

# City of San Antonio



## Minutes Community Health Committee 2023 – 2025 Council Members Chair: Teri Castillo, Dist. 5 Dr. Sukh Kaur, Dist. 1 | Phyllis Viagran, Dist. 3 Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, Dist. 4 | Marina Alderete Gavito, Dist. 7

Thursday, March 28, 2024

2:00 PM

City Hall

The Community Health Committee convened a regular meeting in the City Hall Council Briefing Room beginning at 2:00 PM. Deputy City Clerk Aurora Perkins took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

**Members Present:** Teri Castillo, *Chair*  
Dr. Sukh Kaur, *Member*  
Phyllis Viagran, *Member*  
Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, *Member*  
Marina Alderete Gavito, *Member*

**Members Absent:** None

### Approval of Minutes

#### 1. Approval of minutes from the Community Health Committee meeting on Monday, February 26, 2024.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia moved to Approve the minutes of the February 26, 2024 Community Health Committee meeting. Councilmember Viagran seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Castillo, Viagran, Rocha Garcia

**Absent:** Kaur, Alderete Gavito

### Public Comments

None

## **Briefing and Possible Action on**

### **2. A briefing on 2024 National Public Health Week and Metro Health FY2023 Annual Report [Claude Jacob, Director, Metro Health]**

Mario Rodriguez, Assistant Director for Metro Health, provided an overview of the Metro Health FY 2023 Annual Report and National Public Health Week. He stated that Dr. Claude Jacob was not present due to participating at a National Preparedness Summit and noted that the Public Health Conference would be held in San Antonio in 2025.

Rodriguez stated that staff had provided the Annual Report to the Committee and other materials related to Public Health Week activities.

Rodriguez spoke to the FY 2023 Annual report which covered seven categories and noted that the Metro Health Budget was \$106.4 million. Rodriguez stated that there were many highlights for the department's divisions and he would highlight one for each. Under the Community Health and Safety, he stated that over 880 children were enrolled in the Head Start Program and received tooth decay prevention services. Rodriguez noted that in the category of Communicable Diseases, the Epidemiology Program conducted 90,710 infectious disease investigations; and under the Environmental Health and Operations division, Environmental Health Officers completed 370,066 food establishment inspections.

Rodriguez reviewed FY 2023 SA Forward Program highlights which included under access to care category that 175 medical providers at clinical workshops stated their intentions to implement strategies to improve health care. He added that Metro Health had successfully secured an Infectious Disease Forecasting and Modeling System Grant to better predict infectious disease monitoring as with COVID-19. Rodriguez added that under the category of Food Insecurity and Nutrition, 40 Healthy Corner Stores purchased a combined 72,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables for the general public's availability.

Rodriguez reported that other highlights included under the health equity and social justice, the development of a food insecurity dashboard for Bexar County, the initiation of trauma enforced certification process with 17 City Departments and development of a survivor centered domestic violence initiative provided crisis advocacy to 10,504 individuals referred by the San Antonio Police Department.

Rodriguez spoke to National Awards that Metro Health was recognized for to include CC Public Health Infrastructure Grant Awardee and Gold Status under the City Health Initiative under the Beaumont and Kaiser Foundations.

Rodriguez spoke to 2024 National Public Health week activities and introduced a public health video of services offered by Metro Health which would be aired during National Public Health Week. He

noted that during the National Public Health Week from April 1- April 7, 2024 there would be media launch series in both English and Spanish stations and he reviewed other activities that would occur during the week.

## DISCUSSION

Chair Castillo congratulated the Metro Health Department on their national recognitions.

Councilmember Viagran mentioned that her council district staff had participated in certifications for metro health outreach and stressed the importance for departments and council districts to be certified. She noted that it was important to identify opportunities for health care services availabilities.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked of the plan to replace ARPA funding which would not be available next year. Rodriguez stated that staff would address this in the Budget process in order to continue social services. Councilmember Alderete Gavito stated that there were many opportunities to discuss the need for funding due to the ending of ARPA funding to include autism services.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked where highlighted items could be viewed. Rodriguez stated that information could be obtained on the website dashboard.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if data was available for gender demographics. Rodriguez stated that services were provided to 55% of women and 45% of men. Councilmember Rocha Garcia noted that she participated in World TB (Tuberculosis) Day activities and noted that the City's TB Center was one of 23 in the world and one of only two in the United States.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia stated that she noticed that Metro Health Week did not have activities for Diabetes and Asthma in Council District 4 and asked for consideration for next year. Rodriguez stated that he would provide the full list of activities for the Committee to review and the location of services.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if there were academic scholarships for students to apply for. Rodriguez clarified that there were four academic scholarships available in memory of Dr. Fernando Guerra, long time Medical Officer for the City, and he reviewed the application timeline and process.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked if there was an increase in services for Head Start Programs. Human Services Assistant Director Jessica Dovalina stated that there was not an increase in services but noted that the services for pre-Head Start and Head Start were fully filled and continued for each year.

Councilmember Kaur asked if Siclovia was included in Public Health Week. Rodriguez confirmed that it was included and would take place on April 7, 2024.

Chair Castillo stated that she would like to partner with staff on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) prevention events within her council district and to incentivize people to get tested.

The Item was for briefing purposes only.

3. **A briefing on the new UT School of Public Health San Antonio** [Claude Jacob, Director, Metro Health]

Item 3 was taken first on the Agenda.

Dr. Vasan Ramachadran provided an overview of the UT School of Public Health San Antonio (UTSPHSA) and noted the vision of the school to be a dynamic condition of health and well-being within the South Texas region of the public health corridor.

Ramachadran noted that the school was considered the “School of the People” due to its diversity and outreach. He reviewed the establishment of the school, building of the academic programs, and focus on quality educational programs that served the public health needs of the community.

Ramachadran provided an overview of the consolidated key partnerships in the development of the School to include the City of San Antonio, Bexar County and other medical stakeholders. He added that the mission of UTSPHSA was centered around education, community service, and research that mattered.

Ramachadran spoke to the academic priorities of UTSPHSA of reflecting prevalent public health challenges with a specific focus on social impact. He reviewed the current organizational structure of the UTSPHSA and the status of hiring of all positions of leadership.

Ramachandran noted that the first coursework of the school would focus on public health and administration. He reviewed the UTSPHSA student enrollment timeline which included the application process which opened in September 2023 and enrollment acceptance in December 2023. He added that the first classes would begin in August 2024.

Ramachadran stressed the importance of community engagement and input in the development of the school coursework, concentrations, and enrollment. He stressed the engagement of over 90 stakeholder groups to include departments of the City of San Antonio and Bexar County. He reviewed engagement activities to be provided during the upcoming National Public Health Week.

Ramachadran stated that the school would not be possible without the partnership with the City of San Antonio and the Metro Health Department.

Chair Castillo stated that she was excited about the “People’s School” and the impact it would have on the community on metro health issues. She stressed the importance of utilizing the school in acquiring valuable data on public health issues and initiatives.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked for clarification on public health communications elective coursework and if it should be considered required courses. Ramachandran stated that public health communications would be considered required coursework and he was open to moving it to required coursework.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia noted that she would like to recommend Council District 4 residents to provide stakeholder input and would provide information to the school for consideration in order to gain representation from all areas.

Councilmember Kaur asked if dual degree programs were being offered. Ramachandran stated that there were three dual degree programs being considered and leadership was in the process of

finalizing coursework for the programs. He reported that the programs included a Medical Doctorate/Masters in Public Health, Masters in Business Administration/Public Health, and Dental Health/Public Health Programs.

Councilmember Kaur stated that Council District 1 welcomed opportunities to partner with the school for community events to include those at the San Pedro Theater and Spring Park.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito expressed her support for the school and the need for a public health school in the community. She asked how the Public Health Corridor focus was being addressed by the UTSPHSA. Ramachandran stated that the corridor was made up of 38 counties and would focus on needs of the corridor to include the Cities of San Antonio and Austin along with more rural areas. Councilmember Alderete Gavito spoke to the meaningful impact of the City of San Antonio medical assets that would benefit the 38 county area.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked of the projected enrollment of the school. Ramachandran stated that it was projected to be 30-40 in the first year and expanding to 75 in the second year. He added that as the school grew, class sizes would increase based on demand and curriculum development.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked for clarification on experiential learning opportunities offered by the school. Ramachandran stated that there were approximately 15 organizations that the school was developing Memorandums of Understanding with to develop partnerships for all service directories and job opportunities for students within the corridor. Councilmember Alderete Gavito offered her council district staff to assist at community events within her council district.

Councilmember Viagran expressed the importance and necessity of public and community health work within the health corridor and asked for more conversation on women and girl health issues. She stressed the need for further discussions to address obesity and nutritional challenges/issues. She spoke to the need for quality hospital facilities on the City's South and East Sides.

Chair Castillo stated that it was important to address health issues or concerns with formerly incarcerated individuals to include dental care. She thanked Ramachandran for providing the presentation.

The Item was for briefing purposes only.

4. **A briefing and possible action on a crisis nursery program** [Melody Woosley, Director, Human Services]

Jessica Dovalina, Assistant Director for Department of Human Services, provided a briefing on the Council Consideration Request (CCR) that was submitted by Councilmembers Rocha Garcia and Pelaez. She noted that the CCR was submitted on Sept 21, 2023 to explore the establishment of a cost free San Antonio Crisis Nursery to provide safe and temporary shelter for children at risk of abuse or neglect, family and parenting support, and culturally responsive services.

Dovalina reviewed the national Crisis Nursery Program Model and stated that the nurseries provided services by trained professional staff in a licensed facility/home at no cost to those

needing the service. She stated that the service allowed for parents addressing crisis or receiving services elsewhere during child stay and were for short periods of time. She added that the national model services had been expanded to provide counseling and health services. She noted that currently there was not a center in San Antonio.

Dovalina spoke to community discussions on how to establish a Crisis Nursery Program in San Antonio in a working group collaboration with the departments of Human Services, Metro Health, and the San Antonio Police Department. She stated that the working group would facilitate community conversations on opportunities, need, and potential funding sources available for the initiative. She added that the working group would develop a preliminary feasibility assessment to include best practices, similar programs in San Antonio, and possible scope of services.

Dovalina stated that the next steps of the Program would be to conduct research and return to the Committee to present findings and recommendations at the May 2024 Community Health Committee meeting.

## DISCUSSION

Councilmember Rocha Garcia recognized the work of community stakeholders and recognized Rebecca Helterbrand with RespiteCareSA for her work in the community with providing services to individuals and families. She stressed the need for services for all special populations to include children with special physical and developmental needs. Dovalina stated that there were agencies to address children with delicate health and developmental issues in times of crisis.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia stressed the need to address services for all populations of children's needs and to work with non-profit stakeholder organizations such as KidSafe that specialized in delivery of services. She stressed that it was important to identify what services were provided by groups and what supportive services avenues were available.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito thanked Councilmembers Rocha Garcia and Pelaez for bringing the CCR forward. She stressed the importance of identifying "trusted" service organizations for individuals to utilize in times of need. Dovalina noted that it was important to continue conversations with all organizations to fully identify their services and the building of a directory.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked when Feasibility Study would be completed. Dovalina stated that the initial study would be completed in May 2024.

Councilmember Kaur asked if the Feasibility Study would identify requested funding needs for FY 2025. Dovalina stated that the goal would be to identify initial cost estimates in order to be considered in the upcoming budget plan.

Councilmember Viagran asked for clarification on costs for services provided to adults and children. She also requested processes of service delivery especially in cases of domestic violence and child abuse instances. She requested meetings to further discuss identified services and processes.

Chair Castillo thanked Councilmembers Rocha Garcia and Pelaez for the CCR. She requested

that City and County representation be included in the committee established to discuss domestic and child abuse cases and the development of the Crisis Nursery. She asked for consideration of a model that would not require the submission of a police report in order to receive services. Dovalina confirmed that staff was looking at developing a model that did not require individuals to submit a police report in order to obtain services.

The Item was for briefing purposes only.


### **Adjournment**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:27 p.m.

**Approved**



*Teri Castillo, Chair*



*Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk*