



Multnomah County Public Health Advisory Board Minutes August 2021

Date: Thursday, August 26, 2021

Time: 3:30-5:30pm

Purpose: To advise the Public Health Division on several areas of work with a strong focus on ethics in public health practice and developing long-term public health approaches to address the leading causes of death and disability in Multnomah County.

Desired Outcomes:

1. Hear updates from board members
2. Receive background information on “responsible gatherings”
3. Deliberate on what “responsible gatherings” will look like when COVID-19 cases come down

Members Present: Teela Foxworth, Becca Brownlee, Hanna Atenafu, Maribel Reyes, Nick Kinder, Joannie Tang, Karen Wells, Tsering Sherpa, Mahad Hassan

Multnomah County Staff: Jessica Guernsey, Nathan Wickstrom, Nicole Buchanan, Adelle Adams

Public: Suzanne Hansche

Item/Action	Process	Lead
Welcome, Introductions, Agenda & Minutes Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendees introduced themselves and checked in with one another <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are you? What is your goal for the day? Agenda was approved by consensus Meeting minutes from May were approved by consensus 	Teela Foxworth
Public Comment & Board Sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nathan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OPHA opportunity: https://www.oregonpublichealth.org/opha-conference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let me know if you are interested in attending this conference and we will cover your registration costs Gift cards or Direct Deposit - let me know if you would like to receive either after the meeting Suzanne Hansche comments on 8/26 MCPHAB Ethics Committee Discussion of the question: <i>What will “responsible gatherings” look like as COVID-19 cases eventually come down and vaccine mandates become increasingly common?</i> Baseline criteria/ standards for responsible gatherings would address the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Require uniform preventative measures that are known to prevent community spread of the COVID-19 virus and the most contagious known variants. Relative to the delta variant, that could include uniform masking, proof of vaccination, limitations in the number of attendees to allow for social distancing, ventilation/air circulation systems that minimize risk. Require uniform preventative measures that are known to be most effective in protecting those at most risk, including unvaccinated children, those with compromised immune systems, those with underlying conditions, older adults, and anyone else considered more at risk. Prioritize establishing a safer environment for the most community members whose levels of risk vary along a continuum known to public health authorities and experts. Transparency in public information and community education that in order to effectively control the spread of infectious disease to the point of ending a pandemic requires individual participation in vaccination. We are now living the daily proof for those who have ever thought pandemics end by any other means. A little discussion on the personal freedom issue – Converse to the argument for the right to not wear a mask or to get vaccinated – acts that would protect both the individual and her community – there are the negative impacts to other community members when some of us do not participate in taking preventative measures that are known to be effective. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those negative impacts include reduced (if not erased) personal freedom to be out in public, go to work and school, and conduct the business of everyday life including shopping, accessing healthcare, even essential travel, for those who remain at risk despite their own routine efforts to take maximum precautions. Those who are at more risk include 	Teela Foxworth

	<p>unvaccinated children, those with compromised immune systems, those with underlying conditions, older adults, and anyone else considered at higher risk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refusing to be vaccinated denies the rest of the community and individual community members the opportunity/right/personal freedom to effectively control and manage the pandemic by reaching herd immunity. A conclusion is that personal freedom in regards to preventative measures that protect individuals and communities is that there is no option for any one individual to not take preventative measures for the health of other individuals and the community that does not compromise someone else's personal freedom to participate in society and to protect themselves and their communities to the best of their abilities. 	
Background Review / Q&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jessica: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look at what "responsible gatherings" will look like as COVID-19 cases go down and vaccine mandates become more common <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vaccines are being mandated more broadly - Multnomah County implemented a mandate, sports events, employers Tremendous surge with the Delta variant Absolutely want to make sure that kids can go back to school Assumptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vaccine mandates will become more common. All will include medical exemptions; many will include religious exemptions. Work groups and organizations will have different levels of vaccine coverage, depending on their individuals and how exemptions are granted. Few will be 100% vaccinated. Any mandate means that the organization will know the vaccination status of individual employees. That opens the door to having different expectations between unvaccinated and vaccinated employees (e.g. remote work, wearing a mask). Community level spread affects risk of transmission in any gathering. The lower the COVID spread, the less risky any gathering will be. Who can require vaccine card evidence? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Businesses can make requirements, and so can public authorities, but that's a much larger scale undertaking There are always exemptions Are there any thoughts on getting around falsified vaccination cards? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> State is working on an application that provides a high level safeguard to prevent fraudulent vaccination status There's always a way around things Vaccines are entered into the electronic health records and Alert 	Jessica Guernsey
Large Group Deliberation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCPHAB used the 5Ps Equity Lens Are we expecting recommendations coming out from CDC or Dr. Fauci around how many people are recommended to gather in a safe space? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should we expect that, and how can we incorporate those recommendations? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are expecting guidance, but it's going to be broad enough to encompass the entire country We have a fairly high vaccination rate locally, but there are gaps in communities of color We need to use an equity lens so that we can incorporate guidance locally, which is why we come to places like MCPHAB for guidance What are the gaps in BIPOC communities? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All communities have been going up slowly and are at least over 50% https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/oregon.health.authority.covid.19/viz/OregonCOVID-19VaccinationTrends/OregonCountyVaccinationTrends Power: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is defining responsible gatherings? Providing clarity on what responsible gatherings are going to be and thinking through where we're going will be important How do we prioritize communal oriented cultural communities whose social (psychological) health depends on being in close spaces? Communal healing is huge and the loss of those spaces has lead to another pandemic; one of loneliness and hopelessness Place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who has access to those spaces? Are the spaces outdoors, safe, easy to access in certain communities? Defining what is responsible is challenging - the meaning can be fluid depending on what 	All

community you're talking to

- o Definition being handed down from outside the community adds complication and potential resistance
- As we enter the fall and the rainy season, want to make sure that we're supporting seasonal depression and community growth
 - o Important to look at some of those support services that community members might need
- Built environment aspect of Public Health
 - o Who has access to what?
 - o Who has access to outdoor spaces?
 - o Who has access to space, and what space?
- Having access to quality and safe space is a privilege that many citizens do not have access to, so defining responsible gatherings in terms of safe space is already excluding a variety of people who don't have access to those spaces
 - o Already have many people who are excluded
- Acknowledging that no public space is going to be 100% safe, perhaps there are levels?
 - o If you have access to this space, this would be the responsible gathering, and then build out from there
 - We do try to incorporate guidance through a harm reduction lens at Multnomah County
- What we're seeing is a lot of privileged people with access to those safe spaces who are now complaining about having freedoms infringed on
- Process:
 - o What are the options that we can give people?
 - o Here are your options - how can process be a part of behavior?
 - o Opening more doors through process is helpful
 - e.g. Here are options for getting vaccinated
- Giving a positive spin on what a responsible gathering looks like is a more productive way to seek compliance
 - o How can we couch responsible gatherings in the greatest way to reduce exposure
- I am trying to imagine how schools reopening fits into this discussion (homework supports, sports, SUN schools). School spaces have been an equalizer, so how do afterschool activities fit in there?
 - o Schools are one of the safest spaces to be because they have such detailed guidance on how to prevent spread
 - o We've had really good evidence that schools are following preventative guidance
 - o Need to modify some areas, such as sports, meals, etc
 - o The more that we can get people to understand that your decision to have a safe gathering actually affects whether children can go to school, the more effective our messaging will be
 - o Community transmission links together with schools
 - We can rally around getting kids back to school
 - o Schools are great places to drive public health educational methods
- Disconnect between what's happening and things going on that are "normal"
 - o When you're talking with people, what's the tone?
 - Feel nervous going anywhere with a lot of people
 - Worried about who hasn't been vaccinated and who has
 - Latinos have had large gatherings, primarily due to the large family sizes
 - All about which communities of color have gotten vaccinated
 - o Miscommunication in my community around vaccinations
 - Me taking my vaccine as an example is a way of exhibiting that it's safe
 - There's so much misinformation about the virus around the world
 - o After my family in Florida saw that I got the vaccine, they were reassured that it's safe and then made their own appointments
 - I wonder how many families have those people who can exhibit getting the vaccine to show it's safe? This can be really helpful, particularly for those who don't trust the government for whatever reason
- Vaccine checks by private businesses can go awry (there are early reports of discrimination against poor and people of color communities). Evidence points out that vaccination is a class issue more than a race one. They can go wrong, or be abused
- Behavioral change
 - o People in my network who haven't had exposure to those who have gotten really sick from COVID are not aware that the hospital beds are full, breakthrough cases are possible
 - o Also hearing from people that now that breakthrough cases are possible, why

would I get the vaccine?

- Current rates are more than 3x higher than at the worst point during 2020
- There's so much information out there that people can just find someone who validates their opinion and cling to that perspective
- How do we craft a message about responsible gathering, when the message needs to appeal to a population that is fatigued by the recommendation?
 - If a message can be crafted that's more of a yes, it can give people hope
 - It's really hard to be hopeful when I'm faced with another decision that will impact everyone in my household and everyone around me
- At a tabled event, we were having a discussion around breastfeeding and what the benefits are. A person then shared that they heard that the vaccines have been known to cause spontaneous abortions
 - Important to get a shared understanding - conversations can get challenging
 - Hoping that once we normalize the vaccines, such as what we've done with previous vaccines, folks will become more comfortable
- I have a family member who is a home health nurse who has actively discouraged other family members from taking the vaccine
 - Taken a religious objection around how the vaccine was developed
- Burnout in the hospital
 - Makes me think of offering responsible gathering guidance in a more positive framework
 - We want you to meet with family and friends - here's how you can do that
 - Frame it as a positive, rather than here's your risk
- Echo the positive spin; people don't like to hear what they can't do
- Appreciate the focus on hope
 - Framing matters just as much as the content
 - It is health promoting to mention the need to be around family, friends, community
- Where should this message come from?
 - Who would be the best messenger?
 - What partnerships should be involved?
 - What toolkit should be incorporated?
 - Multitude of options to get messaging out to eyeballs
 - Push to get messaging to houses of worship has been shown to be productive, as well as to barbershops and similar locations
 - Modeling the behavior and getting the word out are two important elements
- Hard because everything I can think of has already been done
 - Social media influencers, doctors, nurses, religious figures
 - Always going to be a rebuttal because people choose to believe misinformation
 - If your family member passed away from COVID and you still don't want to get vaccinated, I don't know what more can be done
 - There is always the group in the middle that may get vaccinated if something bad does happen
 - Perhaps there are still those that can be reached with positive messaging
- Don't underestimate the power of personal stories
 - It could be a 20-minute soundbite of how someone has embraced the notion of responsible gathering
- Could we come up with a bunch of different personal stories from a variety of different communities to share, instead of hearing from people whom we can't relate to?
 - We sometimes don't believe those who don't look like us
- "I got the vaccine because..." or "I wear a mask because my sister is immunocompromised..." etc
- On top of the "why's" also "here is how I am gathering responsibly with loved ones"
- Have a "motto" with different testimonials. It can be the size of the "equality" signs all over town. Throw it up on some billboards. MAX. Streetcar
 - Which I have seen in some places already, but the shift to responsible gathering messaging might be good too
- Framing in a positive and community-care take
- I've been able to sway family members to get vaccinated over a matter of time - takes place over several conversations and takes time to really drill into what your fear is
 - Wraparound care - who is your physician, who can provide vaccination, etc.
 - Family members in rural Oregon who are adamant against
 - Baltimore put out ads that involved a bunch of sharp insightful humor that started a lot of good conversations
 - <https://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=https://arc-anglerfish-washpost-prod->

	<p>washpost.s3.amazonaws.com/public/BEHWATX4IAI6XEI4KJF4RNUPC4.jpg&imgrefurl=https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2021/08/13/baltimore-health-department-memes-covid/&tbnid=sP9AgmrzsfqM&vet=1&docid=WYew8z93aEy_TM&w=1080&h=1080&source=sh/x/im</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Humor can be a really effective strategy • We have done a lot of these strategies locally, but I like how you're packaging it around how to have hopeful and safe gatherings • I wonder if we start thinking about a year or two from now, are we going to start thinking of COVID as endemic? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o This is the start of a framework for when COVID is more endemic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We can take these precautions and continue to have the things we want and enjoy, whatever that means for your community. Here are the things that enable you to do it. • What do safer gatherings look like? • Shared out a celebration for encouraging a family member who was high risk to get vaccinated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o I was able to explain the science behind it o Are there available resources that are concise and distilled in an easy way to understand format? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ e.g. comic book? o We have a lot of resources on our county website • How do we safeguard our own mental and physical safety? 	
Wrap-up and Meeting Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting adjourned at 5:20pm • Action: Nathan will try to find a volunteer to facilitate our next meeting on September 23 	Teela Foxworth