



City and County of San Francisco
Edwin M. Lee, Mayor

San Francisco Department of Public Health

Barbara A. Garcia, MPA
Director of Health

Director's Report for Health Commission Meeting of November 7, 2017

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 Budget Update

On October 26, the House voted to adopt the Senate's \$4 trillion federal budget blueprint by a 216-212 vote, with twenty Republicans and every Democrat voting against the bill. The budget maintains spending at 2017 levels for the next year, but would cut nondefense spending in subsequent years, leading to \$800 billion in cuts over ten years. It is unclear where these cuts will come from as \$600 billion of the \$800 billion in cuts are not specified. The resolution also proposes \$473 billion in cuts to Medicare's baseline spending over a decade and about \$1.3 trillion from Medicaid and ACA-related spending, though these provisions are not enforceable without additional legislation. By passing the budget plan, Republicans can initiate the budget reconciliation process, which allows legislation to be passed with only a simple majority. This process paves the way for a proposed tax bill that cuts corporate and individual income tax rates and is estimated to add \$1.5 trillion to the federal deficit over a decade. Senate leaders signaled that the bill could be introduced, debated and approved in both chambers by the end of November.

Cost-sharing Reduction Subsidies

Earlier this month, the Trump administration ended the cost-sharing reduction (CSR) subsidies that compensate insurers for discounts given to low-income consumers to help cover their out-of-pocket expenses under policies sold on the Affordable Care Act marketplaces. On Wednesday October 25th, a federal judge denied a petition to immediately reinstate the CSR subsidies. California Attorney General Xavier Becerra, who is leading the lawsuit filed with 18 other states and the District of Columbia, stated that legal battle to reinstate the payments will continue.

Last week, the Alexander-Murray bill, a bipartisan bill to restore the cost-sharing subsidies and stabilize the insurance markets, stalled in Congress as key Republicans voiced their concern and the President provided mixed signals about his support. Congress continues to negotiate CSR

funding and there is speculation that the funding might be part of the federal budget negotiations. According to an analysis by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the bipartisan bill would cut the federal deficit by \$3.8 billion over the next decade and would not substantially change the number of people who are covered. The analysis also found that the bill would not change health insurance premiums for 2018, but may keep them steady in 2019. In California, 1.4 million people buy plans through the state marketplace, and 90 percent receive federal subsidies. In San Francisco, there are 14,200 residents enrolled in CSR plans. Because of the uncertainty regarding the subsidies, the Covered California exchange has a contingency plan to impose an average surcharge of 12 percent on certain 2018 health plans to offset the expected loss of the cost-sharing subsidies.

Public Health Emergency Declared for Opioid Epidemic

On October 26th, President Trump formally announced that he is directing the Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) to declare the opioid crisis a public health emergency. This falls short of President Trump's statements in August as well as the recommendation of his commission on the opioid epidemic to declare the opioid epidemic a national emergency, which would have triggered the rapid allocation of federal funding to address the issue. The public health emergency does not release any new funding on its own, but does allow some existing grant funding to be used for an array of efforts, and would ease certain restrictions and laws to address the crisis. It is not clear how much impact the public health declaration will have in the short-term, but potential changes may include:

- Allowing patients to use telemedicine to get medication-assisted treatment, in which medications like buprenorphine and methadone are prescribed to treat addiction. Current law generally requires in-person visits for doctors to prescribe controlled substances.
- Providing more flexibility for federal and state governments in temporarily hiring substance use disorder specialists and allowing Medicaid to pay for residential treatment in facilities with more than 16 beds.
- Allowing for the shifting of resources within HIV/AIDS programs to help people eligible for those programs receive substance use disorder treatments.
- Allowing spending from the Public Health Emergency Fund, a special fund that gives HHS maximum flexibility in a health crisis, though the fund currently has a balance of only \$57,000.
- Allowing the government to negotiate lower prices on naloxone, a drug that quickly counteracts the effects of opioid overdose. Democrat senators wrote a letter on Wednesday to the President advocating for this action.
- Launching a prevention campaign to educate the public about the dangers of opioids.
- President Trump's commission on the opioid epidemic is expected to put forth a comprehensive plan next week.

Hep A Vaccination Update

SFDPH activated its Department Operations Center in September to scale up hepatitis A prevention and vaccination efforts in light of the significant outbreaks of hepatitis A in San Diego, Santa Cruz, and Los Angeles counties. These outbreaks primarily affect persons who are experiencing homelessness and/or who use injection and non-injection drugs in settings of limited sanitation. To date, there is no outbreak of hepatitis A among these populations in SF.

The primary focus for prevention is vaccination, and dozens of dedicated DPH staff and numerous community partners have stepped up. Several clinics have opened their doors to offer free vaccination to people experiencing homelessness and people engaging in drug use, including Tom Waddell Urgent Care, Tom Waddell Urban Health, Behavioral Health Access Center, St. Anthony Medical Clinic, and San Francisco Free Clinic. Immunization efforts are ongoing in primary care settings and homeless shelters, through street outreach, and in the San Francisco jail. In addition, SFDPH is bringing vaccination to where people are through “pop-up” clinics two to three times a week, staffed by DPH nurses and outreach workers. Since August, DPH and its partners have vaccinated 2,920 people at risk.

New Syringe Disposal Kiosk Installed at Main Library

On Tuesday, October 31st, the latest in a series of 24-hour syringe disposal boxes was installed at the SF Main Library. City partners including Department of Public Works, the SF Public Library and the Department of Public Health collaborated on this important project in an effort to address syringe litter on city streets. This is the latest kiosk and is in addition to 13 other SF locations that are positioned within high injection drug use areas.



ZSFG significantly Reduces Med-Surg Inpatient Falls

The most recent British Medical Journal (BMJ) Open Quality Report highlights a study done at ZSFG that shows a reduction in falls and fall-related injuries within the medical oncology unit. British Medical Journal publishes the Quality Improvement Reports called “BMJ Open Quality” reports. This reduction was accomplished by initiating a fall prevention agreement with patients and their families upon admission, scoring and communicating fall risk scores, and insuring that all care team members were involved. Fall and fall injuries rates were compared two-quarters prior to implementation of the fall agreement and eight-quarters post implementation. Falls and fall injuries on the medical oncology unit showed an overall reduction of 37 percent and 58.6 percent respectively. This is the first published study to show a statistically significant decrease in falls and injuries on med-surg units. In addition, the team has met and exceeded the ACA’s Partnership for Patients goal of a 40 percent reduction in injuries. We want to recognize the staff who contributed to this tremendous effort. The complete article can be accessed here:

<http://bmjopenquality.bmj.com/content/6/2/e000119>

SFDPH Staff Assist North Bay Fire Victims

San Francisco has contributed significantly with mutual aid for our neighbors in the North Bay. As of Thursday, November 2, more than 115 DPH staff and contractors have answered the call to deploy to Napa and Sonoma to assist with recovery efforts. Staff from Emergency Medical

Services, Behavioral Health and Emergency Preparation and Response have assisted at shelters and evacuation sites. English, Spanish, Tagalog and Cantonese speaking staff have been able to assist with counseling, helping with kids, and operational duties. We are proud to be able to assist our neighbors in this time of need.

Suicide Prevention and Stigma reduction

Recently, the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) program distributed brochures and promoted programs involving suicide prevention for youth & older adult LGBTQ communities, Spanish speaking communities, and school-based and community-based programs. These materials were developed from a statewide partnership between San Francisco's MHSA program and the California Mental Health Services Authority. The campaigns center around suicide prevention, with materials and resources designed for Spanish-speaking communities and short-film contests for young people.

The campaign educates Californians on how to recognize the warning signs of suicide, find the words to have a direct conversation with someone who is in crisis and know where to find professional help and resources (suicideispreventable.org). To support California's Spanish-speaking community, a translated site called Sana Mente (sanamente.org) contains mental health information and links to helpful resources and materials (e.g. brochures, fotonovelas).

The short-film contest, called Directing Change (directingchange.org) is an annual program that invites young people ages 14 to 25 to create 30-second and 60-second films about suicide prevention for their peers. This program gives youth and young adults the chance to produce films that support the awareness, education and advocacy of suicide prevention and mental health; and are used for social change on contestants' school campuses and their communities. The capstone for this program are red carpet award ceremonies, where the young filmmakers are recognized for their creativity and artistry. For more information and resources, please contact: MHSA@sfdph.org.

Project Open Hand Awards

Four awards will be handed out at the 25th Annual Project Open Hand Holiday Luncheon on Thursday, December 14. The Ruth Brinker Visionary Award will be awarded to long-time Project Open Hand Board Member Linda Glick; Barbara A. Garcia, Director of Health, San Francisco Department of Public Health, will receive the Community Advocate Award 2017; the Most Outstanding Community Partner Award 2017 will be presented to Giants Enterprises; and the Most Outstanding Corporate Support Award 2017 will be given to Gilead Sciences, Inc. Tickets for this fundraiser are available at openhand.org/events or by calling 415-447-2320.

Laguna Honda hosts Grand Circus Rounds

On Sunday, November 5th, Laguna Honda hosted Grand Circus Rounds, an annual fundraising gala benefitting the Medical Clown Project. Two showtimes were held, the first for Laguna Honda patients with an afternoon show open to the public. Patients and gala attendees alike were thrilled with acrobatic feats live on the center stage of the historic Gerald Simon Theater. Since 2015, the Medical Clown Project and Laguna Honda have been partners in providing expressive therapy modalities for patients coping with illnesses. The Medical Clown therapy includes use of magic, music, circus and puppetry as part of the healing process.

Veterans Day Message from Maggie Rykowski

Honoring our Veterans dates back to 1938 when Congress approved the 11th of November each year as a legal holiday dedicated to the cause of world peace known as Armistice Day. This date commemorated the ending of hostilities between the Allies and Germany on November 11, 1918 at the end of World War I. In 1954, November 11 became a day to honor American Veterans of all wars when President Eisenhower issued the first Veterans Day Proclamation. The purpose of Veterans Day is to honor American Veterans, the brave men and women who have served our country protecting our freedom and way of life that we all enjoy. On this Veterans Day I ask that you take a moment to reflect on their sacrifice and service. We have several DPH staff who have served honorably in the United States Military. To those veterans I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for their service to their country. (Maggie Rykowski is the Director of Compliance and Privacy Affairs and is a retired Rear Admiral, United States Navy).