



**Task Force of Border Health Officials (TFBHO) Meeting**

Brown-Heatly Building, Public Hearing Room  
4900 N. Lamar St., Austin, TX 78751

**September 13, 2019**

| Member Name                       | Yes | No | Professional Representatives<br>(non-members)   |
|-----------------------------------|-----|----|---|
| Esmeralda Guajardo, MAHS          |     | ✓  |   |
| Hector Gonzalez, MD, MPH          | ✓   |    |   |
| Steven M. Kotsatos, RS            | ✓   |    |   |
| Josh Ramirez, MPA, CPM            | ✓   |    |   |
| Eduardo Olivarez                  |     | ✓  |   |
| Arturo Rodriguez, DNP, MPA, CPM   | ✓   |    |   |
| Robert Resendes, MBA, MT (ASCP)   | ✓   |    |   |
| Emilie Prot, DO, MPH              | ✓   |    |   |
| Lillian Ringsdorf, MD, MPH        |     | ✓  | (by phone)                                      |
| State Representative Bobby Guerra |     | ✓  |   |
| Senator Eddie Lucio Jr.           |     | ✓  | Represented by Daniel Esparza and<br>Elsa Garza |

**Attendees Present**

Francesca Kupper, John Villarreal, Dr. RJ Dutton, Henry Presas, David Gruber, Imelda Garcia, Alberto Perez, Feliziana Torres, Claudia Bustos, Dr. Allison Banicki, Jennifer Nguyen, Evelyn Hahn, Noah Fox, Norris Harrell, Shawn Tupy, Elsa Garza, Daniel Esparza, Grace Kubin, and Monica Gamez.

**Agenda Item I: Call to Order, Welcome, Chair Remarks, Meeting Logistics and Roll Call**

Vice Chair Gonzalez called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and welcomed attendees to the Task Force of Border Health Officials (Task Force) Meeting and asked if anyone was participating by phone. Dr. Lillian Ringsdorf joined the meeting by phone and expressed her apologies for missing the meeting.

Ms. Kupper read open meeting guidelines and completed the roll call to confirm a quorum. A quorum was established.

**Agenda Item II: Approval of June 7, 2019 Meeting Minutes**

Dr. Gonzalez asked Task Force members approving the June 7 meeting minutes. Mr. Josh Ramirez made a motion to approve the minutes and Dr. Rodriguez seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved.



**Agenda Item III: SB 1312 Border Vector Study Update by Laboratory and Infectious Disease Surveillance (LIDS) Leadership**

Dr. Gonzalez welcomed Associate Commissioner Imelda Garcia. She updated members on SB 1312, as it pertained to LIDS' scope of responsibility. She explained that DSHS would collaborate with the Department of Agriculture (DAG) and with Texas Agrilife to help improve the number of certifications for successful pesticide applications. Texas Agrilife would assist with providing preparation courses for non-commercial applicator license for both general standards and Category 12 Educational Components and monitor training. The DAG will waive the testing fees. LIDS staff will monitor the success of this initiative.

Members asked if the testing would be the same or a variation of the commercial test. The original intent of this request was for local health department personnel to quickly mobilize essential staff, especially during prompt disaster response activities, which require quick deployments of sanitarians and licensed applicators as part of recovery and emergency response efforts. Dr. Rodriguez and Mr. Ramirez stated that there may not need to be a need for a full curriculum-oriented exam but a mechanism for applicators to acquire certifications to respond to emergency situations and recovery efforts. Mr. Ramirez stated that they could help with development and Vice Chair Gonzalez mentioned that it was the original intent of the request.

Ms. Garcia stated she'd investigate this further and follow up with the sanitarian issue because that is not within the LIDS' scope. She'll report back to the Task Force.

**Agenda Item IV: Update on assessment of laboratory capacity and testing**

Ms. Garcia updated members on public laboratory capacity along the Texas border. She mentioned that the last survey was completed in 2016. She expressed updating it and sharing a draft survey with members to identifying gaps and provide feedback. She asked if the Task Force would be forming a subcommittee or if the Task Force would respond as a group regarding border-related lab capacity.

Mr. Ramirez made a motion to form a subcommittee for this effort and Mr. Kotsatos seconded the motion. Mr. Ramirez, Dr. Rodriguez and Mr. Kotsatos volunteered to form a subcommittee to assist with the development of survey questions. Ms. Garcia stated she was hoping for a 30% response rate.

Dr. Grace Kubin, Director of the DSHS Lab also spoke of the need for member communication on the upcoming lab survey. She mentioned that the previous one was quite broad and that member input would greatly improve much needed detail to enhance lab capacity assessment.

Mr. Esparza expressed the need to hear from state agencies on emerging public health threats on a more consistent basis. This would highlight the state's response for localized capacity building and the need to set a standard for capacity as a foundation regarding border needs.



Ms. Garcia mentioned the collaboration with federal partners, such as the CDC, regarding the need and use of federal funds to extend capacity. She used the expansion of additional staff in regions 8 and 11 to help improve border public health. She expressed the need to highlight success stories and the continued need for border health districts to collaborate with federal partners to set a new standard to improve border public health. Dr. Gonzalez thanked her for her service and commitment.

**Agenda Item V: Break**

A break was taken at 10:03am. Task Force members reconvened at 10:20am.

**Agenda Item VI: Work Group Action Plan Updates**

- **Environmental Health**
- **Communicable Diseases**

Task Force members initiated a discussion regarding environmental health issues on the border, including local/statewide legislation regarding tire collection to reduce mosquito proliferation. Members elaborated on minimum requirements for the license associated with mosquito spraying applications to ensure state and local governments collaborate to produce teams that can be deployed quickly. Members will collaborate to produce an assessment of needs/gaps to Dr. Gonzalez.

Mr. Esparza suggested that members communicate the specific vectors found on the border to DAG and the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) so that they can create a specific state-issued license for a particular type of application, as an exception to standardized licensing/testing to combat specific vectors in your region. This will help address a specific need and improve capacity, in conjunction with Texas Agrilife regarding trainings.

Dr. Gonzalez reminded members that environmental health topics also included zoonotic and sanitarian-related public health issues. Members also mentioned topics dealing with genetically-modified vectors and receiving more data on this topic.

Dr. Rodriguez expressed concern regarding acquiring registered sanitarians, especially when referencing food outbreak-related topics. Members agreed and stated the topic should be folded into future assessments. They also elaborated on the idea of working with universities to adjust certain biological degrees to include specific related topics to increase the number of sanitarians among border regions.

Dr. Gonzalez' notes on environmental health included specific training for vector applications, recommendations based on current legislation, technical assistance needs, source reduction and state coordination and support.



**Agenda Item VII:**           **Lunch** commenced at 12:30 p.m.

**Agenda Item VIII:**       **Maternal and Child Health Survey Update**

- **Operation Lone Star**
- **South Texas Adolescent Health Summit**

Regional Manager (Office of Border Public Health Manager) Alberto Perez provided members with a summary of the South Texas Adolescent Health Summit. The conference hosted 160 youth serving professionals in the South Texas area and featured a wide range of topics, including contraceptives and mental health. Given the success of the conferences in El Paso and Brownsville, Alberto stated they are looking into holding a third conference in Laredo in the spring.

Dr. Emilie Prot presented an overview of the data collected from Operation Lone Star (OLS). She noted that, for the first time, OLS data collection differentiated teens aged 13-19 from previously grouped "pediatric" category. She mentioned that teens are one of the highest populations taking advantage of the services offered at OLS and noted that immunizations are crucial because they have a lasting impact in terms of disease prevention. She mentioned that one of the goals of *Healthy People 2020* was to increase HPV vaccination rates among teens and to educate teens on their eligibility of *Texas Vaccines for Children Program*. Dr. Prot also spoke on the importance of improving data collection and continuing outreach efforts to decrease mortality rates on the border.



OLS 2019 Data  
Summary\_8-5-2019.r

**Agenda Item IX:**       **Discussion of November 1, 2018 Report in relation to possible recommendations for November 1, 2020 Report**

- **Office of Border Public Health Program Updates**
  - **Expansion of Border Infectious Disease Surveillance (BIDS)**
  - **Binational Collaborations with Mexico**
  - **Community Health Worker/Promotores Training Center and Conference Updates**

Dr. Gonzalez welcomed Dr. RJ Dutton and his staff. Dr. Dutton spoke of the work his staff had accomplished that aligned with some of the Task Force Recommendations mentioned in the November 1, 2018 Report. Dr. Allison Banicki, John Villarreal and Claudia Bustos shared very brief presentations to update members on recent projects.



Dr. Banicki updated members on the expansion of the BIDS Project.



BIDS summary  
09-12-19.pdf

Mr. John Villarreal updated members on binational collaborations.



TFBHO-  
BHC-COBINASv2.pdf

Mrs. Claudia Bustos updated members on the recent CHW/Promotores Conference and Training Center.



OBPH CHW Training  
Center 2019.pdf

### **Agenda Item X: Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

### **Agenda Item XI: Timelines, Next Steps, Announcements**

Mr. Villarreal addressed members about correspondence regarding 2020 meeting dates and the need to replace some previously suggested dates in April and August. Alternative dates were suggested. Mr. Villarreal will research the possibilities of the newly proposed dates and report back to members. The confirmed dates for 2020 meetings thus far are in black while unconfirmed dates are highlighted:

February 20-21, 2020

April 9-10, 2020

May 7-8 or 14-15, 2020

June 18-19, 2020

July 16-17, 2020

August 13-14 and 27-28, 2020

October 15-16, 2020

December 3-4, 2020 (Members may opt to only meet on December 3, 2020)

Task Force members suggested the following topics to discuss at the next meeting on December 13, 2019:

- Training and sampling for sanitarians
- Establish partnerships for sanitarian training
- Discussion of performance standards for sanitarians



**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services

**Texas Department of State  
Health Services**

- Discussion of the role between DSHS and Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) and inviting a representative to the next meeting
- Improve and expand Operation Lone Star/preparation activities, including active shooter training

Training Center-related trainings:

- Maternal Child Health Safety training, including co-sleeping education

**Agenda Item XII: Adjourn and Thank you**

Dr. Gonzalez thanked members for their attendance and adjourned the meeting.