

Multicultural Advisory Committee of the State of Utah's COVID-19 Response

Meeting Minutes

Friday, February 26, 2021 | 3:00 - 4:00 P.M.

Google Meet | Online

Members: Chair Nubia Peña, Co-Chair Byron Russell, Co-Chair Ze Min Xiao, Aden Batar, Asha Parekh, Brittney Cummins, Dulce Díez, Dustin Jansen, Emma E. Houston, Heather Borski, Jake Fitisemanu Jr., Dr. Len Novilla, Mikelle Moore, Ming Wang, Neelam Chand

Absent: Jess Anderson, Juan Becerra, Silvia Castro, Mayra Cedano, Rebecca Chavez-Houck

Guests: Ramy Ahmed, Ciriac Alvarez Valle, Luna Banuri, Drue Barker, Rozanna Benally-Sagg, José Borjón, Ginette Bott, Mayra Cardozo, Angel Castillo, Maegan Castleton, Neelam Chand, Nate Crippes, RyLee Curtis, Tile Fagatele, Susi Feltch-Malohifo'ou, Jenny Hor, Rossina Lake, Jill Love, Dr. Oscar T. Moses, Jennifer Napier-Pearce, Antonella Packard, Angelo Papastamos, Katherine Potter, Jennifer Robison, Betty Sawyer, Jeremy Taylor, Jerad Todacheenie, Rocío Torres Mora, Jeannette Villalta, Megan Waters, Cathy Wolfsfeld, Ka-Ho Wong, Marti Woolford, James Yapias, Yehemy Zavala Orozco

Welcome – Byron Russell, Co-Chair

Byron Russell welcomed attendees to the meeting.

PPP Loan – Antonella Packard

- The Biden Administration made an announcement regarding the Payment Protection Program Loan.
 - From February 24th to March 9th, businesses with less than 20 employees will have priority access to the loan
 - Intended to prioritize and facilitate loans to small businesses.
 - Loan calculation formula has been revised: self-employed, independent contractors, and sole proprietors are now eligible to get larger loan amounts than before.
 - Income will no longer be measured using net income, but rather gross income, allowing for larger loan amounts.
 - Social Security numbers are no longer necessary to receive a loan, only an individual tax number.
 - Restrictions for non-fraud felony convictions have been removed.
 - Elimination of the student loan debt delinquency disqualifier allows small business owners with student loans to acquire the loan.
 - The program provides loans that can become grants if certain regulations are followed, such as allocating 60% to payroll and 40% to operations.
 - Overall, these changes have allowed for more people to be eligible to apply for the loan.
 - The Suazo Business Center is assisting small business owners with the application process.

Utah COVID-19 Health Equity Vaccination Plan – Dulce Díez

- The goal is to use a fair and equitable distribution plan to vaccinate enough Utahns to reach herd immunity.
- Principles used to guide decision making:
 - Maximize benefits and minimize harm
 - Mitigate inequalities
 - Promote justice
 - Promote transparency
- Pivotal efforts to ensure vaccine equity
 - Identify priority and high-risk populations
 - Develop inclusive messaging
 - Reduce barriers to vaccination
 - Create vaccination sites or locations within the community
 - Mobile vaccination units
 - Make vaccination data available to the public
- Measure of Success
 - Vaccination rates through the state reflect the proportional numbers of Utahns that are vaccinated
 - Similar percentage of all populations have been vaccinated.

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- Multicultural outreach is up to the individual vendors, but efforts are being made to ensure equity.
- Local health departments should try to keep consistency with outreach, and work with community organizations, in the community that is being vaccinated.
- Community members discussed what equity means.
 - Community health workers requested to be part of the planning process at the onset.
 - Equity should be applied during the planning and rolling out process, not just the vaccination plan.
 - Important for different organizations to collaborate, as oftentimes these decisions are out of the Department of Health's oversight.

Food Security – Marti Woolford

- Food assistance is upheld by four major categories: Resource Support, Emergency Food Assistance, Federal Food Assistance, and Policy Advocacy.
 - Resource Support:
 - 2-1-1
 - Food assistance calls are trending downwards.
 - This may be due to the fact that communities have become familiar with where to go for assistance.
 - 84% of interactions are for food pantry support.
 - SNAP application assistance is the second highest request.
 - Emergency Food Assistance:
 - Utah Food Bank
 - Demand is still high especially for children
 - 6 million pounds per month of food is distributed
 - 3x higher than in March/April 2019
 - 45 mobile pantries around the state
 - Food Pantries
 - Feed Utah Food Drive is being held on March 20th, 2021.
 - Multiple faith-based organizations and residents are collaborating to organize a state wide food drive.
 - Federal Food Assistance:
 - SNAP
 - Caseload has remained constant, but only 70% of eligible recipients are applying.
 - Everyone eligible for SNAP benefits is now receiving the maximum allotment on a monthly basis.
 - For example: The maximum allotment for a household of one was \$16, now it is \$204.
 - Maximum allotment has increased by 115%.
 - Exemptions being implemented for college students beginning March 1st based on:
 - If the student is eligible for work study
 - If the student has an expected family contribution of \$0 for the academic year
 - Verified through Financial Aid.
 - Most recent unemployment insurance is exempt from being counted towards SNAP
 - Wal-Mart and Amazon are allowing for online purchases using SNAP
 - P-EBT
 - All children who would receive free or reduced price meals are automatically eligible to receive Pandemic EBT.
 - Children in Child Care
 - Children six and under receiving SNAP are now eligible for P-EBT benefits.
 - Public Charge
 - Using P-EBT does not impact child immigration status. The public charge rule does not apply to P-EBT.
 - eWIC
 - WIC benefits are now available online and on a card.

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- Policy Advocacy
 - Utahns Against Hunger
 - Two bills are being tracked in the legislature, after being sponsored by Utahns Against Hunger:
 - HB 405 Food Stamp Eligibility Amendments
 - This bill modifies provisions related to benefits received under SNAP.
 - SB 141 Task Force on Food Security
 - Food Pantry Survey
 - All major pantries have responded, now awaiting responses from local church pantries.
 - Response rate is just under 60%.
- Food Choice Subcommittee
 - Purpose is to increase availability of culturally relevant foods at emergency pantries
 - Needs: Culturally relevant foods, recipes, and classes
 - Barriers: Transportation, language access, capacity
 - Solutions
 - Recipes and cooking demonstrations
 - Translating the Utah Food Bank's food safety resources
 - Increasing knowledge surrounding federal food assistance
 - Alternatives to traditional food pantries

Housing & Social Services – Asha Parekh

- Strategy Change
 - Smaller and more focused meetings
 - Data and research driven work
 - Invitations to policy experts in the areas of housing, domestic violence, and community health workers
- Housing Disparities: Evictions
 - Target: To understand eviction disparities in Utah by looking at data from 2019 and 2020. Identifying best practices to decrease disparities.
- Rental Assistance
 - Target: To understand where the federal rental assistance dollars are being approved throughout the state, as well as identifying areas of high disparity in need of additional support.
- Domestic Violence
 - Target: Understanding how domestic violence issues are affecting multicultural communities in Utah, as well as the impact of COVID-19 on domestic violence in the state.
 - Compare and contrast domestic violence trends before and after COVID-19
 - Work with domestic violence providers to understand the impact of COVID-19
 - Compile the analysis of the data into an accessible report
- Community Health Workers
 - Target: Engaging with community health workers to validate their work and support them where they are addressing health access for the community. In partnership with Comunidades Unidas and the Utah Department of Health.
- Multicultural Communities Report
 - Target: Synthesize the work into a composite narrative report that highlights the lived experiences of BIPOC communities.

Action Items

- Continue the conversation regarding health equity and provide feedback on an equitable vaccine rollout plan by setting up a meeting between community health organizations and the Department of Health.

Next Meeting

Friday, March 5, 2021 from 3:00–4:00 P.M. through Google Meet.