Public Health Funding and Policy Committee Meeting

August 31st, 2022

Minutes

Committee Members Attending

Stephen Williams, MEd, MPA - Houston Health Department – Chair

Phillip Huang, MD, MPH – Dallas County Health and Human Services – Vice Chair

Emilie Prot, DO, MPH – DSHS, Public Health Region 11

Jennifer Griffith, DrPH, MPH – Texas A&M University

Julie St. John, DrPH – Texas Tech University

Lisa Dick, Brownwood-Brown County Health Department

Lou Kreidler, RN, BSN - Wichita Falls – Wichita County Public Health District

Sharon Melville, MD, MPH – DSHS, Public Health Region 7

Attendees:

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| Aelia Ahktar | Jessica R Hyde | Noah A Chornyak |
| Ann Jacobo | John Villarreal | Rachel E Sonne |
| Andrea E Salcedo | Katherine Layman | Rafael Alberti |
| Angel Anco-Barrera | Kathryn Kaminsky | Rekha Lashmanan |
| Carrie Bradford | Karnes Cliffton | Ricky Garcia |
| Christine Riley | Lacey Camp | Roberto Beaty |
| Christine Yanas | Laura LaFuente | Rose Dunaway |
| Cristina Garcia | Lesley Brannan | Sarah Hollister |
| Colin Crocker | Lillian Ringsdorf | Saroj Rai |
| Crystal Biggs | Lindsay Lanagan | Molly Fudell |
| Dana Birnberg | Lisa Steffek | Scott Milton |
| David Gruber | Lucille Palenapa | Sharonica White |
| David Leary | Megan Wolfe | Stephen Pont |
| Desmar Walkes | Micheal DeLeon | Steve Eichner |
| Emily Rocha | Mohib Nawab | Timothy Patterson |
| Glenna Laughlin | Monica Gamez | Tom Valentine |
| Imelda Garcia | Moriah Hernandez | Veronica Karam |
| Jennifer Smith | Nabeel Mulla | Yolanda S Cantu |
| Jennifer Shuford | Nicole Knight |  |

Vice Chair, Dr. Phillip Huang, called the meeting to order at 9:05 am and the committee members introduced themselves.

**May 25th Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Lou Kreidler motioned to approve the minutes. Dr. Jennifer Griffith seconded. Motion approved and carried. Minutes approved.

**Update on COVID-19 Vaccine Administration:**

Ms. Imelda Garcia updated the committee on COVID-19 vaccine administration with a slide presentation. Both Pfizer and Moderna have issued a Bivalent vaccine which has both omicron and the ancestral strain. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued the emergency use authorization of the Bivalent and vaccines should start shipping soon. FDA’s authorization is for two months after initial dose is administered.

Dr. Huang asked if this new booster could not be used as a primary dose. Ms. Garcia said that was correct, it could not be used as a primary series dose.

**Update on Current Status regarding Monkey Pox:**

Ms. Imelda Garcia updated on the status of Monkeypox within Texas to include information on spread, demographics, and other relevant data. Tecovirimat (TPOXX) is a therapeutic for Monkeypox that has been made available through the strategic national stockpile. TPOXX has been prepositioned so that it is available across the state. There have been some federal performance metrics set for TPOXX with specific criteria. Ms. Garcia proceeded to go over the JYNNEOS vaccine schedules and dosage regimens.

Dr. Huang asked if they would start getting the Immtrac2 data for the Monkeypox vaccine. Ms. Garcia said they hope to be able to provide it in the future.

**Update on Public Health Infrastructure Grant:**

Mr. David Gruber went over the Public Health Infrastructure Grant, beginning with an overview of the grant funds and the differences between it and the Public Health Workforce Grant (PHWG). The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) applied for the state of Texas and in turn for those counties that did not apply separately. The award for the grant is expected in November. Should we receive the grant, a designated amount would go to Local Health Entities (LHEs). We are now in a waiting phase for the application. Everyone will be awarded the money for staffing on day one, then it is up to the LHE to determine how to distribute it over the next five years.

Mr. George Roberts asked if the PHWG extension was a no-cost extension. Mr. Gruber stated that we were granted a no-cost extension. Mr. Roberts asked about the percentage of allocation. Mr. Gruber stated that it could be assumed that the same percentage of allocation is being used as before. There are no additional funds, just an extended period of one year to spend them.

Dr. Huang asked about the terminology of the grants and how both are being used for the public health workforce. Mr. Gruber stated that it is correct, and it is likely the name was already taken with the PHWG.

Ms. Kreidler asked when the formal extension on the PHWG will take place. Mr. Gruber stated that the request has been put in for it but we do not have a date of formal announcement yet.

**Update on DSHS’ COVID-19 Health Disparities Grant Funded Activities:**

Dr. Cristina Garcia gave an update on the Health Disparities Grant. Dr. Garcia gave an overview of the grant and its status through a slide show presentation. The grant funded 16 regional and 7 central office positions of which all the regional and 5 of the central office positions have been filled. These staff are now familiarizing themselves with the counties and locals they will be working with. Communication strategies and plans are currently in development. Monthly sharing sessions with all grant partners are in place and highlights were presented over the summer of the work completed. Pilots of grant partner dashboards are also underway. Dr. Garcia proceeded to give an overview of the Texas Public Health Fellowship Program that is a key grant activity for DSHS. The goal of the fellowship is to provide training for the future of public health workforce. There are a total of 36 Fellowship positions; 13 were placed with 9 separate LHEs and 23 have been placed within 19 DSHS programs. Dr. Garcia finished the presentation by presenting some of the grant’s successes so far.

Ms. Kreidler added that she was excited for the program and to commend the impact that this has had so far.

**Update on Public Health Provider-Charity Care Program:**

Ms. Sarah Hollister gave an update on the Public Health Provider – Charity Care Program (PHP-CCP). Initial training took place on June 30th. A refresher was offered August 8th and the next one will be September 22nd. So far, about 100 entities have been trained. Support information on how to access other information can be found on the PHP-CCP website along with other information. Year one of cost reporting ends September 30th of 2022. The last day to submit the Year one cost report is November 14th of 2022.

**Update on Senate Bill 73 Managed Care Organization Implementation:**

Ms. Sharonica White gave an update on Senate Bill 73. HHSC is continuing to work with the Texas Medicaid & Healthcare Partnership (TMHP) to determine how provider type with be entered into the system. TMHP is using the Agile method to complete this project. TMHP starts this month and state that the deadline of implementation of December 21st, 2022 will be met. Once the provider type is entered into the system, LHEs will have to enroll and be credentialed by the Managed Care Organizations (MCOs). Ms. White hopes to have a subject matter expert at the next meeting to explain more about the provider enrollment process. This project is only focusing on the codes that are billable to Medicaid. Codes that are not eligible will have to go through a separate process.

**Update on Public Health Information Systems and Interoperability with Local Health Entities:**

Mr. Steve Eichner presented an update regarding technology and interoperability. A biannual report on the progress that DSHS and HHSC are making towards advancing interoperability should be available for public comment soon. DSHS has completed testing for receiving COVID notifications through the Association of Public Health Laboratories Informatics Messaging System (AIMS) platform, serving as a nationwide gateway for health providers to route reports of notifiable conditions to LHEs nationwide. DSHS Epidemiologists are still building out the ability for the AIMS platform to route those reports to directly to all Texas hospitals. Federal partners have recently updated requirements for participating in electronic case reporting. DSHS is working on managing declarations of readiness through its websites. DSHS is waiting for the alignment of some of its websites before posting this new information.

Challenges include data quality and some conditions that may require non-electronic notifications. A need for strong coordination between DSHS and LHEs is needed to support the coordination of these new interoperability activities.

Mr. Stephen Williams asked if we are reporting a state of readiness and, if not, what is the protocol. Ms. Monica Gamez answered that the state is working on having validation in place so that the proper information can be transferred to and from the state to the LHEs. DSHS is discussing with CDC on how to best manage grant requirements that require the readiness status. Establishing how public health informatics will receive said information is the current goal.

Dr. Huang stated the importance of data validation. Ms. Gamez described the team currently assisting in handling these validations and that it is a careful process.

**Discussion of PHFPC Annual Report Recommendations:**

Mr. Rafael Alberti stated the need to finalize the recommended course of action for producing the 2022 Annual Report. Mr. Gruber gave an update on two of the first previous recommendations. Mr. Williams stated that with some of these new grants many of the gaps from these first two items have been filled in some way. Mr. Gruber added that COVID and the stress added to filling the gaps in question. Dr. Huang added that it has been very useful on how the public health system has worked together through these past two years and the great partnership between DSHS and the LHEs. Mr. Gruber acknowledged the sentiment and agreed.

Mr. Williams suggested to discontinue the overview and just update what has been previously stated and to highlight how the grants have helped to fill in some of the gaps mentioned in these previous recommendations. Mr. Alberti gave an overview of what the report would look like. Mr. Gruber added that the PHFPC has been able to shape the things that are done within DSHS and help to move things forward in the system.

Ms. Kreidler made a motion to move forward with updating the progress on said recommendations. Ms. Lisa Dick seconded. Motioned was approved.

**Public Comment:**

No Public Comment at this time.

**Timelines, Next steps, Announcements, and Future Meeting Dates**

The next meeting date is scheduled for October 12th. The Annual Report is set for a deadline of November 30th, and it is due to leadership October 18th. A similar agenda is to be followed and Mr. Alberti will discuss it further with Mr. Williams.

**Adjourn**

Ms. Kreidler made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Lisa Dick seconded the motion. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.

Approved:

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Stephen L. Williams, Committee Chair Date