

PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes

January 27, 2022 | 10:00 a.m.

In Attendance, Welcome, Approval of Minutes

Present: Abby Drummond, Bob Dannenhoffer, CeCe Lynn, Chellsey Maher, Christin Rutledge, Colleen May, Janel Sorenson, Judi Moore, Kat Cooper, Kendall Sebold, Marsha LaVerne, Peggy Whalen, Shawn Lybarger

Staff Present: Gillian Wesenberg, Danielle Walker, Athena Wikstrom, Vanessa Pingleton, Cynthia Hurkes, Connie Rosas, Heather Freiling, Mel Johnson, Susan Stiles-Sumstine

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, this meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

COVID-19 Updates and Vaccine Roll Out

Dr. Bob shared a COVID-19 update with the group. According to Dr. Bob, almost every case of COVID-19 currently in the United States is the Omicron variant. Only PCR test samples are sequenced. As of yesterday, 99 percent of sequenced samples were Omicron. Omicron is very contagious, somewhat vaccine resistant, and generally mild. In Douglas County, we are experiencing around 200 confirmed cases per day with many unreported. Schools are reporting 20 percent to 50 percent of students are absent per day. There are currently 31 individuals who are hospitalized in Douglas County, though generally, the cases that are being hospitalized are less severe than seen with Delta or Alpha. Vaccines are working for individuals who are vaccinated and boosted. Thirty of the 31 patients hospitalized are not fully vaccinated. Many individuals with COVID-19 are not getting tested as a portion of them believe they have a sinus infection, bronchitis, or a mild cold, others are not able to get tested as some sites are not testing unless the individual is very ill. There are currently three reasons for underreported cases in Douglas County, individuals not testing as they expect they don't have COVID-19 since it's a mild illness, change in recommendations, and taking at-home tests, then not reporting the positive result. Individuals can report at-home positive results through the Douglas Public Health hotline at (541) 464-6550. When taking an at-home test, wait until the second day of symptoms or five days after exposure. PCR test results are typically received anywhere from 18 hours after testing to two weeks. There are not a lot of PCR machines available. Omicron's incubation period is two days, with symptoms by the third day, and individuals continue to be contagious for five days after symptoms first present. The current guidance is, if you are mildly ill, assume you have COVID-19 and stay home five days or until you no longer have a fever without treating it through medication.

Omicron case counts in many places around the world have had a steep rise followed by a steep fall. Douglas County started our rise about the first week in January, Dr. Bob expects Douglas County to peak in the last week of January or the first week of February. By March, it is expected that Douglas County will have a very low COVID-19 case rate. Omicron quickly infects nearly the entire unvaccinated population in a region, due to how contagious it is. Delta was twice as contagious as Alpha, Omicron is twice as contagious as Delta. There is not currently a new variant on the rise, so we may be able to get a break this spring. The good news is vaccines seem to be very effective in reducing the severity of illness. There are new anti-virals, though they are only available in very low amounts, and not available for the general population yet. Mercy Medical Center is strained, but not as bad as it was in the summer.

Maureen shared that she received the Johnson and Johnson (J&J) vaccination last year and the booster in December, but the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has shared that the J&J booster may not last very long.

Dr. Bob advised, if an individual received J&J and the J&J booster, it appears there is pretty good coverage against COVID-19. Recent research is showing that it is best if you get J&J and an mRNA booster.

Maureen observed that many of the individuals she has tracked with COVID-19 recently are not getting fevers, especially those who are vaccinated.

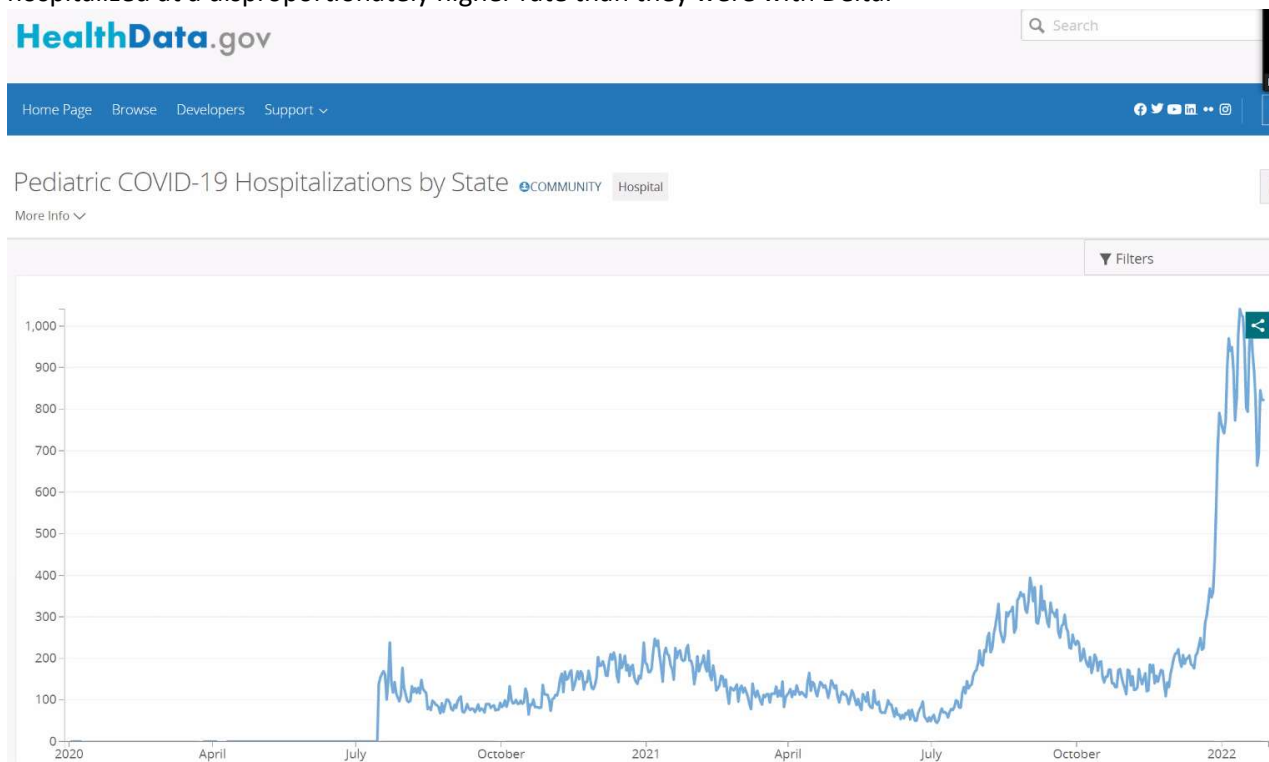
Gillian asked Dr. Bob's advice going into spring for individuals who are immunocompromised, too young to be vaccinated, or elderly.

Dr. Bob advised that individuals still need to be careful. We are still having a few deaths a day in Douglas County, and around 2000 deaths a day in the United States. As the number of cases in the community decreases, it will be safer for at-risk individuals.

Maureen shared that a large majority of the 30 individuals she is tracking are having really bad lower back pain.

Dr. Bob advised that they are seeing a lot of really achy symptoms especially back and chest pain. With Omicron, they are not seeing a loss of smell and taste as was reported with Alpha and Delta. Individuals who are getting fevers are having really bad night sweats. Many patients are getting a lot of headaches, stomach problems, and congestion. Professionals are not seeing the same lower lung problems with Omicron as previous strains. Delta had a lot of recovered cases that are still needing Intensive Care Unit (ICU) care well after the patient has recovered from the initial COVID-19 infection. There are around 30 individuals in the community with traches.

Omicron is infecting children far more than the previous variants. Dr. Bob shared the pediatric hospitalization graph below to show the steep increase of severity of COVID-19 in children with the Omicron variant. Children are being hospitalized at a disproportionately higher rate than they were with Delta.



Peggy observed that this information regarding the severity in children is really helpful for their program. The staff has been frustrated about the Early Learning Division (ELD) requirements for COVID-19 in child care settings and the ten-day quarantine requirement. Since the relief nursery works with kids who cannot be vaccinated because of age this is good information to share with staff.

Dr. Bob advised there are no treatments approved for kids under twelve. Monoclonal antibodies are antibodies grown in a laboratory. Regeneron, Elon, and Lilly are all treatments currently using monoclonal antibodies to treat COVID-19. Individuals who received these treatments had a much lower rate of hospitalization with Delta, however, they don't work at all with Omicron. Sotrovimab works for Omicron, but there is a low number of doses available in Oregon. Shawn asked about the possibility of an Omicron booster coming out, as a staff member had heard that there is one in development.

Dr. Bob shared there is talk about making a booster against Omicron, but it would take at least 90 days to make it, 60 to test, and 30 to distribute, so it's not worth waiting. The current booster is effective within two days of receiving it.

Everyone should get boosted now, not wait. Groups are discussing the possibility of developing a booster that instead of treating spike protein, would work for all COVID.

Gillian inquired when individuals will need a second booster?

Dr. Bob stated that many vaccines need the full dose then a booster, but we don't know what that process will look like for COVID-19. It may be that we need a COVID and Flu shot every year. We found that what was used to prevent COVID (stay home, mask, sanitize) is very effective against COVID and the flu. These increased measures have resulted in very few cases of the flu since COVID-19 emerged.

Gillian observed there was a study that Omicron stays on surfaces longer than other variants. She asked Dr. Bob if the study was accurate and valid?

Dr. Bob advised that sanitizing surfaces is a great idea, the other preventative measures (i.e. masks, social distancing, staying home when sick, etc.) are also very effective. Early learning is a bit different as children behave differently (chewing on toys, putting objects in mouths, etc.). Dr. Bob has not seen a child with an infection that was not COVID-19 in over a month other than one case of influenza. He is hoping that by spring break, COVID won't be a major issue.

COVID-19 has moved from the human population to animals and back a few times. In the summer of 2020, COVID-19 moved to the mouse population in Africa then spread to people again several months later. There are a lot of animal reservoirs around the world (mice, mink, deer, opossums, etc.). We will not be done with COVID-19 for a very long time. It could be like a lot of other infections, such as e. Coli. E. Coli is a terrible infection, but not all-consuming within populations like COVID has been. If at-home testing, antivirals, etc. were widely available, COVID would not have such a large impact on communities. Douglas County had to buy a morgue truck as there was not enough room at the nursing homes for individuals who died from COVID.

Kindergarten Readiness Innovation and Partnership (KPI) Updates

Cynthia Hurkes reviewed the November meeting discussion regarding the regional KPI investment funds. Funding plans are being made with a small regional advisory group and will be brought back to the Professional Advisory Councils (PACs) and Regional Governance Council for further input and approval. Funding investment must meet the goals of the Hubs and Raise Up Oregon (RUO) as well as align with the priority populations listed in the Early Care and Education (ECE) Sector Plan. The KPI and Early Learning Hub work plans are due to the Early Learning Division (ELD) at the beginning of March.

The Conscious Discipline in partnership with the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) is going very well. There are 100 subscriptions that were purchased with five available. Sixty-eight percent of the participants in the Conscious Discipline series are from Douglas County, with seven percent from Lake County, and twenty-five percent from Klamath County. Participants include administrators, early learning providers up to third-grade, home visitors, and more. Ninety-five individuals joined the live, virtual training. Gearing up for a Conscious Discipline collaboration to offer Conscious Discipline to families with the hope to have it completed by the end of June 2023.

Early Learning Gatherings have been offered bi-monthly for a couple of years with a slow down at the beginning of COVID. The last gathering had 35 in attendance, the next gathering is on February 22. This series is focused on self-regulation with the next meeting centering around self-regulation for the provider.

Douglas County Child Care Coalition Update

Heather shared that the Douglas County Child Care Coalition is meeting consistently. They are currently working on some activities to assist with workforce increases across the county. There has been a substantial initiative to make people aware that there are funds for child care providers to join and stay in the child care field. Care Connections & Education, the regional Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR), has received calls regarding the current radio advertisements to recruit child care workforce. Our region, and many across the state, cannot support new sites and classes without first adding to the workforce.

There was a sprinkler law passed during the legislative long session that has been a significant barrier. The law requires all providers, including those providing care in their home, to have a sprinkler system. The Early Learning Division (ELD) is reviewing the law and assessing what can be done to support providers. The coalition is looking at advocating with the legislature to support providers.

The Douglas County Child Care Coalition is also reviewing what can be done around shared services in our community. Shared services include any services that are needed to run a business including Human Resources, billing, collections, scheduling, collective purchasing, etc. The Coalition members include representatives from businesses, the hospital, Head Start, child care, the early learning hub, and more across the community. The community has invested a lot into the coalition and is engaged with how they can assist in making change. The Coalition is making bonuses and stipends available for new providers. The Coalition has really allowed an opportunity to make providers be seen and heard which is supporting what the CCRR has been doing for years.

Hub and Partner Updates

Gillian – The South-Central Early Learning Hub is still waiting for their state contract from the Early Learning Division (ELD). The Preschool Promise request for application (RFA) was supposed to be out in November and has been pushed back, we do not currently have a date that the RFA will be available. There are currently openings at the Yoncalla and Brockway Elementary sites.

Shawn – Hub Updates - Kendra has moved on to Lane County CASA. Christin expressed interest in co-chairing the Professional Advisory Council (PAC). We will determine interest for the co-chair position in February. The time commitment for a co-chair is attending monthly PAC meetings, monthly half-hour planning meetings, and a quarterly Governance meeting to represent the PAC. If there is additional work requested by the state, then the co-chairs also attend and assist with meeting ELD requirements. If you have an individual you would like invited to the PAC, you are interested in the co-chair position, or would like to nominate someone for the co-chair position, please let Gillian, Athena, or Shawn know.

Heather – Care Connections & Education – Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) – The CCRR is looking at having a Spring conference on May 14 that is expected to be a hybrid (in-person and virtual) platform. There is a provider appreciation event that will be held in Klamath County as well.

There will be a no-expulsion rule for any providers who are receiving funds through Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), ELD, etc.

The CCRR is working on reflective practices, evaluating skills, and providing opportunities to grow teaching skills and evaluation skills for child care providers.

There are currently two open positions CCRR is interviewing for next week. One of the positions is a recruitment specialist. Just sustaining staff is difficult and we need to grow child care.

Klamath Community College (KCC) and Umpqua Community College (UCC) navigator positions are available as well due to funds received by the Community Colleges to support these positions. Positions within child care that provide livable wages are increasing all over the region. It's hard to see individuals who are passionate about early learning choosing to move into k12 positions due to wage discrepancies. There has been an increase of students enrolled in Early Learning classes at the Community Colleges. Many of the early childhood courses are available online, making it easier for working professionals to attend courses. The colleges are trying to move classes that need to be in person off of a virtual platform while still being safe. Child care is isolating so providers need to have an opportunity to be in person.

Twelve child care participants got their business certificates through the Small Business Development Center and received quality improvement supports for a year as part of an early learning cohort. Providers who are part of the

cohort are now receiving supports from the CCRR for another 12 months to build a SPARK portfolio to determine their quality rating. If a provider receives pay through ODHS and is not licensed, they cannot earn a livable wage in child care.

Colleen - Healthy Families – Healthy Families is posting for a new family support specialist with preference for applicants who are bi-lingual. Judi is retiring in August and is currently the translator for Douglas County. Applicants do not need to have a strong early learning background.

Vanessa - Community UPLIFT - Community UPLIFT has received 827 referrals to date with 46 in the last quarter. 27 of the referrals received last quarter were for Douglas County and 19 were for Klamath County. Connie has gotten quite a few referrals so far in January. The Home Visiting System Coordination grant through The Ford Family Foundation is currently in the renewal process for phase three. The application process includes building action plans for the next two years. The new plans are aligning with the South-Central Early Learning Hub's strategic plan, annual work plan, and Early Care and Education (ECE) Sector Plan as well as Raise Up Oregon and Coordinated Care Organization (CCO) metrics. Connie is now receiving all of the Douglas County referrals. Vanessa and Connie are currently setting up times to visit programs for Connie to become more familiar with the programs and the personnel.

Connie shared that a lot of individuals whom she speaks with don't know about the resources in the community and have been excited about the resources that are available. The Hub is working on updating our website. Connie is updating the resource directory, if you want updates or to be added, please let Connie know.

Marsha – Family Development Center (FDC) – FDC recently tallied some of the work that they have done over the last year. Over the last 12 months, on top of staying open and providing classroom time, FDC staff has:

- supported 305 children
- supported 321 families
- distributed 3102 face masks for children and adults
- provided 22505 diapers in emergency supply boxes
- conducted 2356 home visits
- volunteered 227 hours including a dinner hosted by FDC, UCC Children's 5k, and Music on the Half Shell
- delivered 576 emergency food boxes.

Peggy - Family Relief Nursery - Kendall is now with the Relief Nursery as the interim director, and Crystal has moved on. Family Relief Nursery will start re-advertising for the director position in the summer. The relief nursery has been hit hard with COVID-19 and had to close classes in the last couple of weeks in the Lane County sites. Drain is full and operating all classes.

Susan - Take Root - Winter quarter classes and workshops are currently taking place. On February 23 and March 2, there is a workshop series called "Babies Don't Come with Instructions." It is a modified "Baby 101" workshop with the first session focusing on moms and the second focusing on the importance of dads. In March, there will be a three-part workshop called "Teaching Your Child to Talk" that Karen Shaw with Early Childhood Special Education is teaching. ESD will have a parent resource center, at the soon-to-be-completed Stephens Street location. Take Root hopes to get community partners to be available for parents once or twice a week at the parent resource center. We expect to move back into the Stephens Street site during Spring Break

Abby – Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) – Douglas County SNAP received a waiver for renewal intakes, so SNAP renewals due in December and January will be automatically extended. If families have had a change in income, it still needs to be reported to Self Sufficiency (SS) to prevent an overpayment of benefits. Douglas County has also received approval for emergency SNAP allotments for February. Emergency allotments are applied for each month and approvals are typically received the week before they take effect. Emergency allotment approvals generally align with the state of emergency. There is a one-month buffer, so if emergency allotments are not approved for March, families will still receive the additional benefits in March to give them notice of the return to base benefits in April. There is a huge SS backlog as some cases have taken over a month to review due to the pandemic, the new ODHS database system, and staffing shortages. To address the backlog, additional ODHS staff positions have been added.

There is currently one position open. Douglas County does not have a phone answering system so with the staffing shortages, individuals are experiencing long wait times and are struggling to contact a SS staff member. The hotline wait times have been over three hours. In cases of emergency needs, the fastest way to contact SS is in person.

Families involved in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) have engagement activities that they are required to attend. Typically, engagement activities are required to be in person, however, it has been approved to hold classes and engagement activities virtually so that families do not fall short of the requirements.

Kat – Umpqua Health Authority (UHA) - Community Advisory Council (CAC) – The OHA CAC oversees a lot of efforts for community funding opportunities. The CAC has openings they are hoping to fill with consumers - individuals who are on Oregon Health Plan (OHP) or have a child who is on OHP.

Janel – Sutherlin School District – Sutherlin School District is hiring staff members in a variety of positions. You can find the open positions at Sutherlin.k12.or.us.

Shawn – United Community Action Network (UCAN) Head Start / Early Head Start – Head Start has experienced the need to close classrooms due to sick staff and students who have tested positive for COVID-19. A Head Start teachers took a position outside of UCAN to help children with disabilities, and Head Start has not received applications to fill the vacancy. One classroom will close until a new teacher can be hired. Closing a classroom means 20 less children can receive Head Start classroom services at this time. The application for next year will be open soon, and UCAN is still accepting Head Start applications for this year.

Future Topics

COVID-19 Updates with Dr. Dannenhoffer

Next Meeting Date

Next meeting February 24, 2022 from 10:00am – 12:00pm.