

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION  
August 8, 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**

Barbara Ferrer, Director of Public Health \*\*  
 Dr. Muntu Davis, County Health Officer\*\*  
 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 10:30 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 June Minutes</p> <p>Land Acknowledgement</p>	<p><i>Information only.</i></p> <p><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>Anish Mahajan, Chief Deputy Director, provided COVID-19 and other public health updates.</p> <p>COVID-19</p> <p>In the past four weeks the reported percentages have doubled. This past week 452 COVID average daily cases was reported, an increase from 229 from two months ago. Wastewater concentrations are currently at 44% of the winter peak of COVID on wastewater from 2023 to 2024.</p> <p>This past week it was reported an average of 81 new COVID-19 hospital admissions per day, a two-fold increase from the 41</p>	

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	<p>admissions we observed per day a month ago. The seven-day overage of daily COVID-19 hospitalizations in our county is 389. 10% of hospitalized COVID patients were in intensive care.</p> <p>DPH is urging residents to use all the tools, not just vaccination, but ensuring they are masking when they are ill to prevent the transmission. CDC is recommending that everyone six months and older receive the updated vaccine this fall when it comes out whether they were previously vaccinated or not. There are still doses of the previous vaccination available as well.</p> <p>COVID-19 testing is still recommended for anyone who suspects they have COVID-19 symptoms or who have had a recent exposure to COVID. Free tests remain available throughout the County and at local pharmacies through most insurances. DPH encourages everyone to take common sense precautions of avoiding getting Covid or other kinds of infections by washing hands, utilizing hand sanitizers, especially before eating, after sneezing and coughing or when in public or crowded places.</p> <p>Residents should stay home if they have symptoms of illness including coughing, sneezing, fever or sore throat, and inform family and friends you have been around to be cautious of the same signs. Residents can always get referrals to free telehealth care to receive COVID-19 treatment and made a vaccine appointment on our public health information line which is open 7 days a week from 8am -8pm at 833-540-0473. More information can be found on our website.</p> <p>Back to School</p> <p>Vaccination remains an important strategy for kids and all community health members. As the new school year approaches, DPH wants to make sure that everyone is protected. The routine childhood vaccination coverage or kids getting their vaccines on-time amongst kindergarteners has declined to its lowest level in decades. There has been a recent uptick in global and domestic measles cases and outbreaks that underscore the unvaccinated children that are at risk for serious illnesses. DPH is sending out the message on how important it is that children get their vaccines. Vaccines have historically protected children from serious diseases like diphtheria, mumps, rubella, which were common in young kids before and were almost unheard of in recently years. Our department is supporting schools and parents with immunizations efforts in several ways by providing guidance</p>	

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	<p>and training for school and childcare facility personnel on the California Annual Immunizations Assessment and reporting requirement providing education and outreach to youths, parents and other community members. Also sharing resources to locate free and low-cost vaccine clinics.</p> <p>Medical Debt</p> <p>Supervisors Hahn and Mitchell sponsored a motion last October to take a series of actions and activities around addressing the significant problem with medical debt. The motion included bringing together a coalition of hospital health insurance plans and community-based groups, legal aid societies and others. The goal of the coalition meetings was to come up with the best strategies to address the problem of medical debt. Nearly 1 in 10 Angelinos are carrying medical debt. These Angelinos are often low income who should not have been billed and should have received financial assistance as it was required by the State of California and hospital’s policies. The second directive will try to seek money to retire existing medical debt. DPH had the support of the Supervisors last month to use \$5 million in our budget to purchase and retire existing medical debts. This is ongoing and currently working with a nonprofit that will help work with hospitals have patients in debt collection to identify specific patients to help purchase their debt to relieve them of that. Debt can be bought in big chunks after a long time at lower prices. DPH suspect that nearly 150,000 Angelenos may be helped by the \$5 million and maybe able to retire nearly \$500 billion of debt.</p> <p>Last Tuesday, the Supervisors approved a County ordinance to help improve our financial assistance work specifically in hospitals.</p> <p>AI-Impics</p> <p>The 2024 AI-Impics will be held on Saturday, September 14, 2024, by our Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (SAPC) Bureau. The AI-Impics is an Olympic-style tradition with over 40 years of history dedicated to celebrating individuals in alcohol and substances abuse recovery. The event offers a day for families and recovering communities where participants compete for trophies and medals in various sporting events.</p> <p>Treatment providers will be bringing clients along to take part in activities such as the opening ceremony parade, track and field events, basketball, weightlifting and various social games like</p>	

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	<p>board and card games. Dignitaries, appointed Commissioners, heads of LAC departments, and family community members will be in attendance. DPH would like to invite everyone on Saturday, September 14<sup>th</sup> at 8:00am at the Los Angeles Harbor College, 1111 Figueroa, Wilmington, 90744.</p> <p>Breast Cancer Month</p> <p>The Board has declared October 2024 Breast Cancer Awareness Month to encourage prevention and early detection of breast cancer. The Board encourages County departments to support Making Strides Against Breast Cancer LA event. DPH’s Office of Women’s Health has been coordinating breast cancer walks and fundraising efforts since 2000.</p> <p>The American Cancer Society is coordinating Making Strides Against Breast Cancer LA’s 3-mile outdoor walk. This is an in-person event that will be held at the Citadel Outlets in Commerce on Saturday, October 19, 2024. You all are invited to come out and support the many families and support breast cancer survivors.</p> <p>Comments/Recommendations:</p> <p>Rodrigues – It is good to see schools taking a more proactive stance. Is the County working with school districtwide community education campaigns? What else is being done to address the misinformation out there regarding vaccination and if there is a coordinated effort right now?</p> <p>Dr. Mahajan – We are seeing these historic low vaccinations precisely because of misinformation. DPH have targeted efforts at the schools not only for immunizations but also for oral health, and other health promotion activities. The Wellbeing centers are being utilized and are in nearly 40 school campuses across the County. However, we will investigate further to see where DPH is with targeting misinformation.</p> <p>Green – I met with Alicia Chang, the Regional Health Officer and Community Field Services. The staff includes public health nurses and some public health investigators, and community health workers. They are a specific program that go out through the community and have developed deep relationships because they are place-based, location-based and have lots of connections with</p>	

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August 8, 2024**

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	<p>their community organization, schools and other groups and bring this kind of information to the community. I commend their work.</p>	
<p><b><u>V. Presentation</u></b></p>	<p>Alice Berliner, Office of Worker Health and Safety.</p> <p>In 2020, the Board of Supervisors passed a motion to establish the Public Health Central Program, which happened during height of the pandemic. The advocacy started when outbreaks was seen primary round low-wage/high hazard industries such as meat and food processing workers, garment and warehouse workers. In this environment, quota expectations, pace of work, indoor heat, workplace violence and all of those elements further contributed to workers being vulnerable to getting and/or exposure to COVID.</p> <p>The program established contracts with worker organizations, primarily worker centers. The concept of the program is to work with organizations to provide education and outreach to impacted workers who are primarily low-wage immigrant workers.</p> <p>In 2020, there was little trust in the government. Workers were scared to file complaints. They were seeing retaliation when workers would speak up about work conditions and for simple supplies like PPE and social distancing. DPH established a trusted network of organizations to use a trusted messenger back to the community for emergency to get messages out and resources. These organizations also help workers file complaints around various types of employer non-compliance. Since then, the program has shifted and has broaden beyond just COVID but other issues such as extreme heat or wildfires and other potential disasters that we might see in the future.</p> <p>The office has been able to accomplish many things that include helping workers identify wage theft at work, harassment, and wrongful termination. The program is now able to support workers in the artificial stone countertop industry where there is now a resurfacing of silicosis, an ancient disease, in the San Fernando Valley communities. Workers are experiencing symptoms and when it was brought to the attention of employers, there have been some retaliation. DPH has contracted with two community-based organizations to be messengers to get out important information back to workers who were exposed to silica.</p> <p>In early stages of silicosis, it can be misdiagnosed as TB. Last year cases were below 50, but last month the case count in LAC was at 100. Due to the dust particles when cutting. This is an emerging</p>	

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
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<b>TOPIC</b>		<b>RECOMMENDATION/ACTION/ FOLLOW-UP</b>
	<p>disease because artificial stone became popular in the early 2000s. 15 or 20 years later, those who have been exposed are starting to get it. So, although Public Health Central Program started with Covid, they are now able to apply it other important issues that may emerge.</p> <p>Lastly, the program is new and is still looking at the vision and what the priorities should be. Although the vision is still in working draft, the LAC Department of Public health Office of Worker Health and Safety will support the advancement of safe and health workplaces for all workers in LAC for education, outreach, research and partnerships with leading organizations.</p> <p>The initial areas of focus are public health council program of the partnership of the organization, education and training. Emerging workplace hazards. With that in mind, this will serve as an umbrella for things like silicosis, extreme heat, wildfires and smoke, strategic partnership and code enforcement.</p> <p>Comments/Recommendations:</p> <p>Crawford – What are the symptoms of silica? Tell us more about the garment industry.</p> <p>Alice – Silicosis is primarily a lung disease. It is an incurable disease, but early symptoms are shortness of breath and cough. It’s like TB. The garment industry is covered by Title 11. This allows the program to start a partnership with the Garment Worker Center to support garment workers in various ways and see how they experience things like extreme heat, wage theft, workplace violence and quota expectations. The program will utilize this partnership with Garment Worker Center to assist in filing complaint in environmental health. The ideal through this program is to help workers navigate issues before having to file and try to support them and support them in implementing changes before having to file a complaint, if possible.</p> <p>Rodrigues - During the pandemic, there was a significant issue with the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) for vulnerable groups in various industries. While some programs provide face coverings, there remains a widespread deficiency in tangible PPE resources. Beyond enforcement and critical education, there's a need for better access to PPE and support.</p> <p>Will this program be able to explore if there are flexible funding options through county departments for PPE provision and if</p>	

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	<p>there's a way to address violations and provide resource navigation? This can help workers to connect with community health workers or case managers who can offer immediate assistance and support. The primary concern is ensuring that workers receive hands-on help and proper resources.</p> <p>Alice: To effectively support and advocate for workers, particularly those in vulnerable positions, several strategies and considerations are being considered such as having trusted messengers like Community health workers, worker organizations, and first-generation kids who act as translators for their parents are crucial. These trusted individuals help bridge communication gaps and ensure that workers understand their rights and obligations. Another is having a holistic approach. It's important to recognize that small businesses and low-wage workers often share the same communities. A holistic approach is needed to address these issues effectively, involving collaboration with various county departments and programs. Lastly, establishing partnerships with organizations like DDO and developing cooperative programs can enhance outreach and support across different communities. The office in development could play a key role in connecting these services and facilitating a comprehensive support network.</p> <p>Crawford: Dr. Antonette Yancy, a notable innovator in worksite wellness and the inspiration behind Michelle Obama's Let's Move campaign, emphasized the importance of wellness breaks and movement throughout the workday. Although this focus on intentional physical activity and mindfulness may not align directly with workplace protection, it complements existing health practices by encouraging proactive wellness. Incorporating concepts like "instant reset" and physical activity breaks can enhance overall health and productivity, addressing issues such as obesity and heart disease. This angle, while not initially the main focus, could be valuable in promoting comprehensive workplace wellness.</p> <p>Green: Longshoremen and other physically demanding jobs often require regular massages and chiropractic care to manage the strain on their bodies. However, workers in industries like concrete pouring and fiberglass handling face significant health risks and may bring harmful materials home. Connecting these workers with resources, such as non-profits offering massages and acupuncture, could be beneficial, but these services need better visibility and accessibility. Additionally, integrating these resources with efforts to manage medical debt and support small businesses could help</p>	

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION  
August 8, 2024**

<b>TOPIC</b>		<b>RECOMMENDATION/ACTION/ FOLLOW-UP</b>
	workers who can't afford necessary treatments. Perhaps this is an opportunity for young people in this field to do internships/low cost as well as get some experience and an inexpensive way for workers to receive services.	
<b>VI. <u>New Business</u></b>		
<b>VII. <u>Unfinished Business</u></b>		
<b>VIII. <u>Public Comment</u></b>	<p>Caller 1: Caller attended meeting last month and continuously concerned about Covid in the community. Caller spoke of respiratory illnesses going around and the need for protection.</p> <p>P.H. – Advised the topic was on occupational health and safety but did not address how COVID is a contributor to worker’s health. He urges LAC to do more on clean air infrastructure, masks in healthcare settings and against masks bans.</p> <p>Line 6/W.P. – Caller advised COVID-19 continues to spread in Los Angeles. While successful strategies for controlling the virus are discussed, not much is discussed on what hasn’t worked. Caller advised vaccines haven't fully stopped the spread and would like to see the document and evaluate all mitigation efforts of what worked and didn’t work and share these experiences to better address the ongoing challenges.</p> <p>Line 12: Caller is a 15-month long COVID patient. Caller is not confident they can survive another covid infection, so they constantly have to makes in public places to avoid crowded indoor spaces in public. Caller would like a mandatory mask policy in public buildings especially in healthcare facilities.</p> <p>Line 15: Caller is concerned about the messaging around COVID. Caller understands vaccinations can help prevent a death or long-term illness not advise it is not guaranteed. Caller is concerned there is not a mask mandate in public health settings. Caller mentioned many people don’t feel comfortable going into hospital</p>	

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
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	<p>because staff are not wearing masks and get pushback when suggested.</p> <p>J.J.: Caller advised although WHO ended the public health emergency last year, we should not let our guards down. Caller mentioned he is a construction worker, and his body hurts all the time. But he would not seek out a message because the virus is still out there, which he advises would increase his chances of long COVID. Caller urges a mandatory masing in healthcare settings and air quality standards.</p> <p>Line 24 E.: Caller advise they have family members who cannot access healthcare right now because there is no mask requirement in healthcare settings. Caller urges LAC to reinstate universal masking in healthcare setting and implement clean air standards.</p> <p>Line D.F.: Caller states that COVID-19 travels from the nose and brain before spreading to the rest of the body, causing possible widespread, which may lead to a dangerous underestimation of the virus's true risk; therefore, a reassessment of COVID policies is urgently needed.</p> <p>Caller H.D.: Caller advises to take the virus more seriously. Caller advises there should be mask requirements in healthcare settings all the time not only when numbers are high as well as have clean air with filtration ventilation in public areas.</p> <p>Attendee N.: Attendee advise had long covid since March 2020 and unable to hold a normal job. Attendee advise vaccines don't stop the spread. They help prevent death to some extent but there are still people getting it. Attendee urges to bring back masks and invest in clean air.</p> <p>Attendee: Schools are significant sources of COVID-19 transmission, and the Public Health Commission must enhance mitigation efforts, including improved ventilation, support for masking, vaccine education, and easier access to testing, to better protect students and prevent long-term health issues associated with the virus.</p> <p>Attendee 3: Wastewater data shows millions are contracting COVID-19 daily, but reporting issues and a delay in vaccinations highlight gaps in current mitigation efforts. Handwashing is insufficient for an airborne virus, and lost tools like contact tracing,</p>	

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
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	mandatory masking, and free PCR testing have weakened our response, particularly for uninsured communities.	
<b><u>IX. Adjournment</u></b>	<b>MOTION: ADJOURN THE MEETING</b>  <i>The PHC meeting adjourned at approximately 11:50a.m.</i>	<i>Commissioner Crawford called a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed and was seconded by Commissioner Dowling.</i>