



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 April 5, 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 124,000 San Francisco residents with confirmed cases of COVID-19. And, sadly, a total of 847 San Franciscans have died. The San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH) sends our condolences to their loved ones.

75 new behavioral health beds for SF residents involved in justice system

Mayor London N. Breed, DPH, and the San Francisco Adult Probation Department (SFAPD) announced an expansion in transitional housing and behavioral health care services for justice-involved adults who are experiencing homelessness. The 75-unit housing site at 509 Minna Street (the Minna Project) in the South of Market neighborhood is currently undergoing renovations for an anticipated opening in early May.

The Minna Project is a partnership between DPH and SFAPD and will open in collaboration with community partners, including Westside Community Services and Tenderloin Housing Clinic, who will oversee program and property management. Participants of the Minna Project will have access to onsite wraparound services, including outpatient mental health and substance use disorder treatment, case management, medication management, support groups, and recreational activities. The Minna Project will support participants in recovery through group therapy, peer support, and medication-assisted treatment for substance use disorders. Together, these services are designed to aid the transition to independent living after involvement with the justice system.

Individuals with behavioral health needs are overrepresented in the justice system, with up to one-third of all jail inmates receiving behavioral healthcare. This population is also disproportionately affected by homelessness and the overdose epidemic. The Minna Project provides the City with an opportunity to provide housing, healthcare, and wraparound services to address this variety of related factors affecting individuals experiencing behavioral health issues.

Minna Project participants will be welcomed from several referral sources, including justice system partners, the Superior Court, Jail Health Services, and an array of treatment and community partners. Program participants are anticipated to reside onsite for 1-2 years before transitioning to more permanent housing.

The new facility at 509 Minna adds 75 beds to DPH's residential care and treatment programs and is part of a 400-bed expansion over the coming years to provide more spaces and overnight options. After 509 Minna opens, DPH will have opened 40 percent, or 164, of the planned 400 new beds. The



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facility will soft launch in early May, with initial guests coming in already connected to services until the program ramps up for onsite wraparound services by Fall.

The Reentry Division of SFAPD will coordinate the delivery of onsite services through community partners. This team, led by formerly incarcerated people, has developed a portfolio of reentry and rehabilitative programs for justice-involved adults that promote recovery and independence. SFDPH will fund the transitional housing program and develop the clinical behavioral healthcare services available for Minna Project participants. The building at 509 Minna Street will be master-leased by Tenderloin Housing Clinic.

DPH-issued health alert regarding people exposed to fentanyl while using other drugs

On March 17, DPH issued a [health alert](#) in response to a series of overdoses, both fatal and nonfatal, among people inadvertently exposed to fentanyl while using cocaine.

Over a period of two weeks, DPH became aware of three fatal and nine non-fatal fentanyl overdoses among persons in San Francisco who reportedly intended to only use cocaine. The three fatal-overdoses occurred in the Mission district on March 5, 2022 and were previously reported in the media.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that can be up to 50 times more potent than heroin. Drug overdoses began increasing precipitously in San Francisco beginning in 2015, mostly due to the presence of fentanyl in the local illicit drug supply. A total of 474 deaths in 2021 were attributed to fentanyl, according to [preliminary City data](#).

In San Francisco, fentanyl is typically sold as a powder (white or lavender) and may have a similar appearance to stimulants like cocaine, leading to unintentional use of fentanyl among people who are intending to use stimulants. People who use stimulants may have little or no tolerance to opioids. For this reason, fentanyl overdoses usually involve cocaine and/or methamphetamine.

Anyone who accesses drugs outside of the regulated medical supply chain may be at risk of fentanyl overdose. San Franciscans who use drugs and/or who know people who use drugs should be aware of the risks of doing so and take extra precautions. DPH recommends the following:

- Be aware that any illicit drugs may contain fentanyl and may pose a risk for opioid overdose.
- Carry and know how to use naloxone, a medicine that can rapidly reverse an overdose, especially if you use illicit drugs or know others who do.
- Take steps to reduce risk including avoiding the use of illicit drugs.
- If you use illicit drugs, please take the following safety precautions: use small “tester” doses; avoid using alone; avoid using drugs at the same time as others in your group due to the rapid onset of fentanyl overdose; avoid mixing drugs; avoid mixing drugs and alcohol; and use



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fentanyl test strips to identify fentanyl in illicit drugs before use. Fentanyl test strips can identify the presence of fentanyl, however, they are not always accurate and additional safety precautions are always recommended.

- Seek treatment for substance use disorders. Medication and other forms of treatment are available through City treatment programs, primary care services, and other health providers.

Overdose prevention resources can be found online at sf.gov/information/overdose-prevention-resources.

SF ramps up mobile COVID testing to target hardest hit communities

DPH is deploying a new mobile testing strategy to be able to rapidly expand or contract testing as needed and to target resources where they are needed most in neighborhoods with the highest positivity rates that have suffered the greatest impact from the pandemic.

Recently, a mobile testing van operated by OPTUM Serve began administering tests at five access points in the Bayview, SoMa and Civic Center and will continue to offer tests for the next 90 days through the *Increasing Community Access to Testing* program funded by the State. DPH also expanded its contract with CityHealth to provide mobile testing at various scheduled locations including the Mission, the Bayview, and the Tenderloin. The CityHealth service, which collects specimens for lab-based PCR tests, is expected to begin the first week of April.

The mobile testing launch comes as DPH prepares to close the 7th and Brannan Street “SoMa testing site” on March 31. At peak demand in mid-January, testing at the SoMa site, managed by contracted partner Color Health, rose to an average of 1,200 per day and has since dropped to an average of 150 per day last week.

DPH will evaluate [real-time data on test positivity rates](#) to decide where to station the testing vans on a month-to-month basis. A calendar of where the vans will be parked with dates will be available at sf.gov/gettested.

DPH will keep stationary sites operating where there is a need, including Alemany Farmers Market, Southeast Health Center, and Ella Hill Hutch. Starting April 1, the Alemany Farmers Market testing site in partnership with Color Health is expanding hours on some days.

DPH and community partners are distributing over-the-counter test kits to individuals who are medically vulnerable in senior housing facilities, in highly impacted communities, and among City workers performing essential services. In January and February, 230,000 over-the-counter test kits were distributed out.



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Testing has played a critical role in San Francisco's COVID-19 emergency response and the data collected has enabled the City to address health and socioeconomic inequities in the deployment of resources, such as placement of vaccine sites in areas with higher test positivity.

As of March 13, San Francisco conducted an average of 4,663 tests per day, down from 16,178 at the peak of the Omicron surge in January. The 7-day positivity rate is 2.4% compared to the peak of 18.9% in January when DPH-affiliated sites rapidly scaled up testing capacity in response to the Omicron surge.

DPH recommends people get tested if they have [COVID-19 symptoms](#) or when they have had a close contact with someone who has COVID-19; testing five days after an infection to come out of isolation; or when asked by their school, workplace, doctor, or the Department Public of Health.

San Francisco has one of the lowest hospitalization and death rates in the nation, despite its dense population, in large part due to high vaccination (83%) and [booster rates](#), and strong community and business support for other COVID-19 safety protocols, including masking.

DPH is keenly focused on reducing health disparities by lowering the impact on communities hardest hit by COVID. In addition to testing, DPH is closing gaps in vaccinations and boosters through vaccine events in schools and communities of color and is distributing masks to those communities while masking is strongly recommended for indoor public settings.

Individuals should access tests through their health care provider if they have one. Those who need to get tested at [DPH-supported sites](#), can do so at high capacity, mobile, or community-based testing sites. Additional information on testing recommendations and sites can be found at: sf.gov/gettested

Laguna Honda Hospital and Rehabilitation Center

Laguna Honda Hospital is a licensed skilled nursing facility serving approximately 700 patients with complex medical needs who are low or extremely low income as part of San Francisco's healthcare safety net.

As a result of reforms implemented starting in 2019, Laguna Honda improved its policy for self-reporting incidents to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). In July 2021, Laguna Honda reported two non-fatal overdoses on site to CDPH, which triggered an extended survey that contributed to CDPH finding the hospital to be in a state of substandard quality of care in October 2021. In response, CDPH and Laguna Honda worked closely with CDPH on a plan of correction, and during CDPH's follow-up survey in January 2022, the facility remained in non-compliance due to one incident in which a staff member was not following protocols. On March 16, 2022, CDPH returned for the second revisit survey and became aware that a patient was smoking in a communal bathroom on a unit and another patient on oxygen was in possession of a lighter. Smoking is prohibited indoors at Laguna Honda and



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using an igniter when done in the presence of oxygen can pose an extreme risk. In response to the patient smoking and the patient found in possession of a lighter, on March 22, CDPH placed Laguna Honda on Immediate Jeopardy for noncompliance with federal regulations and standards. Staff took immediate corrective actions that included increased clinical safety searches and new restrictions on visitors. The Immediate Jeopardy was lifted on March 27 after the facility displayed compliance with the immediate corrective actions.

Despite Laguna Honda's success in responding to the Immediate Jeopardy and ongoing work with CDPH to address these concerns, the facility is nearing the end of the 6-month window to achieve substantial compliance in response to the extended survey conducted by CDPH in October 2021. Laguna Honda received notice on Wednesday, March 30th, from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that its participation in the Medicare/Medi-Cal program could be terminated due to not being found in substantial compliance in the required timeframe. This is a standard notice that federal regulations require be provided to facilities at this point in the regulatory compliance review process. Laguna Honda has until April 14 to resolve remaining deficiencies that were found in October 2021, as well as any deficiencies that were found since, to achieve substantial compliance with all CMS regulations.

Every resource is being utilized to address the concerns of the regulatory body. Laguna Honda is working diligently to meet all regulatory requirements and is developing an updated plan of correction with CDPH in response to the CMS decision.

Commission Appointment and Recognition for DPH's Baljeet Sangha

Baljeet Sangha, MPH, FACHE, DPH San Francisco Health Network's Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Director, was re-engaged, and accepted, a nomination for another 2 year term with the Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) at the State to serve as a Commissioner for the Hospital Supplier Diversity Commission, representing the Hospital Industry. On the Commission, Baljeet will continue to champion the State of California's goals and HCAI's priorities. Supplier Diversity has profound effects on social determinants of health, our communities, and our workforce, and Baljeet will contribute to the development of a progressive strategy and pathway to bring equity and transparency to this space.

Additionally, Baljeet was recently named one of the Top 100 Chief Operating Officers of 2022 by Alumni Spotlight. These executive team members are in charge of implementing strategy, managing change, and overseeing the day-to-day operations of the organizations they serve. This year's awardees span across nearly all industries including education, information technology, food and beverage production, healthcare, civil engineering, tourism, financial services and more. Congratulations, Baljeet, for your exemplary service to the health of San Franciscans!

[DPH in the News](#)



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