



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

AGENDA ITEM #3B
November 9, 2021
Discussion

SUBJECT

Annual Meeting – Commission on Health

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

Jessica Kronstadt, Chair, Commission on Health

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- None

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

The Commission on Health advises the County Executive and County Council on local public health planning, programs, services, facilities, and data on the health status of the County's population. The law establishing the Commission requires that the Commission must report to and meet with the County Council, sitting as the Board of Health, at least annually.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- The Commission has provided comments that include their two principles of promoting equity and making decisions based on accurate and timely data. It also says they will continue to focus on school health and communicable diseases.
- A copy of the Commission's FY2020 Annual report can be found at: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/PHSDocs/COH/FY20%20Commission%20on%20Health%20Annual%20Report_FINAL.pdf
- The HHS Committee will be meeting with all DHHS boards, committees, and commission at their November 15 and 17 sessions.

Attached:

Commission on Health comments 1

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Montgomery County Commission on Health (COH) Fiscal Year 2022 Priorities

The Commission on Health (COH) respectfully submits its Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) Priorities. In the coming year, we plan to continue our focus on **school health** and **communicable disease**, in a manner consistent with our overarching commitment to promoting **equity** and being guided by accurate and timely **data**.

School Health. Studies have long documented the relationship between health and education.¹ Students who are healthier learn better and individuals with higher educational attainment tend to be healthier. Recent research has also focused on the negative impact of poor mental health on children's and adolescents' academic performance.² In FY22, the COH will focus on efforts to support the smooth transition of students back to the classroom. Ensuring students are best prepared to learn requires access to resources to support their physical health (including appropriate vaccinations) and mental health.

Communicable Diseases. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the devastating impact of communicable disease. A review of county data also exposes troubling trends in the rates of other infectious diseases, including tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections.³ Alarming disparities exist by race/ethnicity, gender, age, geographic location within the county. While Montgomery County has been a national leader in COVID-19 vaccination rates, in FY22, the COH will maintain its commitment to addressing any remaining cultural, language, misinformation and other barriers to recommended vaccinations—not only for COVID-19 but for influenza and other illnesses, as well. We will continue to review the data and advise public health planning to better target science-based efforts to meet the evolving needs of a changing population in the County.

The COH is committed to two overarching principles that will guide our work in these two policy areas, as well as in all that we do to support the efforts of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Equity. The 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. We will incorporate this lens in our work related to school health and communicable diseases and will also advise 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.

Data. Basing decisions on timely and reliable data is the cornerstone for sound public health practice. We will continue to seek out data to shape our policy recommendations. We will also continue our advocacy to bolster the epidemiological capacity of DHHS. We believe that the county should invest in developing state-of-the-art data collection and analysis capability to identify disparities and promote the health of all who live in the County.

We look forward to coordinating these efforts with our fellow Boards, Committees, and Commissions and to working with our government leaders, community organizations, and community as we work together to enrich health and well-being in Montgomery County.

¹ CDC. Adolescents and School Health. https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/index.htm.

² Agnafors, S., Barmark, M. & Sydsjö, G. Mental health and academic performance: a study on selection and causation effects from childhood to early adulthood. *Soc Psychiatry Psychiatr Epidemiol* **56**, 857–866 (2021).

³ Healthy Montgomery Core Measures <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/healthymontgomery/chart.html>.