



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 16, 2022

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

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

Today, there are over 172,100 San Francisco residents with confirmed cases of COVID-19. And, sadly, a total of 954 San Franciscans have died. The San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH) sends our condolences to their loved ones.

SAN FRANCISCO WINS LANDMARK OPIOID TRIAL AGAINST WALGREENS

San Francisco acting on behalf of the People of the State of California won its landmark opioid trial against Walgreens pharmacy. Judge Charles R. Breyer of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California found Walgreens is liable for substantially contributing to the opioid epidemic in San Francisco.

The Court found Walgreens over-dispensed opioids without proper due diligence and failed to identify, report, and halt suspicious orders as required by law. This is the first bench trial to decide in favor of Plaintiffs in opioid litigation and the first bench trial to find Walgreens liable.

These corporate practices fueled a widespread surge of opioid-related addiction and overdose in San Francisco, thereby creating an ongoing public nuisance in the region. From 2006 to 2014, San Francisco County saw 163,645,704 opioids distributed, enough for 22 pills per person per year. Between 2015 and 2020, San Francisco saw a 478% increase in opioid-related overdose deaths, and in a typical day at ZSFG Emergency Department, approximately 25% of visits are opioid-related.

This trial is the fourth bellwether case in the federal opioid litigation proceeding involving more than 3,000 American cities, towns, and counties, bringing opioid manufacturers, distributors, and pharmacy chains to court for fueling the opioid epidemic. This case will serve as a test trial to help reach resolutions and seek accountability for the destruction the opioid industry caused.

The next stage of trial will determine the amount Walgreens must pay San Francisco to abate the nuisance they caused. The case is City and County of San Francisco, et al., v. Purdue Pharma L.P., et al., Case No. 3:18-cv-07591-CRB.



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SAN FRANCISCO SUES FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OVER FORCED LAGUNA HONDA HOSPITAL CLOSURE

San Francisco City Attorney David Chiu and former City Attorney Louise Renne announced that they filed a pair of lawsuits over the federal government's decision to cut off federal funding to Laguna Honda Hospital and mandate that the facility transfer or discharge all patients by September 13, 2022.

The City's lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra alleges that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), which operates under HHS, forced the City to implement an unworkable closure and transfer plan that denies the City due process and puts Laguna Honda patients at risk. The complaint lays out how CMS imposed an arbitrary September 13 deadline to transfer Laguna Honda's patients and has denied the City due process as the facility is required to close well before the City's administrative appeals can be decided—appeals that would render the transfers unnecessary. The lawsuit seeks declaratory and injunctive relief to eliminate the September 13 deadline and extend federal funding to Laguna Honda at least until the appeals can be decided and all patients can be safely transferred or discharged.

Similarly, Louise Renne, founding partner at the Renne Public Law Group (RPLG) and former San Francisco City Attorney, announced that she has filed a class action lawsuit against the state and federal government on behalf of Laguna Honda patients and families. The RPLG complaint alleges that the closure of Laguna Honda and rushed transfer process violate the Americans with Disabilities Act and deny patients and their families substantive and procedural due process. The RPLG lawsuit is seeking declaratory and injunctive relief to continue federal funding to Laguna Honda and to stop patient transfers and discharges.

Additionally, the City filed three administrative appeals contesting the CMS decision to terminate its contract with Laguna Honda. Those administrative appeals will not be decided until well after the September 13 deadline to close the facility, effectively denying the City, Laguna Honda, and patients the due process they are owed.

The federal government, through CDPH, have temporarily paused patient transfers, but the September 13 deadline remains, giving the City even less time to complete this daunting and ill-advised process.

The City's lawsuit was filed August 3. The case is City and County of San Francisco v. United States Department of Health and Human Services, et al., U.S. District Court for the Northern District



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of California, No. 3:22-CV-4500.

RPLG's class action lawsuit was also filed on August 3. The case is D.B., et al. v. Chiquita Brooks-Lasure, et al., U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, No. 3:22-CV-4501.

MAYOR LONDON BREED ANNOUNCES OPENING OF VICTORIA'S HOUSE -- NEW RESIDENTIAL AND TREATMENT CARE FACILITY

Mayor London N. Breed and DPH announced the opening of Victoria's House, a 12-month rehabilitation center for individuals with serious behavioral health conditions and substance use disorders. The Victoria's House at 658 Shotwell Street in the Mission neighborhood is a residential and treatment bed facility that offers timely, accessible, coordinated, high-quality, and recovery-oriented care that is delivered in the least restrictive setting.

The Victoria's House is part of the City's plan to add 400 new residential and treatment bed for people experiencing mental health and substance use issues. To date as part of this expansion, the City has created 179 new bed spaces, which include the openings of the SoMa RISE Drug Sobering Center and The Minna Project this year, with an additional 70 beds by the end of August. In total, the addition of beds equates to nearly 250 or 2/3 towards meeting the City's goal.

The 12-month rehabilitative program is designed to support and prepare clients to learn how to live independently and step-down to the lowest level of care as part of Victoria's House's transitional care model. Additionally, clients will have a better opportunity to find stable housing, which will ultimately increase overall City homelessness and shelter efforts. This is especially important for more vulnerable clients of Victoria's House, such as those living with severe mental health disorders and substance use dependencies.

Clients may also undergo cognitive behavioral therapy, dialectical behavioral therapy, and other techniques to achieve independence living skills allowing clients to successfully transition into their communities.

The expansion effort is guided by the 2020 DPH Behavioral Health Bed Optimization Report, Mental Health SF legislation, and with input from stakeholders. The house offers an additional 46 beds for adults with mental health illness and/or substance use who experience homelessness. Clients who will be placed at Victoria's House are referred from acute inpatient hospitals, locked facilities, and jails.

Building on the City's expanding network of treatment bed facilities also reduces the use of



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expensive acute inpatient placements, primarily for clients with behavioral and physical health conditions that are also in need of rehabilitation and social services. After 12 months, clients will be re-assessed if they are ready to live independently or need an extended stay. The DPH Residential System of Care will then assist with housing placement.

Community partner A&A Health Services will run operations at Victoria's House with oversight by DPH. Staff onsite will monitor and engage with clients. A&A Health Service is a non-profit community provider who supports adults who suffer from mental health, addiction, and/or dual diagnosis while address the gaps in independent living skills.

For the latest update on San Francisco's residential care and treatment expansion, please visit: www.sf.gov/residential-care-and-treatment.

San Francisco has also made available a daily update of available mental health and substance use treatment beds, which may be found here: www.findtreatmentsf.org.

SAN FRANCISCO, SAN MATEO CO. RESIDENTS URGED TO SHARE LONG COVID STORIES

UC San Francisco, DPH and San Mateo County Health (SMC Health) are partnering with local community groups in a quest to learn about long COVID. To achieve this, researchers from the project, *Let's Figure Out Long COVID - Tell Us Your Story, Bay Area*, will be calling local residents of all ethnicities and backgrounds who previously had COVID.

Long COVID, also known as post-acute sequelae of SARS-CoV-2 (PASC), refers to both physical and mental health symptoms that last long after an initial infection. Those symptoms may start during infection and never go away or may appear weeks or months afterwards. Common complaints include fatigue, shortness of breath, pain, problems with concentration, depression, and anxiety.

The goals of the project are to learn how common long COVID is in the community—information that is critical in impacting funding for local health departments and services for those debilitated by the condition—as well as to learn what causes it, and how to prevent and treat it.

In Phase I of the project, researchers will call San Francisco and San Mateo County adult residents who had COVID at least three months ago. Whether they have fully recovered or still have symptoms, their experiences will inform researchers about the frequency of long COVID. All ethnic groups and neighborhoods will be represented, and researchers are especially interested in hearing



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from Black/African American, Latino, Pacific Islander and Native American communities who have experienced higher rates of infections, hospitalizations and deaths than other groups.

In Phase II, some people who were previously interviewed will be asked to join a more detailed research study sponsored by the U.S. National Institutes of Health. This study, called RECOVER (Researching COVID to Enhance Recovery), will last three to four years. Study participants will be compensated for their time.

Community organizations will assist in ensuring that input from the community accurately reflects those ethnic groups and neighborhoods where COVID-19 has been most prevalent.

For additional information, please see the website, [Let's Figure Out Long COVID](#), or email a representative: FiguringOutLongCOVIO@ucsf.edu.

PASSING OF DPH EMPLOYEE ISRAEL NIEVES-RIVERA

DPH is saddened to share the news of the passing of Israel Nieves-Rivera, Policy Director for the Population Health Division on August 1, 2022.

Israel was the Policy Director for the Population Health Division. In that role, he served as the principal advisor and coordinator of Division-wide efforts to understand and inform local, state and national policy to improve the population level health San Francisco, with a key focus on reducing disparities and improving health equity in San Francisco. He collaborated closely in this important work with the DPH Office of Policy and Planning.

Israel was always a champion for people and communities. In his early career, he was a high school history teacher. In the 1980s, he worked in New York City in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Prior to joining SFDPH, he worked with AGUILAS, a community-based organization in San Francisco, focused on Latino Gay Men's Health.

He was the former Director of HIV Prevention Policy for SFDPH, where he provided ongoing input into the framing of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy. As part of the management team in the HIV Prevention Section, he helped to complete several Comprehensive HIV Prevention Plans for San Francisco and ensured alignment with national goals. He was instrumental in managing the implementation of key CDC funded initiatives for DPH including the Program Collaboration and Service Integration (PCSI) grant, Project Pride, and the Maven Project. He served as the Government Co-Chair of the HIV Prevention Planning Council and was a founding member and leader of the Urban Coalition on HIV/AIDS Prevention Services (UCHAPS).



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Additionally, he supported our Department's efforts to achieve and maintain Public Health Accreditation and was an early proponent of equity and quality improvement when PHD became a new division. More recently, he worked on Cannabis policy and implementation with our Environmental Health Branch when legislation passed legalizing Cannabis. In March of this year, he championed policy work for Environmental Health Branch to have the Health Commission pass a resolution regarding refuse and garbage laws.

Israel always looked forward to a better San Francisco. On behalf of the department, we express our deepest condolences to his family, close friends, and colleagues.

DPH TRAUMA INFORMED SYSTEMS TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

On September 1st at 11:30am, DPH staff are invited to attend an Intro to Mindfulness training from Jenee Johnson, Program Innovation Leader. Find out more by visiting the Eventbrite link:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/387644704747>

[DPH in the News](#)