



Committee: Directly to Council
Committee Review: N/A
Staff: Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst
Purpose: Receive briefing and have discussion – no vote expected
Keywords: #MCCOH

AGENDA ITEM #3A
December 1, 2020
Discussion

SUBJECT

Annual Meeting with the Commission on Health

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

Desiree de la Torre, Chair, Commission on Health
Christopher Burt, Vice Chair, Commission on Health
Vanessa Kachipande, DHHS Program Manager, Commission on Health

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- None

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

The County Code (Chapter 24-23 to 24-28) establishes the Commission on Health and requires that it must report to and meet with the County Council, sitting as the Board of Health, at least annually on the programs and policies in its purview. The Commission will provide the Council with its statement of priorities that include: (1) school health, (2) public health data and modernization, (3) communicable diseases, and (4) racial equity.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- The functions of the Commission on Health include advising the Executive and the Council by periodically reviewing public health programs; commenting on gaps, deficiencies, or duplications in programs and services, including health disparities and inequities; reporting on the performance of DHHS programs and actions needed to improve programs; commenting on funding for public health programs; and advising on health planning based on health status data.
- The Commission on Health has 19 voting members from a cross section of consumers and providers of health care. One member must be a member of the Montgomery County Medical Society. The Health Officer and a Council representative (council staff) are non-voting members.

Website:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/PHS/CommOnHealth/COHIndex.html>

Attached:

Priorities statement from the Commission on Health

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Montgomery County Commission on Health (COH) Fiscal Year 2021 Priorities

The Commission on Health (COH) respectfully submits its Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) Priorities. The COH is focused on four key public health priorities: **School Health, Public Health Data and Modernization, Communicable Diseases and Racial Equity**. We plan to coordinate and align these efforts with our fellow Boards, Committees, and Commissions that have identified the same or similar priorities. Together, we believe we can address the following public health priorities.

A. School Health

Studies have shown that poor health can put education at risk – kids with poor health tend to have higher absenteeism rates, lower academic concentration, and higher risk of learning disabilities. Conversely, education can create opportunities for better health – adults with a good education tend to have better jobs, access to health care, live in healthier neighborhoods, and live longer lives.

We are significantly concerned with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning. In FY21, our focus will be on supporting efforts to ensure a safe return to the classroom. This will include identifying ways to ensure all school age children are current on their vaccinations and providing recommendations on vaccine distribution plans.

B. Public Health Data and Modernization

Modernizing the public health approach by integration of newer technology to improve processes and the County's ability to respond to public health efforts is critical to addressing health equity. The recent pandemic has reinforced that there needs to be a continued focus on updating systems to improve ER standards. Additionally, leveraging new technologies will help ensure efficient and effective data collection, processing and reporting.

In FY21, the COH will continue to advocate for the County to invest in building its epidemiological capacity as state-of-the-art data collection and analysis capability is integral to support the health needs of the County's residents.

C. Communicable Diseases

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the burden of communicable disease to the forefront. While all can benefit from routine immunizations, reducing cultural, language, and other barriers to recommended vaccinations is essential to promote equity. The County also continues to bear the burden of other infectious diseases such as sexually transmitted infections and tuberculosis. A closer examination of the epidemiological data shows a number of conditions with increasing trends and demonstrated disparities by race/ethnicity, age, sex, and geographic area.

In FY21, we plan to review this data and advise public health planning to better target efforts and resources to meet the evolving needs of a changing population in the County. We hope to continue to encourage focus on science-based approaches to preventing communicable diseases, with specific attention on routine influenza vaccinations for everyone over six months of age. We also plan to work to help counter misinformation that could reduce the willingness of County residents to receive recommended vaccinations, including one for COVID-19.

D. Racial Equity

The Commission on Health (COH) is dedicated to identifying, addressing, and correcting racial disparities in Montgomery County. We stand beside every Montgomery County resident, employee and visitor in the quest to make Montgomery County a safe and supportive environment for everyone regardless of their race or ethnicity. Residents of color, regardless of income, lag in access to healthcare and high-quality education.

This year, the COH plans to ensure that racial disparities are addressed in all the priorities we have identified. We are committed to advising the County Executive and the County Council on racial equity, social justice, and inclusion throughout the County's public health issues, programs, services and to monitor and assess racial and equity needs of residents in this county.

We look forward to working with our government leaders, community organizations, and community as we work together to continue to enrich the health of the residents in Montgomery County.