

**Louisiana Commission on HIV, AIDS and Hepatitis C Education,
Prevention and Treatment**

May 11, 2020

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Virtual Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/7789959325>

Or Telephone:

USA 602 333 0032

Conference code: 712643

Commission Members Present:

Alleen King-Carter, Amanda Dumas (proxy for Marcus Bachhuber), Andrea LaPlante, Angie Brown, Anthony Basco, Austin Matthews, Baylor Boyd, DeAnn Gruber, Fran Lawless, George Nawas (proxy for Kathleen Kennedy), Jacqueline Porter, Jennifer Singh, Meta Smith Davis, Mitchell Handrich, Norma Porter, Stephanie Taylor, Tamara Boutte, Tamachia McCaa, Tanya Brown, and Tavell Kindall

I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call

Dr. Gruber took a roll call of Commission members and their designees.

III. Old Business: February Minutes

Commission members reviewed the minutes from the February meeting. Anthony Basco moved that the minutes be accepted. Tavell Kindall seconded. The motion passed.

IV. New Business: COVID-19 Updates Overview

Dr. Gruber stated that COVID-19 is the most pressing item in our state currently. The Governor will be announcing new information regarding opening the state this afternoon. This meeting is to dive into specific initiatives and Kim Hood is going to speak regarding current COVID-19 testing activities. In addition, expanded contact tracing should begin by end of week. The Legislature was paused through April and the state budget should be the main focus. However, the legislature is still considering many bills. Dr. Gruber stated that over the weekend, she did a quick search of bills using public health key words – unable to find anything specific to HIV or HCV. Dr. Gruber asked if anyone is aware of specific bills. There were no responses.

V. New Business: COVID-19 Testing in Louisiana – Kim Hood

Kim Hood, HCV Program Manager with the OPH STD/HIV/Hepatitis Program was reassigned eight weeks ago to work with Dr. Billioux and other OPH leadership to

increase access to COVID-19 testing and to develop an integrated approach with an equity lens to address disparities.

One key component is to identify congregant hotspots to increase testing. If you are an organization interested in providing testing, email Kim Kimberly.hood@la.gov.

Shirley Lolis asked if they plan to connect with community-based organizations for testing and she also inquired if we have enough tests in the state. Kim replied that they are working on a targeted plan to connect with CBOs; there are more tests than before, although the supply from the federal government is insufficient and they are identifying other sources.

D. Gruber indicated that two primary interventions are required for a phased reopening: widespread testing and precautions for positive cases and contact tracing. Currently, there are approximately 25-30 OPH staff who are reassigned to conduct patient interviews and contact tracing. At this time, OPH has contracted with two call centers and probably a third center this week to meet the daily needs of 700 employees. By Friday, May 15th, there should be 250-300 highly trained individuals to make calls. One challenge is at the call centers, staff will ensure social distancing and safe for work but a lot will be working remotely. Call center employees have medical backgrounds and will be trained on new platform.

Stephanie Taylor asked what are the plans to get people's names for businesses? D. Gruber acknowledged that has been discussed and Dr. Frank Welch in Bureau of Community Preparedness is facilitating the development of guidance for businesses and contact tracing and at this time, collection at businesses is not included. Instead, reaching out to employers of infected employees and contact tracings for those employees exposed is a priority.

Sylvia Andrews asked what is the new data platform system where contact tracing information will be stored? D. Gruber – A contract with Salesforce has been executed, along with Accenture to customize a platform to incorporate scripts and data. This decision was made after exploring many options and talking to other jurisdictions. This is the same process and platform that is being used in the state of Massachusetts.

Angie Brown from IWES asked if CBOs will be mandated to include COVID -19 testing with HIV/STI testing. Anthony James answered that COVID-19 is not currently funded in CBO contracts.

VI. New Business: CARES Act in Response to COVID-19/ Ryan White and HOPWA Allocations

- a. Fran Lawless – Ryan White Part A/City of New Orleans presented information regarding current resources for both Ending the HIV Epidemic and COVID-19 response. She was asked if COVID-19 is going to be included with HIV testing and indicated that is their plan and will need to coordinate with Regional Medical

Directors. F. Lawless also shared that additional HOPWA funds will be available for housing. By the end of the month, the City should be able to order PPE since COVID-19 funds are very flexible, although the primary goal is to fill in gaps in Ryan White services.

- b. Natalie Cooley – Ryan White Part A presentation on behalf of Danette Brown, Ryan White Administrator for Baton Rouge Transitional Grant Area.
- c. Ariel White – Ryan White Part B/HOPWA presentation. Ariel highlighted that funding contracts are being amended based on number of clients served in previous 6 months.
- d. Norma Porter –Ryan White Part C presentation
- e. Angie Brown – Ryan White Part D presentation

F. Lawless commented that she was happy to hear others' COVID-19 plans as these funds were unexpected and required a rapid turnaround and it sparks creativity. For example, at-home test kits are a helpful idea. D. Gruber agreed and acknowledged that it's good to see how these resources have been allocated around the state.

VII. New Business: Provider Needs and Concerns

D. Gruber asked if there are any needs or plans related to COVID-19 response and impact that individuals wish to bring to the Commission attention.

Reginald Vicks asked if there are capital dollars for structural changes to meet COVID-19 needs? D. Gruber responded that the federal money passed by Congress to address COVID-19 is being distributed, but she is not aware of specific funds for capital changes. State funds are lacking since it has to cover 25% of all COVID-19 costs and revenue is down.

F. Lawless commented that there are grants from HRSA to support COVID-19 and that includes building renovations. The plan is to meet with providers to assess needs and desires to support tele-health.

Angie Brown added that Ryan White did include funds to change work centers/nursing stations and there are plans to put up barriers to promote separation and add space. She added that Gilead funding is also available.

Dorian Alexander asked if there are any lessons learned from COVID-19 that may help eliminate HIV stigma in the future? D. Gruber responded by stating that it is still early in the COVID-19 process and that lessons learned will present themselves.

Alexander Adams asked if there is guidance for the reopening effort? D. Gruber stated that there are guidelines on the LDH website regarding the ability to put up barriers and provide distancing as a protective measure. There is additional guidance being worked on now for how to operate with limited capacity.

N. Porter stated that at Tulane, the clinic is staggering visits between two providers as well as coordinating with other providers.

Angie Brown stated that their process is similar to Dr. Porter's with regard to staggering appointments, providing tele-health and setting up a parking lot waiting area and patients are texted when it's time to come in. Staff have been trained on precautions and new normal operations.

Sonya Millman asked if the HIV testing procedure was going to change considering COVID-19 concerns? S. Burgess stated that there are discussions with contractors happening now and there are plans to double up testing efforts in the latter part of year. Masks and other precautions will be recommended. SHHP is also piloting at-home HIV test kits for persons who are at risk for COVID-19, in order to avoid having to seek testing in the community. The Program is working to minimize a negative impact on service delivery.

Anthony Basco commented that at CareSouth, the biggest change is wearing masks and more distancing, but so far, that process is working well.

Noel Twilbeck commented that tele-health no show rates have dropped for their agency.

George Nawas asked if there is a plan to give out test kits to university students for HIV and COVID-19? D. Gruber asked if anyone has specifics for testing for university students? There were no responses, therefore, D. Gruber stated that this group will follow up. A. Brown stated that IWES will continue venue-based testing and will there be guidance from the State? D. Gruber confirmed there will be guidance.

S. Andrews asked if there is a contingency plan for a COVID-19 second wave? D. Gruber stated that the Governor's plan is to do staged re-openings, monitor data for increased number of cases, hospitalizations, and COVID-like illnesses, and potentially roll back as needed.

Someone asked how to help partners that don't meet deliverables? S. Burgess stated that we will not penalize partners under contract.

N. Porter asked how long will COVID-19 drive-thru testing continue? D. Gruber responded by stating that Dr. Holcombe in Region 6 has been doing a great job coordinating this effort and should continue for a while. Other regions are finalizing plans and we could get a summary for each region of how they will be testing.

Alexander Adams mentioned that Dr. Billioux's slide show presentation during the last meeting regarding the HCV Elimination Strategy was cut short and inquired if there will be additional info regarding HCV testing in the Department of Corrections?

B. Britton stated that depending on the facility and physical layout, there are limitations and because of COVID-19, OPH mass testing at DOC facilities is on hold. However, persons who initiated HCV treatment have been able to continue receiving that treatment.

VIII. Other Business: Announcements

A. King-Carter announced that LAAN is restructuring its Legislative Day, which will be held virtually on May 12, 2020 at 1:30pm. The flyer and link will be shared with Commission members after this meeting.

Updates to EHE activities:

- i. Jenny Hall announced that the statewide EHE draft plan is in progress. Town halls to get statewide feedback will occur May 28th and June 2nd. Please spread the word.
- ii. EHE updates regarding Baton Rouge and New Orleans will be provided during the next meeting.

IX. Public Comment: Brandi Bowen and others requested more information regarding the pause on testing and services within DOC facilities.

X. Next Meeting Date: Will be scheduled in July or early August.

XI. Adjournment: Anthony made a motion to adjourn, N. Porter seconded.