



## 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 January 6, 2025

*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.*

### **4TH ANNUAL HR EQUITY CONFERENCE**

On December 16<sup>th</sup>, the DPH Human Resources team hosted the 4th Annual Equity Conference, centered around the theme “It Starts With Me: Introspection and Tangible Actions to Advance Equity and Inclusion at DPH.”

Over 145 DPH Human Resources professionals gathered in the Koret Auditorium at the San Francisco Public Library's Main Branch for a day of inspiring talks and activities, including a plenary session from Dr. Adina Sterling (Katherine W. Phillips Associate Professor of Business, Columbia Business School) and remarks from myself, Luenna Kim (Chief HR Officer), Mawuli Tugbenyoh (Acting Executive Director of the Human Rights Commission), and Shireen McSpadden (Executive Director of the Department of Homelessness & Housing Services). There was also a cross-departmental equity panel featuring Maria Mastrokyriakos (Senior HR Analyst, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the San Francisco Library), Monica Davis Stean (Human Services/Administrative Services Manager at Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure), and Shane Zaldivar (Manager of Training and Education at Office of Transgender Initiatives).

Group activities helped employees use shared language around preferences, traditions and requirements to enable an environment where HR professionals can advance respectful policies and processes to better serve our workforce.



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### **DPH SHELTER HEALTH PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTED IN SF EXAMINER**

A December 4, 2024 Examiner story "*Decade-old SF program aims to minimize 911 calls to shelters*" highlighted the Shelter Health program. DPH Shelter Health began as a pilot in 2014 after it was identified that two shelters had the city's highest number of 911 calls. By placing a nurse in the shelters, 911 calls dropped by half. Today, the Shelter Health team has registered nurses, health workers, and behavioral health staff working in more than 20 shelters and navigation centers serving 3,000 shelter guests. Shelter Health offers drop-in hours at sites one to four times per week, depending on the location. Services range from chronic-disease care, wound treatment, medication management, immunizations and on-site infectious-disease testing. The article highlighted a patient who credited his shelter health nurse as saving his life, "Sometimes it's just about listening and being there, and showing that she actually cares, that's all it takes." The patient had prior participated in DPH's Medical Respite program, which highlights DPH's continuum of services to support and stabilize the health of people experiencing homelessness. Full article [here](#).

### **DPH STREET CARE SERVICES FEATURED IN THE CHRONICLE**

A December 12, 2024 Chronicle article "*Gaping wounds, puffy hands, heart infections: S.F. drug users suffer from more than overdoses*" highlighted the health issues of people experiencing homelessness, particularly people using substances. The article profiled a 36-year-old who uses a wheelchair due to a severe skin infection that preventing him from walking more than a few steps at a time. Because people using drugs have often had negative experiences with the health care system, people often don't seek care until they are quite ill and often experience health issues decades earlier than the general population. Our DPH street care workers deliver mental health and addiction treatment to people experiencing homelessness in the community with a goal to develop trust and bridge care to the city's four-wall clinics. The article quotes DPH's recently retired Dr. Barry Zevin saying that "People want to be healthy but their addiction — and the cognitive impairments it has caused — make it difficult to follow through on medical appointments and caring for their bodies. It's really hard to work on getting your addiction treated, so a lot of [patients] start with their medical conditions. When they see they can get compassionate care for their medical condition, then they start to be more open to working on their substance use." Full article [here](#).



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### **EHB TEAM COLLABORATED WITH CDPH TO REDUCE AND PREVENT NOROVIRUS**

DPH Environmental Health Branch (EHB) regulates and permits businesses that retail food and beverages in San Francisco. A part of the Food Safety Program is responding to foodborne illness complaints and conducting thorough investigations, including interviews and determining the food source causing the illness. EHB works collaboratively with our Communicable Disease Control Unit (CDCU), the State Department of Health (CDPH), and food manufacturers and distributors to eliminate the retail of unsafe food for consumption to reduce and prevent further illness.

On December 6, 2024, The EHB foodborne illness team identified three separate 311 complaints involving illness from the consumption of raw oysters. When we collected shellfish tags from all three restaurants that day, it was determined that all oysters were harvested in British Columbia, Canada and two of the restaurants had oysters from the same harvest site. CDPH Seafood Investigation team and CDCU were contacted immediately of a potential outbreak. Complainants contact information was provided to CDCU and they were able to quickly request testing from several complainants which resulted in a positive Norovirus test.

While the FDA and CDPH continued to gather evidence to officially announce a recall, EHB-FBI Team conducted field site visits to the SF fisherman's wholesale market. They were able to provide the tag numbers and variety to the wholesalers and highly recommended to pull the stock from sale. They also obtained a list of restaurants and markets from the wholesalers and conducted site visits to provide warnings as well. By December 12<sup>th</sup>, the oysters were recalled statewide and DPH staff had already informed all points of sale.

The above boots-on-the ground work is a testament of the importance of local Environmental Health presence in protecting public health. The teams proactive and collaborative approach with agencies and industry significantly reduced the number of cases. Great work!

### **HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES AT ZSFG**

As the year came to an end, ZSFG capped off December in reflection and celebration. The Patient Experience team and UCSF's Dean's Office organized opportunities for staff to give back to the community by organizing a Toy Drive where donations were shared with the pediatric patients and with the community through the Jewish Family and Children's Services Gift Drive, Toys for Tots, and the SF Fire Department Toy Program. A clothing drive was also organized to collect clothing



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for patients being discharged from the hospital. The ZSFG Wellness Team hosted a Pet Therapy session where a Golden Retriever, Brixton, dressed in holiday attire brought cheer to teams across the hospital including the ICU and Birth Center. Chief Nursing Officer Gillian Otway and the Pediatric and Perinatal Units hosted their annual Gingerbread decorating contest where CEO, Dr. Susan Ehrlich, and CMO, Dr. Gabe Ortiz, were amongst the judges. The five teams who participated were all deemed winners with the NICU receiving Best Overall, the Birth Center with the Funniest, Women's Clinic as Most Festive, Children's Clinic as Most Colorful, and In-Patient Pediatrics as Most Creative.

### **COVID-19 UPDATE**

As of 12/31:

- San Francisco's 7-day rolling average of COVID test positivity is 1.4%.
- Twenty-six percent of SF residents are fully up to date on their COVID vaccinations and have received the updated vaccine.