

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION
September 12, 2025**

APPROVED

COMMISSIONERS

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

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 **Not Present**

<i>TOPIC</i>		<i>RECOMMENDATION/ACTION/ FOLLOW-UP</i>
<u>I. Call to Order</u>	<i>The meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m. by Commissioner Green</i>	<i>Information only.</i>
<u>II. Announcements and Introductions</u>	The Commissioners and DPH staff introduced themselves. Land Acknowledgement Action for August Minutes	<i>Information only.</i> <i>Read by Commissioner Green</i> <i>Moved to October</i>
<u>III. Emergency Circumstance</u>		
<u>IV. Public Health Report</u>	Dr. Barbara Ferrer, Director, provided Public Health updates. These are deeply troubling times, both nationally and within our Public Health Department. The ongoing acts of political violence are horrific and must be stopped. It is crucial to have the Office of Violence Prevention here today, as their work represents a crucial response to one of the most urgent issues facing our country. It is a proud moment to be part of an organization committed to justice and to work not only to respond to violence, but to prevent it by addressing the root causes that allow such acts to keep happening. Thank you for being here and for your continued efforts in this vital work	

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	Employee Appreciation Event – Giving Thanks Public Health is excited to celebrate our annual <i>Giving Thanks</i> employee appreciation event on November 6th. While budget limitations prevent the usual hosting of an in-person gathering at Grand Park, Public Health remains committed to recognizing the outstanding contributions of our staff. This year’s event will be held via live stream, and we invite everyone to join as we celebrate the amazing work happening across DPH. Dawna will be sharing the link to the live stream soon. Looking forward to honoring staff and partners together! Public Health Recognized with 22 County Awards Public Health received 22 awards from the LA County Quality and Productivity Commission. These include: In partnership with the Board of Supervisors, CEO, and Productivity Managers Network, these awards honor efforts to improve the quality and productivity of county services. Our Top 10 awardees include: • <i>Help in Any Language: On-Demand Interpretation</i> • <i>Protecting and Saving Lives with Safety</i> (an OVP program) Videos featuring these projects will be shared at the October awards ceremony. Congratulations to all as their work continues to shine even in challenging times. Summary of Budget and Operational Challenges • <i>Significant Risk & Uncertainty:</i> ○ The organization is currently facing considerable financial and operational risk due to uncertain federal and county-level funding. • <i>Federal Budget Uncertainty:</i> ○ FY26 federal appropriations are still being negotiated. ○ A continuing resolution is likely, but final funding amounts remain unclear. ○ The President’s proposal includes over a 50% cut to CDC funding, which would be devastating.	<i>Dawna to send the link to the Commissioners for Giving Thanks Online Event</i>

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	○ House and Senate proposals differ from each other and from the president's, with negotiations ongoing. • <i>County Budget Crisis:</i> ○ Revenue reductions due to a lawsuit and fire-related costs. ○ Already implemented one budget curtailment and instructed to prepare for five more. ○ 8.5% cuts already factored into the budget; further reductions possible. • <i>Federal Restrictions Beyond Funding:</i> ○ New executive orders, HHS guidance, and contract clauses restrict use of federal funds. ○ A temporary court injunction is currently blocking enforcement, but the threat remains. • <i>Impact on Workforce:</i> ○ The agency employs 4,500 people whose jobs are affected by federal, state, and local policy uncertainty. ○ Staff are experiencing high stress due to both financial uncertainty and broader societal challenges. ○ Leadership is encouraging staff involvement in efficiency efforts and maintaining morale through support resources. Budget Landscape The department is facing three major fiscal challenges that threaten its ability to maintain services. First, county budget curtailments have cut 8.5% from the flexible portion of funding (about 13% of the overall budget), which is critical for prioritizing services. Additional cuts of 1.5% and 3.5% are pending Board review. These reductions have already led to the elimination of over 100 essential but vacant positions, severely affecting service delivery, including outbreak response and community outreach. Despite assumptions to the contrary, reducing staff—even vacant roles—has tangible, negative impacts on public health operations. The second challenge is the sharp increase in labor costs following a new contract, which includes a \$5,000 bonus per employee. While the county will cover 17% of the cost, the department must find nearly \$19 million more. Some of this burden will be passed to grants, resulting in unfilled grant-funded vacancies that risk non-compliance with grant obligations. Remaining costs may be covered by eliminating filled positions or reducing contracts. Future years will bring further costs due to scheduled bonuses and COLA increases. With limited flexibility and a grant-heavy budget, the	

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	department anticipates service reductions and potential workforce cuts as unavoidable consequences. The third and most severe challenge is the deep reduction in federal funding—\$43 million this year and a projected \$155 million loss by FY 2027. These cuts affect essential public health programs like disease prevention, emergency response, and food security. The department is working to reallocate flexible dollars to preserve critical services where grants are disappearing, such as HIV prevention and SNAP-Ed programs. However, without replacement funding, up to 400 additional positions could be lost in the next few years. Despite reduced capacity, the department remains committed to protecting high-risk populations, especially during respiratory virus season, by promoting vaccination access and ensuring clear, science-based public messaging. Respiratory Season As the respiratory season begins, the department is preparing its response amid significant funding cuts, which have greatly reduced mobile vaccination capacity. Despite these limitations, efforts will focus on protecting high-risk groups, particularly older adults and residents of skilled nursing facilities. While federal guidance on managing respiratory season remains unclear, the department is aligned with state health authorities and leading medical organizations, all of which continue to support vaccination as the primary defense against infectious diseases—especially for adults 18 and older, where federal messaging has been inconsistent. The department is also emphasizing the importance of vaccinating other vulnerable groups, including young children, pregnant women, and individuals with underlying health conditions. Staff have been trained on current recommendations to ensure consistent communication and care delivery. Public messaging efforts are being strengthened to ensure the community receives clear, evidence-based information on the value and availability of vaccines. Despite reduced capacity, the department remains committed to an ethical, science-driven approach to protecting public health. Recommendations/comments:	

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	Rodrigues: What is the contribution from the county to subsequent years of bonuses and COLAs? Dr. Ferrer: It is at about 17%. It's called the suspension rate. It's always been at that. There is always a challenge to meet the increasing cost and personnel that often are not covered fully by our grants. And that struggle, as you noted, becomes more profound when there's less and less money here. Green: Appreciates the leadership team and acknowledges the tough and sometimes uncontrollable decisions that need to be made at times. He recognizes the heavy burden leaders carry and commends their strength and dedication, even when exhausted. He also notes the challenge of maintaining staff wellness and morale during difficult times. Given the difficult decisions and pressures the department is facing, especially with the upcoming changes in September, how do you plan to maintain your own balance and support your team's wellness through this ongoing uncertainty? Dr. Ferrer: A continuing resolution means the department continues to be funded at the current level, which is beneficial as it delays the anticipated deep budget cuts. Public Health has a dedicated team of 4,500 employees. Special recognition is given to the leadership team, who have been working tirelessly for months to develop a plan to move forward while preserving as many services as possible.	
<u>V. Presentation</u>	Kelly Fischer, Office of Violence Prevention provided updates from the program. The office dedicated to gender-based violence was established in 2019 by the Board of Supervisors with the goal of taking a public health approach to preventing violence. Since its creation, the office has grown rapidly and focuses on strengthening collaboration with county partners to prevent various forms of violence and promote healing. It works closely with the county leadership committee and a Survivor Center Community Partnership Council to guide its	

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	efforts toward achieving a vision of a violence-free Los Angeles County. The first strategic plan focused on several key goals to address violence prevention across the county. These included establishing regional Violence Prevention Coalitions to foster collaboration in a large, diverse area, creating a community-accessible open data portal to increase transparency and awareness about local violence, and expanding the trauma prevention initiative to nine communities by 2022. Additionally, they launched a crisis response pilot in South LA, aimed at providing healing support after violent or traumatic events through a community-driven approach. The plan also emphasized advancing healing-centered, trauma-informed systems change. A trauma-informed care specialist works within the office and with county departments and community partners like Parks and Recreation, the district attorney's office, and courts to transform how violence and trauma are addressed. The overall goal is to shift the narrative around violence, recognizing it as a public health issue and encouraging all partners to play a role in its prevention. Since 2019, the office has expanded its work significantly thanks to strong leadership support from Dr. Ferrer, Dr. Batra, the Bureau staff, and the Board of Supervisors. Key initiatives include launching a firearm safety program in 2022, a youth suicide prevention pilot in 2023, and in 2024, introducing the Family Assistance Program, gender-based violence prevention, and establishing a sexual assault council. The Firearm Safety program is an award-winning effort focused on reducing gun violence through evidence-based strategies, such as providing free firearm safe storage devices. Research shows that safe storage practices are effective, with most Americans, including two-thirds of gun owners, supporting mandated locked storage. In LA County, about 12% of households have firearms—roughly 400,000 homes—though this is likely underestimated. Firearms account for 74% of homicides, with a child affected by gun	

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	violence every 30 hours. The economic impact is staggering, with suicides costing nearly \$9 billion annually and homicides costing \$9.5 billion, in addition to the profound effects on individuals and communities. This firearm safety initiative began from a Board motion to distribute free firearm safety locks at LA County hospitals and quickly expanded with growing partner interest. Currently, locks are distributed at six County hospitals, five tool lending libraries, and various community events, with a website form allowing anyone in LA County to request up to two free locks by mail. Over 33,000 locks have been distributed so far, with plans to expand outreach through partnerships with health systems like LA Care and Kaiser, community organizations, and public health sites. The youth suicide prevention work addresses a critical public health issue in LA County, where there were 594 youth suicide deaths and thousands of hospitalizations, and emergency visits related to suicide attempts among youth aged 10-24. Males, Asian, and Black youth are disproportionately affected, with risk increasing as youth get older. Thanks to funding from the California Department of Public Health, the department launched a pilot program providing support groups for youth who lost loved ones to suicide, medical case workers in emergency rooms, suicide prevention training coordination, and a widely viewed media campaign. Many of these efforts have been extended with additional funding from the probation juvenile justice Coordinating Committee, helping sustain these vital resources. The Family Assistance Program, transitioned to the office in 2024 from the Department of Mental Health, provides grief counseling, system navigation, and burial cost assistance to families affected by deputy-involved shootings, use of force incidents, or deaths in sheriff's custody. The team of three clinical social workers collaborates with multiple county departments to improve support systems and prevention efforts. Since February 2024, they have reached out to 95 families, with 82% accepting services, and have disbursed	

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	nearly \$350,000 to 65 families for funeral and burial expenses. The Gender-Based Violence Prevention Initiative, led by Clara Chang, was launched following Board motions to assess existing efforts, identify gaps, and create a countywide framework for prevention. With \$2 million awarded to 12 community organizations, the program supports healthy relationship education, LGBTQ+ youth leadership, engagement of men and boys, and economic empowerment for women and girls. Additionally, a teen dating violence prevention toolkit is being developed in partnership with various county departments and will be launched in February 2026 during Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, aiming to raise awareness and provide resources on recognizing abuse and promoting healthy relationships. The LA County Sexual Assault Council was launched in 2025 to bring together multiple sectors and individuals with lived experience related to sexual violence. Its goal is to coordinate efforts across systems, improve communication, and better support survivors and community needs. The council includes 17 diverse members representing various sectors such as survivors, rape crisis centers, Sexual Assault Response Teams, healthcare, mental health, the District Attorney's Office, community organizations, and campus services, covering all county supervisorial districts. This council was established after years of advocacy and recommendations from an ad hoc committee focused on prevention, intervention, healing, and suspension related to sexual assault. Key goals include providing training and education, enhancing data collection and sharing, advocating for policy and funding at multiple levels, and fostering system-wide coordination among community and county service providers. Nicole Paris, the council's Executive Director, is available for questions after the presentation.	

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	Recommendations/Comments: Rodrigues: How is the Office of Violence Prevention’s work engaged with the school systems? Kelly: A new school safety initiative was launched and funded by ARPA, focusing on restorative justice practices. This program continues this year and aims to expand restorative justice across all related efforts. Additionally, the initiative collaborates with student well-being centers on community violence prevention and youth suicide prevention. Clara: In addition, one of the four categories of our gender-based violence grant is our healthy relationship education and training. We have a contractor in each supervisorial district that's engaging with middle school and high school youth, teaching healthy relationship behavior, setting healthy boundaries, bystander intervention, things like that. So, we're very excited about that. Dr. Batra: The Sexual Assault Council presents a new opportunity to engage with college-age students, who have been actively advocating in this area. The council is working with community colleges, where students are taking a leadership role, helping to build and strengthen partnerships in this space. Green: Advised on the importance of adopting a public health approach to addressing major issues like violence, substance abuse, mental health, and lack of vaccination—threats recognized over the past several years. It was also emphasized that applying the public health model to violence prevention, including interrupting and preventing its spread, is a critical and somewhat overdue strategy, with both systemic and human components. The work being done is challenging and appreciates the leadership involved, and hints at the need for integrating different services upfront to support healing and prevention efforts. Kelly: Child sexual exploitation is addressed through a collaborative effort outside the Office of Violence Prevention, with involvement from the Gender-Based Violence team, the Office of Women’s Health, and other departments focused on	

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	human trafficking and sexual assault. While the office doesn't directly lead this work, it builds on decades of efforts and aims to be responsive to County needs. She emphasized the importance of better coordination between child exploitation and gender-based violence initiatives and highlighted the critical need for self-care and support for first responders and staff who face vicarious trauma.	
<u>VI. New Business</u>		
<u>VII. Unfinished Business</u>		
<u>VIII. Public Comment</u>		
<u>IX. Adjournment</u>	MOTION: ADJOURN THE MEETING <i>The PHC meeting adjourned at approximately 12:05pm.</i>	<i>Commissioner Green called a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed and was seconded by Commissioner Rodrigues.</i>