



## San Francisco Department of Public Health

Grant Colfax, MD  
Director of Health

City and County of San Francisco  
London N. Breed  
Mayor

### **Director's Report for Health Commission Meeting of August 20, 2019**

*A current overview of issues affecting the state of public health in San Francisco*

<https://www.sfdph.org/dph/comupg/aboutdph/insideDept/dirRpts/default.asp>

#### **Federal administration's changes to public charge**

On August 12<sup>th</sup>, the Federal Administration issued a new rule change to “public charge” policies that govern how use of public benefits affect individuals’ immigration status. Under the change, receiving certain public benefits would affect applications for legal permanent residency (“green card”). San Francisco and Santa Clara counties filed a joint lawsuit on August 13<sup>th</sup> to stop the Administration from moving forward with these changes. If litigation does not prevent the rule from taking effect, the soonest this policy will become effective is October 15.

The City of San Francisco encourages members of immigrant communities to continue to use all the benefits and resources available to them, including health care services. While the new public charge rule directly impacts a small number of people in San Francisco, the associated fear and confusion is likely to result in a ‘chilling effect’ – causing many low-income immigrants and their families to refrain from accessing critical health and nutrition benefits that they are entitled to receive. San Francisco is a sanctuary city, and all are welcome here. The San Francisco Department of Public Health will continue to provide health care services through our clinics and hospitals in the San Francisco Health Network, regardless of immigration status or lack of insurance.

#### **An Epic Transformation**

On August 3<sup>rd</sup>, we went live with a new electronic health record system. Epic. The health department introduced a tremendous amount of change in a short period of time, and we've already had so many wins. Having access to a patient’s entire medical records across the different locations is transformational for providers because we can connect primary care, specialty care, care at ZSFG and LHH, and beyond. More than 4,000 patients have information from non-DPH providers in their records, and at peak times, there are 1,500 concurrent users on the system. We also have information available within our Epic dashboard that we didn't have before. For example, we can see the number of beds available at any moment - information that used to take us 24 hours to get. In addition, Epic protects patient information as medical errors are now more transparent. There have been zero harm events associated with Go-live.



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We've had a full team dedicated to ensuring the transition is as seamless as possible. For the entire month of August, we have specially trained support staff helping at each unit. For technical issues, the IT team brought in 360 helpers and created five command centers with staff working 12-hour shifts around the clock. The wait time for calls to the Help Desk are averaging less than 15 seconds, and 77 percent of the 10,000+ tickets have been closed as of August 14<sup>th</sup>. We've resolved issues by connecting with groups, building training plans, developing Tip Sheets, creating new processes, and always putting our patients first.

While we celebrate our successes, as with any new technology, we also continue to address challenges within Epic. There is a learning curve to using a new system, especially one that touches every part of the organization, and this is no exception. There have been moments of frustration, but there have been more moments of collaboration and patience within all levels of DPH staff. With new processes, workflow redesigns, and collaborations across many multi-disciplinary teams, we have been able to resolve thousands of issues and will continue to address them as quickly and efficiently as possible. As we continue to go through the experience and adjust to the new norms, we are excited to use Epic as a tool that will truly transform care.

### **Health department continues to respond to prevent overdoses and increase access to treatment**

National and local media recently have reported about overdose mortality deaths in San Francisco. The health department has seen a rise in fentanyl overdoses, and deaths by overdoses, over the last few years. In response to this increase in trend, we are continuing to focus our work on overdose prevention efforts and saving lives:

- We have been providing naloxone (Narcan) in the community since 2003, saving lives by equipping people who use drugs, and their friends, to reverse overdoses.
- Our Street Medicine team provides buprenorphine to help people experiencing homelessness start opioid addiction treatment. Additionally, we are increasing access to buprenorphine. In 2017, there were 2,073 people with buprenorphine prescriptions, and another 400 people treated by our Street Medicine Team since November 2016.
- Our syringe access programs provide fentanyl test strips so that people can learn whether their drugs contain fentanyl and use that information to decide whether to take the drug, and how much of it to take. This is critical in cases when fentanyl is a contaminant in other drugs, such as meth, crack, heroin and Xanax.
- We have a strong surveillance system that allows us to monitor the situation closely and direct response efforts where they are most needed.
- Our syringe access programs also provide naloxone, buprenorphine and connection to treatment.
- Our Harm Reduction partners in the community receive information directly from the community of people who use drugs and provide educational alerts and warnings when



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fentanyl overdoses rise, or other dangers to street drugs emerge. Communication within the community is key to saving lives.

- Our Jail Health Services provide opioid addiction treatment, including methadone and buprenorphine.
- We support the creation of overdose prevention sites (safe injection services) in San Francisco and are working with state legislators on enabling legislation.

### DPH in the News (Aug 6 – Aug 14 2019)

SF Chronicle, Aug 14 2019, Navy altered Hunters Point cleanup to cover, not remove, toxic soil

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Report-Navy-altered-Hunters-Point-cleanup-to-14302320.php>

NY Post, Aug 12 2019, SF saw huge spike in fentanyl-related deaths in 2018

<https://nypost.com/2019/08/12/san-francisco-saw-huge-spike-in-fentanyl-related-deaths-in-2018/>

KRON, Aug 8 2019, Midwife services expanded at Zuckerberg SF General

<https://www.kron4.com/news/bay-area/midwife-services-expanded-at-zuckerberg-san-francisco-general/>

Pitchfork, Aug 8 2019, Outside Lands becomes first major U.S. festival to offer on-site cannabis sale and consumption

<https://pitchfork.com/news/outside-lands-becomes-first-major-us-festival-to-offer-on-site-cannabis-sale-and-consumption/>

SF Chronicle, Aug 7 2019, Fentanyl overdose deaths soared in 2018 with 89

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Fentanyl-overdose-deaths-soared-in-2018-with-89-14289026.php>

SF Chronicle, Aug 7 2019, Outside Lands gets green light for pot sales on festival grounds

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/business/article/Outside-Lands-gets-city-s-green-light-for-pot-14288811.php?psid=eTWi7>

KQED, Aug 7 2019, SF fentanyl deaths up almost 150

<https://www.kqed.org/news/11766169/san-francisco-fentanyl-deaths-up-almost-150>