to draft a letter to the BCC thanking them for their support of Public Health? It will likely need to be submitted after the June 21st meeting, due to limited timing.

Jennifer McElravey motioned to submit written testimony after the June 21st Board meeting. Annie Paulsen seconded the motion. All in favor and none were opposed. The motion was passed. Alex Coleman will try to provide a draft by next Tuesday, June 20th, for review.

Next Meeting

Ideas for the August meeting agenda ideas include future meeting formats and what they might look like, how we want to move forward, and developing a workplan for the next year. The group usually works together to do a Community Needs Health Assessment about every three years. The last one was conducted during the pandemic. Please let Alex Coleman know if you have pressing needs or ideas for the next meeting.

Closing

There is no meeting in July, the next meeting will be on August 9, 2022 via Zoom. Jennifer McElravey closed the meeting out.