



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 February 20, 2024

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

<https://sf.gov/departments/san-francisco-health-commission/past-meetings>

In alignment with the California Department of Public Health, we will no longer report on COVID-19 case data. More people are now testing themselves at home for COVID-19 and we do not get data from at-home testing. This affects the accuracy of data on testing volume. We will continue to report on key indicators of COVID-19 severity and spread including [hospitalizations](#), [deaths](#), and [test positivity](#).

CELEBRATING HEROES AND HEARTS AT ZSFG

On February 8, I had the pleasure of celebrating 20 years of *Hearts in SF*, an annual event to support ZSFG Hospital hosted by the San Francisco General Hospital Foundation. We celebrated our partnership that continues to have a profound impact on our patient-centered care at ZSFG, while fostering civic pride with beautiful Hearts sculptures throughout San Francisco, all while raising critical funds for the hospital.

I was thrilled to help honor Dr. Hali Hammer who was celebrated at the event on her last day before retirement. As the Director of Ambulatory Care for the San Francisco Health Network, Dr. Hammer received well-deserved accolades for her work to ensure the best care at all our clinics and throughout the Health Network. We applaud her leadership and thank her for everything she has done during her career at DPH.

The event also honored ZSFG's Dr. Andre Campbell for his dedication to excellence in trauma care, increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion and his advocacy addressing gun violence. Reverend Claire Chuck Bohman of ZSFG was recognized for their work attending to the spiritual needs of patients, family, and staff at ZSFG. And, notably, the Bridge and Engagement Services Team, also known as the Best Neighborhoods Team, received the 2024 Community Impact Award. Congratulations to all the exemplary recipients of this year's honors!

And thank you to the San Francisco General Hospital Foundation for their continued support of our safety net hospital that is serving nearly 100,000 people every year.



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WINTER STORMS RESPONSE

During the weekend of February 3rd DPH Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (PHEPR) staff prepared for and successfully responded to the latest round of winter storms, a combination of atmospheric river and bomb cyclone-type weather events. The storms produced several hours of heavy precipitation and sustained high winds resulting in localized flooding and downed trees and left much of San Francisco without power for several hours. PHEPR staff collaborated closely with the Department of Emergency Management, Emergency Medical Services Agency, Human Services Agency, Department of Public Works (DPW), local hospitals, and other health care system and private sector partners to ensure streamlined emergency response and to protect the health and safety of the public, especially populations that are most vulnerable to the health impacts of winter storms.

BIENNIAL FOOD SECURITY AND EQUITY REPORT

The Food Security Task Force was created by the Board of Supervisors with the purpose of making recommendations on policies and programs to improve food security. Membership of the task force consists of community-based organizations and city departments.

In accordance with [Ordinance 103-21](#), the purpose of the Biennial Food Security and Equity Report is to report out on populations in San Francisco that are food insecure, that are receiving City food-related services, and to summarize what barriers to food security exist. The data that inform this report are collected from several city departments, agencies and community-based organizations.

Current local data reveals that food insecurity remains high, even among households with incomes above San Francisco's median income level, and critically high for low-income San Franciscans. The data also demonstrates that people of color continue to be disproportionately affected by food insecurity. Currently, food programs are not designed or funded to meet all of the food needs of the household, so families may use multiple food programs to obtain the nutrition they need.

For example, the recent RAPID-SF survey administered by the San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families to over 600 households in San Francisco with children ages birth to 17 years revealed that overall, 30% were food insecure, despite an average household income of \$130,000 among survey respondents. Food insecurity rates were highest among recipients of Medi-Cal (57%) and CalWorks (90%), and Black/African American families (77%). Families with full-time jobs and benefits are struggling to meet their nutritional needs.



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Participation in federal nutrition programs remains much higher than before the pandemic. Between 2020 and 2022:

- CalFresh/EBT participation increased 52%
- WIC participation increased 30%
- SFUSD served 20% more meals

Recommendations from the Task Force include:

1. Support funding structures that promote a holistic approach to food and nutrition security in San Francisco.
2. Eliminate barriers and invest strategically in neighborhoods where structural racism and disinvestment have led to low access to healthy and culturally relevant food.
3. Increase coordination of local governments' programs and policies related to food systems.
4. Elevate the community's voice and participation in the development and implementation of food policy; and
5. Engage the health and housing sectors around food security.

For more information about the report and Food Security Task Force Recommendations, see the [link here](#).

EMS DATA EQUITY CONFERENCE

The San Francisco Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Agency, of which DPH's Dr. John Brown is the Medical Director, participated in the first-ever EMS Data Equity conference recently. The conference was co-sponsored by SF Fire Department, San Jose State University and the Carestart Foundation and brought together EMS researchers and Quality Improvement personnel from all over California. The conference focused on the importance of using EMS data to improve equity in both research and evaluation of care being provided out of hospital to populations in San Francisco and across the state that have barriers to care or are experiencing disproportionate health impacts related to structural racism. Topics included: Health inequities in EMS, opportunities for data equity, and learning community conversation, among others. DPH and SF Department of Emergency Management will be using lessons learned from the conference in their EMS Agency quality improvement and research programs.



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PHEPR PARTICIPATION IN THE ASSOCIATION OF BAY AREA HEALTH OFFICIALS ANNUAL EVENT

Building trusted relationships with regional partners and stakeholders is instrumental to enhancing the emergency response capabilities of DPH, San Francisco's health care system and overall community. DPH PHEPR continued to strengthen its regional partner relationships by participating in the Association of Bay Area Health Officials (ABAHO) Annual event. In early February, ABAHO hosted the event at the UC Berkeley International House in Berkeley, CA. PHEPR joined Bay Area Health Officers and Directors, EMS agency administrators, public health emergency preparedness staff, public health information officers, state and private sector partners, and local emergency management representatives to engage in a scenario-based discussion of a regional emergency response. The discussion revealed several new insights and considerations for how the Bay Area might develop and share information and resources during a catastrophic regional incident. PHEPR participated along-side other representatives from San Francisco, including the San Francisco Health Officer, the Director of Emergency Medical Services Agency, and the DPH Communications Director.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH BRANCH CONTAINS AND PREVENTS DISEASE OUTBREAK

The DPH Environmental Health Branch (EHB) conducts investigations related to foodborne illness outbreaks. Every outbreak is different and requires a unique set of skills from the staff involved to determine if an outbreak is occurring as well as the pathogen that is involved.

Recently, DPH Communicable Disease Control (DPH-CDC) reported two confirmed cases of shigellosis to EHB. Through investigation, EHB Principal Inspector Mary Freschet and Senior Inspector Carlos Barragan determined the two individuals ate at the same SF food facility. Additionally, Marin EHB reported that they had two confirmed cases of shigellosis and EHB was able to determine both Marin residents ate at the same restaurant. Inspector Philips Ossai also learned that his district's FBI investigation complainant also ate at the same food facility, making five (5) total cases.

The EHB inspectors worked with DPH-CDC to formulate a plan for containing a possible disease outbreak. EHB staff conducted an inspection and distributed stool sample kits to food facility employees, approximately 10. EHB bilingual inspectors provided hygiene/handwashing training and instructed staff regarding how to do wellness checks. The restaurant was closed pending the results of the tests. Two members of the staff tested positive for shigella and were not allowed to return to



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work until they were no longer contagious. Due to the rapid and comprehensive response, the disease outbreak was contained and there have been no further cases reported. Sr. Inspector Carlos Barragan, Principal Inspector Mary Freschet and Inspector Philips Ossai did an outstanding job and we thank them for protecting the health and safety of SF residents and visitors.

DPH STAFF CELEBRATE EQUITY DURING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

This Black History Month, the Office of Health Equity (OHE) and DPH equity leads are hosting a wide range of events that focus on Black/African American health, history and culture. DPH staffers are proud to hold the events (listed below) with the aim of building a culture of equity and inclusion at SFDPH and throughout the city of San Francisco:

- Feb. 21: ZSFG: Soul Kitchen Delights: African American Cooking Demo
- Feb. 22: SFDPH Black Infant Health Program Open House
- Feb. 26: ZSFG: Spiritual Serenity Lounge: African American Wellness
- Feb. 28: ZSFG: Heritage Tour
- Feb. 28: A staff workshop at Maria X. Martinez Health Resource Center will focus on people experiencing homelessness.
- Feb. 28: Primary Care will hold its third annual “Primary Care Black State of Our Union” virtual event.
- Feb. 28: Behavioral Health Services will host an event on the history of hip-hop at South of Market Mental Health clinic.
- Feb. 29: Laguna Honda Hospital employees are invited to join a unity walk.

Learn more about the [Office of Health Equity](#).

COVID-19 UPDATE

As of 02/15:

- San Francisco’s 7-day rolling average of COVID test positivity is 5.6% and there are 43 COVID hospitalizations.
- Twenty-nine percent of SF residents are fully up to date on their COVID vaccinations and have received the updated vaccine.

[DPH in the News](#)