

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION
October 10, 2024**

APPROVED

COMMISSIONERS

Crystal D. Crawford, J.D., **Chairperson** *
 Patrick T. Dowling, M.D., M.P.H., **Vice-Chair** *
 Kenny Green*
 Alina Dorian, Ph.D. **
 Diego Rodrigues, LMFT, MA*

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH REPRESENTATIVES

Dr. Barbara Ferrer, Director of Public Health **
 Dr. Muntu Davis, County Health Officer**
 Dr. Anish Mahajan, Chief Deputy Director*

PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION ADVISORS

Christina Vane-Perez, Chief of Staff **
 Jeremiah Garza, Advisor to the Chief Deputy Director*
 Dawna Treece, PH Commission Liaison*
 Judith Vazquez, Senior Advisor to the Director*

****Present **Excused ***Absent***

TOPIC		RECOMMENDATION/ACTION/ FOLLOW-UP
<u>I. Call to Order</u>	<i>The meeting was called to order at 10:35 a.m. by Commissioner Crawford</i>	<i>Information only.</i>
<u>II. Announcements and Introductions</u>	The Commissioners and DPH staff introduced themselves. Action for September Minutes Land Acknowledgement	<i>Information only.</i> <i>Moved to November</i> <i>Read by Commissioner Crawford</i>
<u>III. Emergency Circumstance</u>	N/A	
<u>IV. Public Health Report</u>	Anish Mahajan, Chief Deputy Director, provided COVID-19 and other public health updates. COVID-19 COVID-19 continues to decline in transmission as DPH reports a seven-day average of 144 daily cases for the week. That is a decrease from 345 cases reported about four weeks ago. Reported cases do not include home tests or infections among people who do not test. As a result, the actual number of infections could be much higher.	

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	<p>Wastewater concentration of the SARS-CoV-2 virus are at 37% of the 2023/24 winter peak. This is a decrease from the 57% that was reported on September 11th to 37% right now.</p> <p>A Seven-day average number of daily Covid-19 hospitalizations in LA County at 273 down from 453 that was reported a month ago. The daily average of COVID deaths this past week is 1.4% compared to 1.9% four weeks ago.</p> <p>DPH will continue to monitor the Covid-19 data as we enter the respiratory virus season, the fall and holidays and the winter, which we will possibly see a rise during the fall and holiday season.</p> <p>LAC residents have access to updated free Covid-19 vaccines designed to target strains that are currently circulating. The updated vaccine is strongly recommended this fall for residents aged six months and older. Any resident who is seeking vaccination with an updated 2024 or 2025 flu vaccine will be able to do so regardless of insurance or immigration status. The updated flu vaccine will add protection against severe consequences of flu. Free vaccines are available to the uninsured and the underinsured adults at many healthcare providers and health clinics throughout California through the COVID-19 Bridge Access Program.</p> <p>CDC recommends that all person over five years of age receive one dose of the updated Moderna doses or three Pfizer doses vaccines. CDC also recommends everyone to get the updated flu vaccine, which can be done safely in conjunction with the Covid vaccine. The Public Health info line is open seven days a week, from 8:00am-8:00pm. The number to call is 833-540-0473.</p> <p>Along with vaccination, there are other tools for protecting ourselves against Covid-19, that includes masking. Masking is recommended in crowded areas and especially while traveling to other places. In healthcare settings, where staff are working, we have a health officer order that will come into effect on November 1st that will require staff who have not obtained the updated flu for Covid vaccine to wear a mask while working in the healthcare facility.</p> <p>Dengue Virus</p> <p>DPH is confirming six cases of locally acquired Dengue in LAC. Acquired Dengue means that the residents who have acquired this</p>	

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	<p>virus have had no history of travel to places where Dengue is common and so they have acquired the Dengue virus here in LAC.</p> <p>It can take four to seven days for a person to develop symptoms after being bitten by a mosquito infected with Dengue. Persons infected with Dengue may have flu-like symptoms. Severe Dengue can result in severe bleeding, and severe organ impairment, which is a serious medical condition, but most recover after about one week. 1 in 20 people with Dengue can develop severe disease, which can be life threatening. One in four people will develop symptoms but some can be asymptomatic.</p> <p>Public Health will continue to work closely with the vector control districts on enhanced surveillance and active engagement within communities.</p> <p>Everyone in LAC can take proactive steps to reduce mosquito breeding to avoid mosquito bites and try to help prevent the ongoing local transmission of Dengue.</p> <p>Bird Flu</p> <p>The California Department of Public Health reported that a third human case of bird flu has been confirmed in California. The case was identified in the Central Valley in an individual who had contact with infected dairy cattle. CDC confirmed that it was someone who works with dairy cattle.</p> <p>CDPH identified two new possible human cases also in the Central Valley. The specimens from the latest cases are being sent to the CDC for confirmatory testing. There is no known link or contact between any of the California’s confirmed or possible cases continuing to suggest that there is only animal to human spread of the virus in the state.</p> <p>All individuals had contact with animals at different farms. The cases have experienced mild symptoms including eye redness or discharge like conjunctivitis of the eyes and none of the individuals have been hospitalized. The risk to the public remains low, but people who interact with infected animals like dairy or poultry farm workers are at higher risks.</p> <p>DPH is using both human and wastewater surveillance to help detect and monitor for bird flu. Bird flu is tracked by testing sick and dead birds and wild animals that are collected by animal</p>	

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	<p>control agencies across LAC. DPH recommends that everyone receive a seasonal flu vaccine. Although the seasonal flu vaccine will not protect against bird flu, it can decrease the risk of being infected with both viruses at the same time and reduce the chance of severe illness.</p> <p>Hurricanes: Milton and Helene</p> <p>DPH would like to acknowledge the devastation to all those in Florida that were affected by Hurricanes Milton and Helene. The hurricanes are having an impact here in LAC in that several of the large manufacturers of the IV products used in hospitals have their production factories in Florida and LAC are experiencing supply chain shortages in IV products. IV products are the central way in which hospitals and clinics get medication and other important products into human beings. Some hospitals are postponing elective procedures and surgeries as a result.</p> <p>MEHKOs</p> <p>On October 7th, DPH began accepting applications for those who want to start their own Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation called MEHKO with permits to begin November 1st. Applications are available on our website at ph.lacounty.gov/mehko.</p> <p>Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations are food facilities that are operated by a resident from their private kitchen. Once permitted, a resident can store, handle, prepare and serve the food to the public as allowed by state law as a mini restaurant.</p> <p>The MEHKO operator needs a certified food Protection Manager certificate upon successfully passing the food safety exam from an approved and accredited organization and submit it with their MEHKO application. Food needs to be prepared, cooked, and served or delivered on the same day that it is made. There are some limitations such as a 30-meal limit per day, or 90 meals per week with a total revenue of \$100,000 a year.</p> <p>Public Health Environmental Health Division will authorize permits and conduct annual inspection and complaint-based investigations. Other limitations include no usage of third-party delivery apps such as Uber Eats, Postmates, Grubhub, etc., except as provided in the California Health and Safety Code.</p>	

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	<p>Recommendations/Comments:</p> <p>Dowling: Can the bird flu be past thru the milk?</p> <p>Dr. Mahajan: Although there have been various things being found in the milk being tested, traces of bird flu have not been found.</p> <p>Crawford: The MEHKO is an exciting new program and hope this is an opportunity to partner with the ethnic media to get the word out to residents about this. There is a lot of interest in the small community-based organizations so it's imperative to get the word out. The Taste-Of-Soul will be on October 19th on Crenshaw between Obama Blvd and King. It's a great opportunity to get this information out to the public.</p> <p>Green: Once the mosquitos breed do they transfer the Dengue to the offspring?</p> <p>Dr. Mahajan: Unsure of that currently.</p>	
<u>V. Presentation</u>	<p>Gema Morales-Meyer, Director of Clinic Services and Heidi Lopez, Public Health Nurse Supervisor</p> <p>In March 2021, efforts began to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccinations for all LA County residents. Initially, about 10% of residents aged six months and older had received at least one vaccine. By 2024, vaccination rates had increased, with the data showing a progression in percentages represented by green, blue, and purple colors, each indicating a 10% rise in those vaccinated.</p> <p>The MVT team is a multidisciplinary team. There is a data team, scheduling team that helps with request via DPH link requesting vaccine clinic, and a dispatch team, an education team, nurse field team and special population and PEH team.</p> <p>The nurse field team includes nurse practitioners, public health nurses, RNs, LPNs, and community health workers who deliver vaccines, testing, and treatments in the field. Nurse practitioners can treat positive STIs, while positive TB cases are referred to public health centers for ongoing care and assessment.</p> <p>We provide education on available vaccines and screening services to ensure our PEH neighbors are informed. Additionally, we</p>	

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	<p>distribute Naloxone units and fentanyl test strips for harm reduction and offer referrals to various resources while collaborating with homeless service providers in the community.</p> <p>Over the past two years, our outreach team has conducted 935 clinic site visits across LA County, serving both sheltered and unsheltered populations. On average, the team visits five sites daily, providing services such as vaccinations and testing. For example, today they are at various locations in downtown LA and North Hollywood. A map illustrates the extensive reach, highlighting visits from Gorman to San Pedro.</p> <p>In terms of services provided, the team offers four vaccines—COVID-19, flu, mpox, and Hep A—targeting outbreaks among the homeless population. In total, they have administered over 5,100 COVID vaccines, 2,300 flu vaccines, 3,300 mpox vaccines, and 2,100 Hep A vaccines.</p> <p>Since 2017, outreach efforts have focused on providing services to unhoused individuals, significantly increasing Hep A vaccinations, with over 2,100 administered, including recent outreach in Santa Monica for those exposed to Hep A.</p> <p>In March 2023, STI and TB testing was added to the outreach program, with testing numbers shown in green. A decrease in testing occurs during fall and winter due to respiratory vaccination campaigns. Additionally, harm reduction efforts include distributing Naloxone units and fentanyl test strips in the field, responding to clients' needs for these supplies.</p> <p>Over the past three years, several key lessons have emerged in outreach efforts to unhoused individuals.</p> <p>Meeting People Where They Are- Outreach teams go directly to locations such as parks, shelters, and encampments to provide services.</p> <p>Resource Awareness- It's crucial to know available resources for food, clothing, and domestic violence assistance. A pocket resource guide has been created to help provide this information.</p>	

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	<p>Collaboration- Partnering with established community providers helps build trust and encourages service acceptance among unhoused individuals.</p> <p>Incentives- Offering incentives, like gift cards, hygiene kits, or socks, can enhance outreach efforts and encourage engagement with services.</p> <p>Next steps include continuing the respiratory virus campaign to combat COVID-19 and flu, enhancing screenings for various diseases, and increasing outreach to unsheltered locations through public health nurses. The team will also respond to emerging outbreaks like Hep A and mpox, while navigating additional resources as part of clinical care. Sustaining funding through billing is a key goal to maintain these services for homeless individuals across LA County.</p> <p>The presentation acknowledges the contributions of those who gathered the data and especially the field teams providing essential services to both unhoused and housed residents throughout the county.</p> <p>Recommendations/Comments:</p> <p>Dowling: We don't sustain this through billing. Nobody gets turned away.</p> <p>Heidi: correct, the team inquiries about insurance status to determine which vaccines to provide, as COVID-19 vaccines are privately purchased but have options for the uninsured or underinsured. However, they do not turn anyone away, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of insurance status or documentation, can receive vaccines and services.</p> <p>Green: how do you dispatch in which area do you consider priority? So how do you dispatch and what's the priority locations? Because county is huge.</p> <p>Heidi: The current focus is on serving PEH (persons experiencing homelessness) and seniors. Requests received via the DPH link, phone calls, or emails are prioritized accordingly. During respiratory season, the team aims to visit about 12 sites daily, including those for STI and TB screenings, prioritizing PEH first,</p>	

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	<p>followed by homebound individuals and seniors, while also addressing other needs as they arise.</p> <p>Rodrigues: The discussion highlights concern about funding for ongoing health initiatives. Questions focus on whether funding is secured on a year-to-year basis or if it's part of a multiyear program. There's an acknowledgment that support may be needed for subsequent years, especially given the expectation that multiple diseases will persist. Clarification is sought on the current security of funding and the specific needs of the program moving forward.</p> <p>Gema: The team was established in response to COVID-19 in 2020, with much of their funding still coming from COVID-related sources, which have been declining. Currently, funding is secured only through June 2025 and is expected to be on a year-to-year basis. There are concerns that the team will shrink due to reduced funding, and they have yet to secure funding beyond next June. They are also accessing Measure H funding for staff involved in homeless-specific work but acknowledge that overall funding remains unstable.</p>	
<u>VI.</u> <u>New Business</u>	<p>Recommendation letter:</p> <p>Exide EPA letter – Janet Scully, Program Manager with the Public Health Office of Environmental Justice, and Climate Health. Request that the Public Health Commission support the EPA's proposal to add the former Exide Technologies facility in Vernon and surrounding areas to the Superfund National Priority List (NPL).</p>	Commissioners will review the recommendations and will move the action to vote in November.
<u>VII.</u> <u>Unfinished Business</u>		

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<u>VIII. Public Comment</u>	<p>J.T.: Patients seeking medical care while trying to avoid Covid infection face significant challenges, caller advised a friend's recent hospitalization where staff often entered unmasked, and an air purifier was not allowed and advised the current sole vaccination policies strategy is inadequate since vaccines do not prevent transmission. Caller advises urgent action is required to educate the public on these risks and improve safety measures in healthcare settings.</p> <p>P.H.: Caller advises there is a strong call for a more proactive approaches to address the ongoing dangers of Covid, which have been downplayed in recent years. The caller suggests replacing limited PCR tests with free N95 masks and providing these masks at homeless mobile clinics alongside testing and emphasizing the importance of clean air in schools and public spaces to mitigate illness spread. Additionally, the caller proposes incentivizing upgrades to HVAC systems in various public buildings and express a willingness to collaborate on educational efforts to empower parents and improve air quality.</p> <p>S.D.: Caller advises unmasked and unquarantined individuals spread Covid contributing to long Covid, which affects many Americans. The caller emphasizes the lack of known treatments and social support for those suffering and highlighting that reliance on vaccines alone is insufficient for preventing long Covid. The caller urges for more accessible and reliable testing options like PCR.</p> <p>Ext#2156: The caller emphasizes that current efforts to prevent airborne diseases, such as masking in healthcare settings, are just a small start and should be expanded to all individuals, not just those unvaccinated. Caller advised while vaccinations have reduced hospitalization and death rates, the long-term effects of repeated infections remain uncertain and stressing the importance of masking and clean air in public spaces. The caller advocates for the standardization of high-quality air purifiers in all public areas, including schools and transportation.</p> <p>Ext#0619: The caller, who is immunocompromised, expresses concern for both them and their elderly mother when attending medical appointments, as they often encounter unmasked individuals, including healthcare workers. During a hospital visit none of the medical staff were wearing masks, raising worries about potential Covid exposure, especially during routine MRIs. The speaker notes that while their mother wears a mask for</p>	

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	<p>appointments, she does not mask at religious and social events, highlighting a need for better public messaging on the importance of masking. Lastly, the caller states the necessity of air filters in public buildings to enhance safety.</p> <p>J.C.: The speaker, a 67-year-old active member of their community, expresses gratitude for being part of an accomplished group of commissioners. They regularly attend synagogue and exercise classes, highlighting their commitment to staying active and engaged. Recently, they have discussed health topics like diet and the use of sealed metal buses during Covid, which they refer to as "coffins" due to poor air circulation. They plan to share their experiences with managing nausea from medications and symptoms of anemia at the next meeting, showcasing their dedication to both personal health and community involvement.</p> <p>E.S.: The caller, a 30-year-old woman in Los Angeles disabled by a Covid infection, shares a recent experience where she met an ER nurse practitioner who tested positive after working a long shift, highlighting the risks healthcare workers face. The caller advises healthcare workers have a higher frequency of long Covid due to repeated exposures, and that infections pose cumulative risks. The caller advises the current public health strategy, which focuses on vaccination without sufficient masking, is deemed ineffective, as vaccination offers only marginal protection against long Covid.</p> <p>H.D.: The caller advocates for always requiring respirator masks in healthcare settings, not just during high case numbers. The caller advises that SARS-2 should be treated as a Level 3 biohazard and that the public must be made aware of its potential to cause long-term organ damage. The caller advises that vaccines do not prevent transmission or long Covid and that effective measures like masking, good ventilation, and filtration are essential to prevent infections. The caller asks for improved public health campaigns, mask mandates in healthcare, and accessible PCR testing to ensure that vulnerable populations can safely access healthcare.</p>	

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<u>IX. Adjournment</u>	<p>MOTION: ADJOURN THE MEETING</p> <p><i>The PHC meeting adjourned at approximately 11:50 a.m.</i></p>	<p><i>Commissioner Crawford called a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed and was seconded by Commissioner Green.</i></p>