



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 November 19, 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 [test positivity](#) and will monitor other indicators including hospitalizations.

DPH LAUNCHES INSPIRATIONAL TREATMENT AND RECOVERY PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

DPH announced the launch of a new powerful public education campaign aimed at raising awareness about drug treatment and recovery services.

The campaign features San Francisco residents who have benefitted from addiction treatment and recovery services, sharing their stories and that they are “living proof” that treatment works and recovery from addiction is possible.

The campaign is one component of the City's larger effort to reduce overdose deaths from the lethal drug fentanyl and support recovery from substance use disorder. It coincides with the full launch of the nighttime on-demand medication treatment program that connects individuals who suffer from fentanyl addiction to a medical professional who can immediately prescribe buprenorphine from 8 a.m. to midnight daily.

DPH makes substance use treatment accessible across its system of care, including in hospitals and 14 primary care clinics, permanent supportive housing, shelters and navigation centers, street-based settings, and the Jail Health program. DPH continues to aggressively expand substance use treatment options while removing barriers to treatment. The work has included launching new treatment programs, expanding hours at outpatient treatment facilities and access points, adding 400 residential



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treatment and care beds, and more than tripling the number of street care workers in the community outreaching to people who use drugs.

The campaign directs people to the DPH Behavioral Health Access Line, a 24/7 call center that serves as a central access point for substance use and mental health services. Beginning in October, the telephone line added the option to virtually connect to a medical professional about medications for fentanyl and other treatment options.

Public education campaign materials will be distributed across the City via billboards, Muni bus shelter ads, social media ads, in ride car share Lyft vehicles, and other outlets. Ads will be shown across the city but will be centered around the Tenderloin and South of Market neighborhoods, where overdose deaths occur at a higher frequency than other neighborhoods. The DPH team is also working directly with community-based organizations to share materials and raise awareness among all San Franciscans that treatment works, and recovery is possible.

PASSAGE OF PROPOSITION B TO HELP IMPROVE SFDPH HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CENTERS

The entire DPH community celebrated the passage of Prop B, which will allow several critical infrastructure projects to move forward at Zuckerberg San Francisco General (ZSFG), Chinatown Public Health Center, City Clinic and Laguna Honda (LHH) to the benefit of both staff and patients. Prop B is a \$390 million general obligation bond that passed in November with more than 72% voter approval. It includes \$205 million in healthcare infrastructure improvements.

Projects at ZSFG will make much needed mechanical and IT system upgrades and strengthen the hospital's facilities against the growing threat of climate change, such as the installation of a new chiller and cooling tower that supplies cool air and cold water to much of the campus. Their importance was made clear during a recent prolonged heatwave. Prop B will also fund a full seismic retrofit of Building 3, a six-story building that will provide working space for about 300 staff and house psychiatric supportive services and continue to house the hospital's Anatomic Pathology Lab. ZSFG staff will be moved out of older seismically deficient buildings on campus into Building 3 when complete. In addition, Prop B will help expand the capacity of ZSFG's Psychiatric Emergency Services, allowing ZSFG to treat nearly twice as many patients in a light-filled space designed for better patient experience and care coordination.



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Prop B will allow the Chinatown Public Health Center project to move forward with a full seismic retrofit of their building and funds to co-locate the Chinatown Child Development Center there. CPHC has proudly served San Franciscans with a focus on the Chinese and Asian American community since 1969 at its current location, providing medical care and mental health services, and dental care. Funds from Prop B will help us integrate primary and alternative medical care with mental and behavioral health services, expand dental care, increase the number of exam and consultation rooms, and improve accessibility and air quality and ventilation.

Prop B will provide funds to relocate San Francisco City Clinic to a building optimized for health care, expanding services and making it more accessible and safer for patients. A new clinic space will improve the sexual health outcomes of patients by expanding lab functions for on-site test results processing and sameday diagnosis, strengthen coordinated care with other needed services, ensure faster and more streamlined services, and improve ADA accessibility.

Finally, Prop B will ensure Laguna Honda completes projects that are directly tied to federal regulatory operating requirements. Projects include enhancements that will have a direct and meaningful impact to the quality of care for our residents.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS VOTES TO APPROVE RESOLUTION TO LIVESCAN TO CONDUCT BACKGROUND CHECKS WHEN ISSUING PERMITS

The Environmental Health Branch regulates, and issues permits to businesses that offer massage in San Francisco. A part of this process requires massage business operators to have a criminal background check to verify that the owner does not have a violent or felony history. Historically, these background check have been performed by the San Francisco Police Department.

Beginning in 2023, the Environmental Health Branch (EHB) reached out to the San Francisco Massage Council and the Office of Small Business to see if there was support for creating a background process which would not require police involvement and found that there was strong support. With this community support, EHB has been working towards establishing LiveScan as an alternative background check method. On November 14th, EHB asked the Board of Supervisors' Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee to approve a resolution which will allow DPH to implement Ordinance No. 105-23 regarding Massage Permit Requirements under the SF Health Code. The committee voted unanimously to approve the resolution which we expect the full board to



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approve in December.

This effort is an example of the EHB working proactively to meet a need without compromising health and safety. Once approved, the Livescan process will provide a more streamlined and equitable option for massage businesses without compromising health and safety.

ZSFG APPOINTS TWO NEW NURSING DIRECTORS

ZSFG recently appointed two seasoned staff members to join its nursing leadership team. First, Merjo Roca has been appointed Nursing Director of Specialty Care. Merjo was previously the Nurse Manager for the Urgent Care Center and the Patient Vaccine Clinic. Merjo has a diverse leadership background in outpatient and inpatient nursing, a passion for performance improvement and increasing teamwork, and a love for teaching, coaching and mentoring staff. During both the pandemic and the Mpox health emergency, Merjo's leadership was critical in quickly establishing and expanding testing and vaccinations for the community; she helped the hospital vaccinate more than 213,000 patients during COVID and also established ZSFG as an Mpox mass vaccination site, which vaccinated more than 21,000 patients.

ZSFG also appointed Joan Torres as Nursing Director for the Department of Psychiatry. Joan led the development and expansion of ZSFG's Behavioral Emergency Response Team (BERT), a nationally recognized program that addresses use of force on patients by law enforcement. It brings a trauma-informed approach to care, ensuring safety for staff and patients by de-escalating difficult situations before they become violent. Under Joan's leadership, the BERT conducts thousands of consultations per year, largely without law enforcement present. Joan developed all the standard work and policies and procedures for BERT, hired and trained all members of the team, oversaw the operations of the department, and partnered with multidisciplinary stakeholders to establish BERT as a 24/7 service available throughout ZSFG as well as expanding it to the Emergency Department.

COVID-19 UPDATE

As of 10/31:

- San Francisco's 7-day rolling average of COVID test positivity is 2.2%.
- Twenty-one percent of SF residents are fully up to date on their COVID vaccinations and have received the updated vaccine.