

Meeting Notes

Public Health Advisory Council of Snohomish County

July 22, 2020 | 7:45-9:15 a.m. | Snohomish Health District | Zoom Meeting

Members present:

Jason Biermann, Snohomish County DEM
Frank Busichio, InterFaith Family Shelter
Jeff Clarke, Commissioner, Mukilteo Water & Wastewater District
Amy Beth Cook, Lake Stevens School District
Lisa George, PRMCE (Chair-Elect)
Robert Goetz, Everett Police Department
Midori Larrabee, EvergreenHealth Monroe
Patricia Love, City of Stanwood
Karri Matau, Community Foundation of Snohomish County
Shaughn Maxwell, South County Fire and Rescue
Sid Roberts, The Roberts Group (Past Chair)
Tové Skaftun, Community Health Centers
Jim Welsh, ChildStrive

Staff Present:

Shawn Frederick
Dr. Chris Spitters
Heather Thomas
Nicole Thomsen
Wendy Burchill
Linda Carl

Members not present: **Brent Hackney**, Brent Hackney Designs; **Lark Kesterke**, United Way; **Korey MacKenzie**, Diamond Knot Alehouse (Chair)

Guests: **Linda Redmon**, Board of Health member; **Kevin O'Brien**, Lake Stevens Fire Department

Recording Secretary: Linda Carl, Executive Assistant

The meeting was called to order at 7:46 a.m. The meeting was held via Zoom video conference.

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Mr. Sid Roberts and seconded by Mr. Jeff Clarke to approve the minutes of the May 27, 2020, meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

COVID-19 Update

Dr. Chris Spitters reported that there has been a sustained increase in the case rate. At the end of May and early June we had around 15 cases/day; now we're close to four times that number. Since going into phase 2 there's been increased interaction, likely leading to increased case numbers. Sixty percent of the recent cases are in the 15 to 39 age group. Small gatherings are also driving cases up. As a result, the Governor has rolled back allowable group sizes. People 30 to 39 have younger children, potentially spreading the virus through the community and into the school environment. Increased cases can also affect the upper age ranges, which will affect hospitalization rates—a key metric in reaching phase 3. Ms. Lisa George reported that PRMCE has 19 COVID-related patients currently hospitalized; they have not gone above 20 per day for a few months. PRMCE has a capacity for 120; they currently have enough PPE and have no restrictions on elective surgeries. Dr. Spitters reported that moving backward to phase 1 is driven in part by increased mortality, bed capacity, and available PPE. We're averaging about 60 new cases/day. He noted that there could be an emerging plastics shortage, which could affect supply-chain efforts. About 20% to 40% of people never show symptoms. We are still in the single-digits of the proportion of the county population

that has been infected cumulatively; 90% or more remain susceptible. Antibodies are a good marker for short-term immunity, but it is possible patients can be reinfected. Ms. George added that Sacramento has reported seeing patients a second time. Ms. Matau asked about county demographics; Dr. Spitters will email a report to the committee. He noted that we're seeing 2 to 5 times higher rates in Native Americans/Alaska Natives, Latinos, and African Americans, and about 100 times higher in Pacific Islanders. Hospitalization rates are also higher, but death rates in these groups remain low and not statistically different than Asians or Caucasians. Asians and Caucasians have similar incidence rates. Dr. Spitters stated Health District testing guidelines are focused on people with symptoms, close contacts, or in workplace-setting outbreaks. He noted that the coronavirus mutates, which could result in reinfections. Combined with flu season, this could challenge hospital capacity. In a school setting, it will be difficult to distinguish symptoms, and many will likely miss school due to reporting symptoms. However, precautions (e.g., face coverings) will help reduce transmission of coronavirus and the flu. A dozen or more types of vaccines are in development, but it could still be 12 to 24 months out until the general population has access. Dr. Spitters would like to see better-than-average coverage for first responders for flu vaccines and is looking at the bigger picture regarding vaccines and first responders.

Suicide and COVID-19

Ms. Wendy Burchill, Healthy Communities Specialist, reviewed youth suicide statistics. From 2014 to 2019, there were 35 in the county—24 males and 11 females. Until July 27, there have been zero youth suicides on one calendar year. September is Suicide Awareness Month. The Snohomish County Department of Human Services has emotional support services available to those affected by COVID. Ms. George mentioned that 988 (like 911) is being development as a suicide hotline, but may not be up and running for several years. PRMCE has opened a mental health urgent care center, which has been very busy. Mr. Shaughn Maxwell noted that a 1% rise in unemployment equals a 1.6% rise in the adult suicide rate. Ms. Burchill noted that the suicide rate is increasing more than the homicide rate in the county. Poisoning isn't always clear if it's accidental or suicide; cause of death is determined by the medical examiner. She noted there are also co-occurring disorders, such as mental health and increase in opioid use.

Public Health Foundation

Ms. Heather Thomas reported that the ad hoc committee met seven times to discuss the formation of the foundation. The name will be Sound Foundation for Public Health and its purpose is to provide support for issues listed in the CHA/CHIP as well as emergent issues. A resolution of the Board of Health expresses support and directs the creation of an MOU that clarifies the roles of the foundation, the Board, and the PHAC. It also authorizes in-kind support for procuring professional services; there is an initial placeholder of \$50K for upfront work.

Additional Information

Ms. Nicole Thomsen welcomed new member Deputy Chief Shaughn Maxwell, representing emergency medical services, and thanked Chief Kevin O'Brien for his service on the PHAC.

For next month's agenda, Ms. Matau suggested the topic of schools and COVID-related impacts. Ms. Amy Beth Cook noted that about 70% of parents are in favor of some form of in-person learning in the fall, but there's a rising concern among educators. Dr. Spitters added that the timing and framework needs to be updated for how schools will resume. The Health District has a weekly call with school superintendents, the Everett School District, and some private-school administrators.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:16 a.m.

The next meeting of the PHAC is Wednesday, September 23.