

**Office of Health Equity Advisory Committee (OHE AC) Meeting
Teleconference Meeting Minutes (DRAFT Staff Notes)
March 9, 2022**

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OHE AC Members Participating:

Sarah de Guia, Chair
Shireen Malekafzali, Vice Chair
Jei Africa
Bernadette Austin
Angela Ball
Robin Carter
Jazmine Garcia Delgadillo
Lisa Folberg
Aaron Gardner
Jo-Ann Julien
Simran Kaur

Nahla Kayali
Patricia Lee
Vong Mouanoutoua
Hector Ramirez
Nancy Rodriguez
Terra Russell-Slavin
Ana Gonzalez Seda
Michael Witte
Angelina Woodberry
Weiyu Zhang

Members Absent:

Califia Abwoon
Valentine Antony
Kismet Baldwin

Dannie Cesena
Yvette McShan

State Officials/Staff:

Tomas Aragon, Director and State Public Health Officer, California Department of Public Health (CDPH)
Rohan Radhakrishna, Deputy Director, Office of Health Equity (OHE)
Ana Bolanos, Assistant Deputy Director, OHE
Marina Castillo-Augusto, Chief, Community Development and Engagement Unit (CDEU), OHE
Linda Helland, Chief, Climate Change and Health Equity Section (CCHES), OHE
Amanda Hooker, Stakeholder Engagement Coordinator, OHE
Kimberly Knifong, Chief, Business Operations Unit, OHE
Meredith Lee, Chief, Advancing Community Equity Branch, OHE
Peter Oh, Chief, Health Equity Research and Statistics Section (HERSS), OHE
Jason Tescher, Chief, Gender Health Equity Unit (GHEU), OHE

Speakers from the Public:

Saradia Choudhary
Stacie Hiramoto

Chris Miller
Shannon Muir

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9:00 a.m. Convene Meeting and Welcome | Roll Call | Agenda Review

Welcome

Sarah de Guia, Chair of the OHE (AC), called the AC meeting to order at 9:01 a.m., welcomed everyone, provided a brief overview of the meeting agenda, and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

Amanda Hooker, Stakeholder Engagement Coordinator, reviewed the language interpretation function and housekeeping items.

Ice Breaker

AC Members responded to ice-breaker questions posed by the chair.

Approve December 1, 2021, Meeting Minutes

AC Member Julien stated she will send clarifications on her comments on page 8 to staff.

MOTION: Vice Chair Malekafzali moved approval of the December 1, 2021, Office of Health Equity Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, with a note to clarify AC Member Julien’s comments on page 8 post-meeting. AC Member Mouanoutoua seconded. Motion carried 19 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain, per roll call vote as follows:

The following AC Members voted “Yes”: Africa, Austin, Ball, Carter, Delgadillo, Julien, Kaur, Kayali, Lee, Mouanoutoua, Ramirez, Rodriguez, Russell-Slavin, Seda, Witte, Woodberry, and Zhang, Vice Chair Malekafzali and Chair de Guia.

Approve January 27, 2022, Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

MOTION: AC Member Julien moved approval of the January 27, 2022, Subcommittee Meeting Minutes as presented. Motion carried 18 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain, per roll call vote as follows:

The following AC Members voted “Yes”: Africa, Austin, Ball, Carter, Delgadillo, Julien, Kaur, Kayali, Lee, Mouanoutoua, Rodriguez, Russell-Slavin, Seda, Witte, Woodberry, and Zhang, Vice Chair Malekafzali and Chair de Guia.

Public Comment

No members of the public addressed the AC.

9:30 a.m. Advisory Committee Work

Chair de Guia stated the AC will discuss shared meeting agreements, Recruitment Subcommittee, OHE AC officer positions, and hear nominations.

Meeting Agreements

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Chair de Guia asked for volunteers to be part of a working group to review various meeting agreements and bring recommendations to the OHE-AC for approval. AC Members Africa and Zhang volunteered to serve on the working group.

Recruitment Subcommittee

Ms. Hooker stated several AC Members will be terming out after the September meeting. Staff will be doing a gaps analysis to determine the representation profiles to bring to the AC. She asked for volunteers to collaborate with the OHE in reviewing the recruitment process, priority profile areas, and the top ten applications. AC Members Carter and Ramirez volunteered to serve on the Recruitment Subcommittee.

Officer Nominations

Chair de Guia suggested revising the Bylaws to allow for a co-chair model for the AC. She asked for AC Members who are interested in the chair or vice chair positions.

AC Members Austin and Seda stated they were interested in vice chair position.

Public Comment

No members of the public addressed the AC.

10:00 a.m. Updates from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Office of Health Equity (OHE)

Presenters:

- Tomas Aragon, Director and State Public Health Officer, CDPH
- Rohan Radhakrishna, Deputy Director, OHE
- Ana Bolanos, Assistant Deputy Director, OHE

Chair de Guia stated the AC will hear updates from the CDPH leadership regarding the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Department's equity priorities, updates from the OHE Deputy Director on the OHE budget, and OHE program updates on the topics of data collection and mental health.

Tomas Aragon, Director and State Public Health Officer, CDPH, provided an update on the COVID-19 pandemic and its related impacts. He provided examples of communities that mobilized safety measures such as wearing masks and getting vaccinated for improved outcomes. He stated underneath the health status data, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed many social and structural vulnerabilities.

Dr. Aragon reviewed the Shots, Masks, Awareness, Readiness, Testing, Education, and Rx (SMARTER) Plan, put out by the Governor, which marks a shifting of the collective mindset. Most transmission happens when individuals are asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic. The SMARTER Plan builds on lessons learned to date, acknowledging the uncertainty of future variants, and shifting the mindset to acknowledging the need to be prepared as a community. He stated the need to also address as many inequities as possible. He noted that there will be an emphasis moving forward on developing a good

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test-to-treat strategy to ensure that the value stream is robust and available and on education.

Dr. Aragon provided an overview of how the SMARTER Plan relates to racial and health inequities being seen throughout the state. He showed a graphic titled “Causal Graph of Racism: What is the Root Cause?” demonstrating how cultural and structural racism affects individuals, groups, and the social determinants of health and discussed prevention, control, and mitigation. He stated good public health tools would alleviate the production of racism. He stated the need to go upstream even further.

Discussion

AC Member Witte stated inequities are a huge challenge. He stated the need to take the opportunity from this pandemic to use lessons learned to help prevent this in the future. He stated some of the near-term issues, besides test-to-treat and the inequities around that, are making boosters available to younger populations. He stated the need to consider how to be successful in terms of the various elements to be able to protect populations moving forward beyond vaccines and treatments. He asked how individuals out in the field can help make this effective.

Dr. Aragon agreed that vaccines in children ages 5 to 11 are impactful. He noted that, while the vaccine effectiveness wains, it protects against hospitalizations and death.

AC Member Gardner stated concern about long COVID treatment equity.

Dr. Aragon stated post-COVID conditions, including long COVID, are important issues because they touch many different things. The state is participating with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in a large, longitudinal cohort study on long COVID.

AC Member Austin stated there is a political nature of health and COVID. Her research center was working with community partners in the Central Valley and found that in areas with conservative leadership, public health officials were concerned pre-COVID about making statements that could be seen as politically controversial in the most conservative communities. Public health officials and school officials do not have the political cover that they need. She encouraged being cognizant about the role the state can play to provide that political cover. Also, places like school districts do not feel that they have an enforcement role but wait for directives from the state or the CDC. She is suggesting thinking of what can be done at the state level to move policies forward that protect the most vulnerable communities.

AC Member Ramirez asked what can be done to help the state proclaim racism to be a public health emergency.

Dr. Aragon stated the Governor has been very intentional about making equity the “North Star.” Equity is the biggest focus and making sure that every Californian has access to mental health services across the state regardless of location, age, or background.

AC Member Zhang stated she liked how the SMARTER Plan is based on the lessons learned over the past two years of public health response. She asked if there will be

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opportunities for the AC to take a deep dive into what lessons were learned over the past two years, especially the public health strategies that have worked and what has been learned about state government working with local health departments and community-based organizations in responding to the pandemic. Having discussions about these lessons learned are key to moving forward.

AC Member Zhang asked about missing areas in the SMARTER Plan, whether explicit equity principles can be spelled out in the endemic response, and how the state continues to meet the social and economic needs of communities.

Dr. Aragon stated the SMARTER Plan is COVID-focused and is not sufficient to address economic and other needs of communities. The state plans to invest in research collaboration statewide on all these issues. There are many areas to study. It is important for researchers to include community as they begin to design studies, and also that they take community evidence into account in the design of studies to learn as much as possible on what has worked and what can be done better. It is also important to research how to assist in recovery from the trauma that has occurred and what can be done to promote healing as a state.

Public Comment

Saradia Choudhary stated one of the biggest issues is doing away with stigma when a worker comes forward with mental health issues, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The healing process can begin when California starts taking a lead in not punishing individuals because they have a mental illness, but instead supporting them so they can get help and keep their jobs.

Office of Health Equity Budget

Ana Bolanos, Assistant Deputy Director, OHE, reviewed the Office of Health Equity Budget, which was included in the meeting materials.

Discussion

AC Member Africa asked about the plan for getting long-term sustained funding that can build and sustain the infrastructure.

Assistant Deputy Director Bolanos stated many OHE projects have been initiated by stakeholders, who usually go to the Legislature for funding.

AC Member Russell-Slavin agreed with the challenges of one-time funding and asked how to work with the CDPH to create a long-term stream of funding that can be used to address health disparities. One-time funding is needed to address emerging needs but it is important to bring those emerging needs to then create a more grounded response system.

Stakeholder Engagement

Rohan Radhakrishna, Deputy Director, OHE, asked Black and indigenous people of color (BIPOC) communities to ask more questions and to learn. CDPH leadership does not reflect the diversity of California. Because of that, the CDPH will rely on the AC for advice and help in understanding gaps and perspectives.

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Deputy Director Radhakrishna provided a higher-level Agency-to-CDPH-to-OHE update and discussed engagement opportunities. In October, the Agency centered equity, social justice, root causes and changing the conditions in its tagline, North Star priorities, and guiding principles. He thanked the OHE and the AC for their input and guidance in shifting the Agency in that direction. Next steps are the operational and implementation aspect of it. Agency will soon announce its first Chief Equity Officer.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna stated he is co-chairing the Justice, Equity, Diversion, and Inclusion (JEDI) Subcommittee with Marcela Luis (phonetic) from Social Services. The Subcommittee will meet in person for the first time tomorrow and will dive into areas such as language access, an equity dashboard, and training. Part of the JEDI's intention is to create an ecosystem of equity and community of practice. He asked for feedback from the AC as he provides updates at future meetings.

Department-Level Opportunities

Deputy Director Radhakrishna reviewed a slide of Dr. Aragon's revised priorities, titled, CDPH transformation: "Becoming the Best at Getting Better." He stated he is leading the workstream around the focus areas of becoming a healing organization and equity and anti-racism. It will take a lean process-improvement approach. He stated there is a draft one-pager called an A-3, which is an 11x17 sheet of paper that shows current and future state metrics and timelines. He stated Dr. Aragon gave his permission to share this one-pager with the AC for feedback at a future meeting.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna reviewed the slide on excess mortality based on detailed race and ethnicity groupings. He stated the Data Dashboard will be developed at the Agency level. He asked for AC feedback on the dashboard and sharing disaggregated data.

Other Engagement Opportunities

Deputy Director Radhakrishna agreed that one-time funding is a challenge. He suggested creating a Sustainability Subcommittee to overcome barriers. He noted that evaluation and data are important parts of that, and using frameworks like Results-Based Accountability can show good stewardship of government dollars, that it is not just a one- or two-year island of excellence innovation, and that bridges are being built for the long-term.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna stated another engagement point is looking at the COVID-19 pandemic and knowing, while shifting from response to recovery, that there are many lessons learned. He asked for AC input at a future meeting on the After-Action Review (AAR) and how to thread equity throughout the lessons learned. California is still very much in response mode.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna stated the OHE has started to not only talk about post-COVID illness and long COVID in terms of clinical symptoms, but also about the long-term impacts of COVID such as social and economic impacts on California. He asked the AC to provide feedback on the questions that need to be asked, noting that the OHE may not be asking them but will be guiding the broader community in terms of what they are looking at.

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Deputy Director Radhakrishna stated much was learned through the OHE Strategic Plan: Portrait of Promise. It's 10-year anniversary will be celebrated later this year. He noted that it is a good time to get the AC's input on next steps.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna also asked for the AC's input that Dr. Aragon can present at the Interagency Council on Homelessness, an exciting opportunity to focus on housing and homelessness from an equity perspective.

Discussion

Chair de Guia stated this kind of change is difficult and takes time, but she acknowledged that the OHE and the CDPH are listening to the AC's concerns on issues such as housing and addressing structural racism. She thanked Deputy Director Radhakrishna for his focus and commitment.

AC Member Zhang stated the AC also asked for a presentation from the CDPH on the overall budget proposal and the ongoing \$300 million infrastructure budget proposal for the CDPH. A spending plan was posted to the CDPH website. She asked about thoughts that have gone into this spending plan and if there is an opportunity for the AC to weigh in on the design of the spending plan to ensure that it includes equity as a guiding principle.

Chair de Guia stated there was not enough time to include that in today's agenda but that presentation will be agendaized at a future meeting. She noted that the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN) has done a good job of sharing what is moving through the current process.

Public Comment

Chris Miller, High School Teacher, stated he has been engaged at the local, state, and national levels around the intersection of mental health and spirituality. Research has shown that many individuals struggling with mental health issues value religion. The 2018 Strategic Plan to Reduce Mental Health Disparities, developed by CPEHN and the California Reducing Disparities Project (CRDP) Partners, includes a recommendation to engage spiritual leaders, healers, and the faith-based community. The CRDP Partners recommend that the Legislature fund the OHE to support a statewide consortium.

Marina Castillo-Augusto acknowledged and appreciated Chris Miller's comment. She stated her section has been involved in the past with mental health and spirituality efforts but, due to a number of redirects, her section cannot prioritize it. She stated Dr. Aragon spoke today about how to move toward a California that is a healing state. This is very much aligned with some of the work that began under the CRDP, but also many community-based organizations have a focus in working in this space. She stated she is eager to have further discussions on this about linking community-based organizations in this space to more traditional county behavioral health services.

11:15 a.m. Break

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11:25 a.m. Updates Office of Health Equity (OHE) and the Strategic Growth Council (SGC) | AC Member Discussion | Public Comment | Adjourn

Presenters:

- Meredith Lee, Chief, Advancing Community Equity Branch, OHE
- Jazmine Garcia Delgadillo, Health and Equity Program Manager, SGC

Chair de Guia stated, due to time constraints, the Section Chief will not present their updates but their talking points will be sent to AC Members. She stated the AC will hear updates from the OHE Advancing Community Equity (ACE) Branch on OHE's work on housing and homelessness. AC Members will provide feedback, which will be passed to the California Interagency Council on Homelessness. She asked staff to present this agenda item.

State Health Equity Plan Presentation

Meredith Lee, Chief, Advancing Community Equity Branch, OHE, provided an overview, with a slide presentation, of the background, purpose, baseline organizational assessment for equity infrastructure, and timeline of the State Health Equity Plan, which falls under the California Equitable Recovery Initiative (CERI). She began her presentation by asking a question for AC Member feedback: should the State Health Equity Plan and the Portrait of Promise be combined? She noted that this would not change the Demographic Report, which is updated every two years by the OHE Health Equity Research and Statistics Section (HERSS).

Discussion

Vice Chair Malekafzali spoke in support of combining the efforts. She stated it would be nice to have everything in one place so that the equity work can be integrated solidly into specific actions.

AC Member Zhang stated she would need to review the materials more in order to provide feedback. She asked about the possibility of incorporating the local equity requirement into the three-year Community Health Assessment Plans. She suggested weaving the four domains listed on the presentation slides – workforce and capacity, collaborative partnerships, equity in organizations policies and practices, and planning and shared decision-making – into the Community Health Assessment Plans to give counties guiding principles when doing their equity assessments.

AC Member Africa spoke in support of combining the efforts and noted that it will take a coordinated effort to embed equity in the work. All the work that trickles down affects community-based organizations.

AC Member Julien spoke in support of combining the efforts and noted that there is more work to be done with the Portrait of Promise.

Chair de Guia encouraged the AC to consider its role in these efforts. She asked the state to think about if there is a focusing that the AC can do to be more effective and helpful to the CDPH going forward.

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Public Comment

No members of the public addressed the AC.

Health Equity, Housing, and Homelessness at CDPH Presentation

Chief Lee introduced two new Housing and Homelessness Equity Specialists, Pike Long and Mollie Lund. She provided an overview, with a slide presentation, of the Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH), key figures to know on the ICH, budget change proposal for two more positions to support the housing and homelessness work, Action Plan for Preventing and Ending Homelessness in California (Cal ICH Action Plan), CDPH's engagement in the Cal ICH Action Plan, ICH meeting timeline for stakeholder feedback, and the COVID Vaccine Peer Ambassador Program. She suggested that the AC look at the Cal ICH Action Plan, which is a model plan that leads with racial equity.

Update on SGC's Housing-Related Work

Jazmine Garcia Delgadillo, Health and Equity Program Manager, SGC, provided an overview of the SGC and the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) Program, an integral program of the SGC. She noted that the AHSC is currently gathering public input on guidelines. The guidelines will be released in October of 2022, with a due date of February of 2023.

Discussion

AC Member Julien asked about homeless data as it pertains to health, if there is a champion for homeless health, and if there is someone who looks for trends in the data such as conditions for homeless people and takes action on those findings.

Ms. Delgadillo stated the budget change proposal includes one Research Scientist III. The idea is to have someone with a high-level degree of epidemiology, biostatistics, and data analysis to help do more of the work mentioned by AC Member Julien.

AC Member Rodriguez suggested including an analysis within the portfolio of programs being initiated to see how rent managing strategies might help alleviate homelessness, such as rent control, rent stabilization, and caps, especially in densely-populated areas with the largest absence of housing.

AC Member Rodriguez asked about data analytics and the number of services within the portfolio of programs that target or outreach to the homeless in vulnerable communities to provide available information and whether those communities are at the table adding to the conversation.

Ms. Delgadillo agreed that those things are needed and needed to be done better. She stated the need to learn where to work with partners to understand what they are doing and noted that this would add an additional public health inequity lens.

Chair de Guia stated this is something that has been raised in this venue in the past – the state is saying one thing or has revenues and resources but what is actually happening on the ground is quite different. Another observation is that there is an intersection with mental health as well. She suggested thinking about how the OHE is

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working within the Department to eliminate silos and making sure that there is the ability to connect individuals to resources and services that are available so that it is much more seamless and individuals do not need to go to multiple places to access services.

Chair de Guia stated this is one of the ways that community-based organizations can partner. She suggested thinking of community-based organizations as an extension of infrastructure in local communities and why it is important to ensure they are part of the budget change proposal process.

Public Comment

Stacie Hiramoto, Executive Director, Racial and Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition (REMHDCO), suggested reviewing the Health Equity and Racial Justice budget proposal. It is an important measure that would affect the OHE. She also suggested reviewing the measure to declare racism a public health crisis.

AC Member Julien asked if there are updates from the state about climate change.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna stated the OHE has been active with cross-department and cross-agency partnerships and has two budget change proposals around climate change and health surveillance as well as regional planning, which includes a potential \$25 million to regions. He put links to the budget change proposals in the Chat Section.

Chair de Guia asked for feedback on the issues to discuss at the next meeting such as learning more about the Health Equity Plan, digging into the SOGI data and mental health issues, getting updates on climate change, the Health Equity and Racial Justice Fund, and the CDPH budget proposal for the next fiscal year.

AC Member Austin suggested budgeting enough time for AC leadership elections and possibly moving to co-chair positions. She asked to include a discussion on fire season and accessibility in rural communities, disaster and recovery planning, Housing and Community Development (HCD), and the SGC Statewide Housing Plan.

AC Member Julien wrote in the Chat Section that she suggests having a discussion at a future meeting on the public health impacts of heat.

AC Member Witte stated one of the things the California Primary Care Association (CPCA) is looking at is new ways to take care of cohorts of patients and communities. He stated the CPCA is working closely with the CDPH in terms of direct care because direct care does not mean the old fee-for-service version of primary care. It means how to partner with community partners for value-based care and to help communities be healthier, particularly those at risk. This is a great model for that.

Public Comment

Shannon Muir, Co-Director for Precision Medicine at the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, stated she is in charge of a project that is aimed to increase the number of underrepresented minorities that participate in biomedical research. Medical diagnostics, treatments, and devices may not be equally safe or effective for all potential patients. She stated she is creating a website that will house resources to help engage diverse communities as partners in research and provide best practices for stakeholders

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including sponsors, community-based organizations, providers, researchers, and participants. She asked AC Members who are interested in reviewing content or helping with the distribution of the materials after the website has been put together can contact her offline.

AC Member Ramirez noted that OHE work is often not highlighted. There is a great opportunity to show community members how they are benefiting from the work of the OHE. AC Member Ramirez recommended highlighting stories from the individuals who have benefited from the work of the OHE and sharing it with the public through social media.

Adjourn

Chair de Guia thanked Amanda Hooker for her work at the OHE and wished her well in her new position. She thanked everyone for participating and ended the proceeding at 12:32 p.m.