



Task Force of Border Health Officials (TFBHO) APPROVED Meeting Minutes 1:00 p.m., December 7, 2023

Physical Location: Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Robert D. Moreton Building, Room M-100, First Floor 1100 49th Street, Austin, Texas 78756

TEAMS Virtual/Hybrid Meeting

Table 1: TFBHO attendance at the December 7, 2023, meeting.

Table with 6 columns: MEMBER NAME, YES, NO, MEMBER NAME, YES, NO. Rows list attendees like Dr. Richard Chamberlain, Ms. Esmeralda Guajardo, etc.

Agenda Item 1: Call to order, welcome, Chair remarks, meeting logistics, and Roll Call

Dr. Arturo Rodriguez, Chair, convened the TFBHO meeting at 1:00 p.m., and welcomed attendees. He also welcomed Dr. Cynthia Gutierrez, director of the new Health Department of the City of Pharr, as a new TFBHO member.

Agenda Item 2: Consideration of October 11, 2023, draft meeting minutes

Dr. Rodriguez called for any edits or changes to the draft October 11, 2023, meeting minutes. Receiving no edits or changes, Dr. Rodriguez called for a motion to approve the draft.

MOTION:

Mr. Steven M. Kotsatos moved to approve the October 11, 2023, draft meeting minutes as written. Ms. Shannon Harvill seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved with no nays nor abstentions.

Agenda Item 3: Update: DSHS Immunizations Unit

Mr. Greg Leos, Director, Assessment, Compliance and Epidemiology Branch, Immunizations Unit, DSHS, and Ms. Mona Crowley, Lead Nurse-Immunizations Unit, DSHS, provided members with an update on vaccinations. Mr. Austin Knaplund, Vaccine Ordering Lead, Vaccine Operations Unit, DSHS Immunizations Unit, presented a PowerPoint titled "Immunization Program Update".

- There is a higher vaccination rate on the border this season than the last one, but not a significant increase. The immunization focus this season is on the tripledemic (RSV, COVID, and Flu).
- The COVID-19 booster rate is lower than the previous year.
- The supply of RSV vaccines is limited because of the national supply. Birthing hospitals are being prioritized.

Agenda Item 5: Presentation: Mosquitoes Behavior and Control

Dr. Christopher Vitek, Director, Center for Vector-Borne Diseases, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, presented a PowerPoint titled "Mosquito Vectors in South Texas". Highlights included:

- With 85 mosquito species, Texas is by far the most diverse of any continental U.S. state. Fifty-five of them are likely to be found along the southern border region.
- There is a potential risk of the introduction of new potential disease vectors that can spread new diseases.
- There is a need to make sure there are effective control strategies for eliminating mosquitoes. There is a drastically reduced efficacy of the insecticides.

Agenda Item 4: Presentation: Food Allergies

Ms. Belinda Vaca, advocate for food allergies awareness, and mother of Sergio Lopez, in whose honor Senate Bill 812 was passed during the 88th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2023, presented a PowerPoint titled "Take all Food Allergies Seriously". Highlights included:

- Her son died because of someone's ignorance. But hundreds are dying of this every day as one out of 13 children, and one out of 15 adults have food allergies.
- Having EpiPens (epinephrine auto injection) available can save lives when a food allergy reaction is produced.

Agenda Item 6: Discussion: 2023-2024 Recommendations Report

Dr. Rodriguez asked Mr. Kotsatos to lead the discussion about Human Resource Infrastructure, Binational Initiatives, and Health Information Exchange. The results will be included in the 2023-2024 Recommendations Report.

Agenda Item 7: Public comment

No public comment was received.

Agenda Item 8: Closing remarks, thank you and adjourn

Dr. Rodriguez adjourned the meeting at 4:07 p.m.

Please click on the link to the archived HHSC video to view, and listen to, the entirety of the December 7, 2023, Task Force of Border Health Officials (TFBHO) meeting; this video will be available for approximately two years from the date the meeting video is posted in accordance with the HHSC records retention schedule:

[Task Force of Border Health Officials \(TFBHO\)](#)