

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION  
December 12, 2024**

**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\*

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

<b>TOPIC</b>		<b>RECOMMENDATION/ACTION/ FOLLOW-UP</b>
<b><u>I. Call to Order</u></b>	<i>The meeting was called to order at 10:35 a.m. by Commissioner Crawford</i>	<i>Information only.</i>
<b><u>II. Announcements and Introductions</u></b>	<p>The Commissioners and DPH staff introduced themselves.</p> <p>Action for October Minutes November Minutes</p> <p>Land Acknowledgement</p>	<p><i>Information only.</i></p> <p><i>Approved</i> <i>Approved</i></p> <p><i>Read by Commissioner Crawford</i></p>
<b><u>III. Emergency Circumstance</u></b>	N/A	
<b><u>IV. Public Health Report</u></b>	<p>Muntu Davis, County Health Officer, provided COVID-19 and other public health updates.</p> <p>As of December 5<sup>th</sup>, there was a total of 283 measles reported this year in the U.S. That is four times the number of cases reported in all of 2023, which was 59 cases. Moreover, 40% of the cases required hospitalization to manage their measles complications or for isolation. This year, there have been 14 confirmed cases of measles in California, and in LAC, there is one previous case of measles reported from February 2024. On December 5<sup>th</sup>, LAC reported being notified of one case of measles in a non-Los Angeles County resident who traveled to LAX while infectious at the end of November. The person arrived on Qatar Airways at the Tom Bradley International terminal on November 27<sup>th</sup>. DPH</p>	

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	<p>coordinated with CDC and other local health departments to notify all passengers that may have been exposed during the flight.</p> <p>Measles</p> <p>Measles spreads easily through air and on surfaces between people who are not already protected. Vaccination with the measles, mumps, rubella vaccine will provide much needed protection. It can take up to 7 to 21 days for symptoms to show up after being exposed and it can lead to severe disease in young children as well as adults. Anyone who have been exposed or notified that they have been exposed need to review their medical records and call their healthcare provider immediately. Those exposed residents should opt to stay at home, avoid school, work, or any other large gatherings. DPH will make sure to issue any updates as this is an ongoing investigation.</p> <p>Raw Milk</p> <p>DPH has been alerting residents about the evolving nature of the raw milk recall, which started with a specific lot number and then went to all the raw milk and cream products after several detection of H5 of birds' flu within the milk. On December 5<sup>th</sup>, DPH advised residents to avoid consuming all raw milk and cream products that were voluntarily recalled by Raw Farm LLC because the California Department of Public Health detected H5 birds flu virus in their milk and dairy cows multiple time over the last week. Residents are encouraged to return any Raw Farm LLC raw milk or cream products to where they were purchased. Folks should contact their healthcare provider if they are experiencing symptoms like eye redness or discharge, cough, sore throat, runny nose, diarrhea, vomiting, muscle ache, headaches, fatigue, trouble breathing, and fever.</p> <p>Pasteurized milk remains safe. The process for pasteurization heats the milk up high enough to a high enough temperature for a certain amount of time to kill harmful germs that can cause serious illness. This process eliminates the harmful germs, but does not eliminate the milk's nutritional value. Raw milk is milk that has not been pasteurized to kill harmful bacteria, and raw milk and raw milk products made from it can carry harmful germs such as listeria, salmonella, campylobacter, E coli, and other viruses and parasites. Anyone can get sick from drinking raw mil or consuming raw mil products. The highest risk for severe</p>	

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	<p>illness is people who are pregnant those who are 65 and older and children younger than five as well as people with weak immune systems. There will be more information to come as we learn more.</p> <p>Public Health Accreditation</p> <p>Department of Public Health has received re-accreditation from the Public Health Accreditation Board (Board). DPH has another five years of being labeled as an accredited Health Department. The Public Health Accreditation Board is a nonprofit national accreditation program that assesses a health department’s capacity to carry out essential public health services as well as a strong infrastructure and innovation to advanced public health practice. It sets standards for each health department to adhere to and is supported by the CDC. DPH has completed a comprehensive process and documents of all our evidence related to the department doing the things that are needed. Moreover, the Board also came out to a site visit and inadept discussion. DPH is please again to be recognized by PHAB and looks forward to continuously improving and promoting ongoing quality improvement through the department.</p>	
<b><u>V. Presentation</u></b>	<p>Dr. Annabelle De St. Maurice provided an overview of surveillance and prevention of respiratory virus transmission in LAC.</p> <p>The department’s general respiratory virus surveillance focuses on monitoring COVID-19, flu, and RSV by tracking virus levels, illness severity, and trends. Virus monitoring relies on data from select laboratories in LA County that report positivity rates for these viruses, helping identify the peak of the respiratory virus season. Trends are also analyzed year over year. Additionally, wastewater surveillance detects trends in individuals who may not seek medical care, tracking outbreaks and their spread.</p> <p>Illness monitoring involves emergency department data from syndromic surveillance, focusing on influenza-like illnesses and COVID-19. A program called Angelinos in Action sends text messages to residents to report symptoms of respiratory illness, providing another data source that complements wastewater surveillance and sentinel data.</p>	

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	<p>For severe illness, data on hospitalizations and death certificates, particularly for flu and COVID-19, are analyzed. Pediatric deaths from RSV are also monitored, providing a complete picture of the impact of these respiratory viruses.</p> <p>Prevention efforts focus on education about infection prevention best practices, particularly in non-healthcare settings. The team works with homeless shelters, correctional facilities, congregate care, educational, and childcare settings. They also aim to improve vaccination access through mobile vaccine teams, especially in homeless shelters. Resources such as websites, downloadable toolkits, and webinars are available to support these community efforts. Other teams within the program focus on healthcare settings.</p> <p>There is a strong focus on skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) within the program, particularly regarding vaccination rates. Weekly surveys are conducted to monitor vaccination levels, and for facilities with lower rates, a vaccine confidence initiative is implemented, involving in-person discussions to improve vaccination. The team works closely with administrators and infection preventionists to educate on the importance of vaccinations during the winter respiratory virus season. Additionally, a health officer order mandates that employees not vaccinated for both influenza and COVID-19 must wear masks, encouraging vaccination. Educational webinars are held for SNFs, and there is an Honors Program recognizing SNFs with high COVID-19 vaccination rates.</p> <p>The vaccine preventable disease team is focused on promoting immunizations for young children, particularly through the distribution of the RSV vaccine (Seba Map) in birthing hospitals. They work with hospitals to enroll in the CFC program, ensuring infants receive the vaccine to prevent RSV-related hospitalizations. Biweekly office hours are held for healthcare providers to offer updates and answer questions about immunizations. Additionally, newsletters and webinars are provided for pediatric providers to discuss respiratory virus transmission, immunization updates, and emerging treatments, addressing the evolving landscape of immunization and respiratory virus management.</p> <p>The program is collaborating closely with community-based organizations, including maternal and child-focused groups, such as the doula program, to promote immunization. These partnerships help reach individuals who may benefit from</p>	

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	<p>these community programs. Additionally, the program works with community health workers to share immunization information and distributes updates through GOV Delivery and newsletters. The vaccine preventable disease team has also updated their website with information on respiratory viruses and adapted the CDC immunization guide for better accessibility to Spanish-speaking populations.</p> <p>When clusters or outbreaks occur, the first step is confirming the outbreak with the affected site. The team reviews best practices for preventing transmission and refers the situation to Community Field Services for more specific guidance, especially in high-risk settings like skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) and shelters. Resources are provided as needed to control the spread, such as vaccinations, testing assistance (e.g., for COVID-19), personal protective equipment, and support in improving ventilation practices.</p> <p>Regarding H5 bird flu, it has been circulating in the U.S. among wild birds and poultry, with the first human case in 2022. A more recent case in April 2024 raised concerns due to the individual's exposure to dairy cows, which are mammals, potentially allowing the virus to mutate and increase human infection risk. While no human-to-human transmission has been observed, over 50 cases have occurred in poultry and farm workers. Two cases, including one in California, were found in individuals without known exposure to poultry or cows, identified through routine surveillance.</p> <p>In LA County, wild birds have been confirmed with H5 bird flu, which is expected during migratory bird season. The virus is naturally found in wild birds, and symptomatic birds are tested for H5 bird flu to track transmission. There have been no confirmed human or mammal cases in the county, though H5 has been detected in wastewater, likely from dairy processing sites and discarded milk. The general public's risk remains low, but people are advised to avoid raw milk and take precautions when interacting with animals potentially carrying the virus. The public is also encouraged to get their seasonal flu vaccine.</p> <p>To prepare for H5 bird flu, LA County conducts surveillance, including testing influenza specimens from hospitals and clinics. Although some flu A specimens may test positive, the</p>	

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	<p>public health lab has not detected H5 bird flu in community specimens.</p> <p>The federal government has stockpiled vaccines for H5 bird flu, but the decision to release them is made by a group working with the CDC. They evaluate several factors, including the severity of the disease, human transmission, and any signs of the virus mutating or becoming more resistant. So far, cases in the U.S. have been mild, so the focus remains on severe disease prevention. While the federal government has stockpiled vaccines and is working on producing more, they are also monitoring the virus through sequencing to determine if new vaccine strains are needed in case the virus mutates.</p> <p>Comments/Recommendations:</p> <p>Green: It seems like many of the strategies and resources being discussed, such as stockpiles and vaccines, are based on previous preparations made for emergencies like terrorism and bioterrorism. These measures, which were already in place for large-scale crises, are being expanded and adapted to address new challenges, ensuring preparedness for potential large-scale bioterrorist events. Presumably, the focus is on building upon existing infrastructure and scaling up resources if needed.</p> <p>Dowling: The cost of eggs continues to soar. Any thoughts?</p> <p>Dr. De St. Maurice: The rising cost of eggs could be due to the H5 bird flu. When farms experience an outbreak, they often cull large numbers of infected birds to prevent further spread. This depopulation, along with the high mortality rate and reduced egg production in sick birds, has led to a decrease in egg supply, contributing to higher prices.</p> <p>Dowling: Raw milk, is there a real, true benefit for folks that take in raw milk versus pasteurized, and why would folks do that if there is no benefit?</p> <p>Dr. Davis: I don't think there's any data that shown that raw milk is better than pasteurized.</p> <p>Rodrigues: The information provided is very relevant to the communities the Commission serves. The website, from QR</p>	

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	<p>code, indicated hospitalization data would be uploaded after November 1st, but no such data is available. While there is data available in other sections, the hospitalization data is missing.</p> <p>Dr. De St. Maurice: True, the hospitalization data is now being sourced from the NHSN due to changes in CMS's reporting requirements over the summer. They assure that the data will be updated as soon as it is received and shared, noting that the switch to a national database has improved reporting but also altered how the data is accessed.</p> <p>Dr. Davis: Improving media and communication efforts, particularly on social media platforms like Instagram is crucial. While weekly COVID numbers are shared, perhaps adding context, such as showing percentage increases compared to previous weeks, months, or years. A simple visual cue, like an arrow indicating the percentage change, could help raise awareness and encourage caution. The goal is to provide clearer messaging to the community about current trends and comparisons with the past.</p> <p>Crawford: Emphasized the importance of continuing personal protective equipment (PPE) messaging as the holiday season approaches, especially in higher-risk settings like gatherings. She mentioned due to PPE use it reduced cold and flu period and suggest that the messaging should encourage wearing PPE, particularly for higher-risk individuals, without causing fear or being too forceful. The goal is to raise awareness and consistency in the messaging, ensuring people understand the benefits of PPE during the holidays. Any thoughts about as we get into the holidays, about how messaging could add in a way that is helpful?</p> <p>Dr. De St. Maurice: There are efforts to emphasize the importance of PPE in healthcare facilities, skilled nursing homes, and among at-risk communities. DPH stresses the need to focus on high-risk settings, such as crowded public transit, and particularly encourage PPE use for individuals at high risk of complications. The focus is on protecting vulnerable groups in these environments.</p>	

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	<p>Dr. Davis: During this time of year, DPH sends out messages focused on safety, emphasizing respiratory virus season rather than just COVID. The messaging encourages wearing masks, particularly in crowded indoor settings, and prioritizes protecting individuals at higher risk for severe infections. They clarify that the message is not specific to any one virus (COVID, flu, RSV, etc.), but rather promotes general protective practices. Will confirm that these messages are being distributed again.</p>	
<b><u>VI. New Business</u></b>	<p>Action for 2025 Chair and Vice Chair: Commissioner Dowling was nominated for Chair and Kenny Green was nominated for Vice Chair.</p>	<p>A motion was called to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Rodrigues. All in favor.</p> <p>Approved</p>
<b><u>VII. Unfinished Business</u></b>		
<b><u>VIII. Public Comment</u></b>	<p>Caller H.D.: Speaker expresses concern over the rising number of COVID hospitalizations in LA, with 232 people being hospitalized, and the spread of other illnesses like pneumonia, flu, RSV, and H5N1. Caller questions why there is no mask mandate in healthcare settings, suggesting that respirator masks should be required year-round for all healthcare workers, regardless of vaccination status. The caller asks for better protection measures in healthcare and schools, such as N95 masks and improved ventilation and the ongoing risks of COVID, including long-term effects like heart attacks, stroke, and neurological damage.</p> <p>Teams Caller J.T.: Expressed concern about poor air quality in places where children gather, particularly in classrooms. Despite repeated requests for action, the district checks show that air quality monitors are fine but believes this is inadequate. Air quality in classrooms should be addressed to protect children's health and mentioned a lack of action and</p>	



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	<p>involvement from public health authorities. Caller also references the efforts in New York to address long COVID and advised for similar attention and action.</p> <p>Teams Caller P.H.: The caller urges a proactive approach to respiratory virus protection, emphasizing that monitoring trends alone is insufficient. Caller recommends pre-COVID and H5N1 PCR testing in LA County, encourage discussions with LA schools about air quality standards and suggest respirator mandates in healthcare settings. The caller advocates for clean air upgrades in businesses, public buildings, and public transit, arguing that these measures would reduce the spread of COVID, H1N1, RSV, pneumonia, and other airborne illnesses. Advised clean air as a non-controversial public health measure and urge replicating successful public health messaging from New York, including information about masking and long COVID, across LA County.</p> <p>Teams Caller S.J.: Caller associated self as part of the group that has consistently raised concerns about COVID and long COVID, asks what actions have been taken or are planned in response to their concerns. The caller emphasizes the need for progress in 2025, urging the commission and the new chair to collaborate with them. Despite offering to meet multiple times, the speaker notes a lack of engagement. They stress the personal and public health impact of these issues and call for serious consideration in the coming year.</p> <p>Caller A.: Expresses frustration with the lack of public health action on long COVID in LA, contrasting it with efforts in other cities. The caller advised efforts in distributing free masks and educating people in areas like Gardena and Long Beach, noting that many feel neglected and lack clear guidance. The speaker calls on public health authorities to take more responsibility. They urge a stronger public health response, including endorsing mask-wearing not only for viruses but also for wildfire smoke, and stress the need for better protection measures for LA's air quality.</p>	
<b><u>IX. Adjournment</u></b>	<p><b>MOTION: ADJOURN THE MEETING</b></p> <p><i>The PHC meeting adjourned at approximately 11:45 a.m.</i></p>	<p><i>Commissioner Crawford called a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed</i></p>

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		<i>and was seconded by Commissioner Rodrigues.</i>