

**Office of Health Equity Advisory Committee Meeting  
Teleconference Meeting Minutes (DRAFT Staff Notes)  
September 2, 2021**

859-2482-8538; Code 462515

**OHE-AC Members Participating:**

Sarah de Guia, Chair	Simran Kaur
Shireen Malekafzali, Vice Chair	Nahla Kayali
Califia Abwoon	Patricia Lee
Valentine Antony	Vong Mouanoutoua
Angela Ball	Hector Ramirez
Jessica Buendia	Nancy Rodriguez
Aaron Gardner	Terra Russell-Slavin
Ana Gonzalez Seda	Michael Witte
Jo-Ann Julien	Angelina Woodberry

**Members Absent:**

Kismet Baldwin  
Robin Carter  
Lisa Folberg  
Yvette McShan

**State Officials/Staff:**

Christine Siador, Assistant Director, California Department of Public Health (CDPH)  
Rohan Radhakrishna, Deputy Director, Office of Health Equity (OHE)  
Marina Castillo-Augusto, Chief, Community Development and Engagement Unit (CDEU), OHE  
Lazaro Cardenas, Project Lead, Racial and Health Equity Initiative, OHE  
Chantal Griffin, Health in all Policies, OHE  
Amanda Hooker, Stakeholder Engagement Coordinator, OHE  
Kimberly Knifong, Chief, Business Operations Unit, OHE  
Meredith Lee, Health in All Policies (HiAP) Team Lead, OHE  
Peter Oh, Chief, Health Research and Statistics Unit (HRSU), OHE  
Jason Tescher, Chief, Gender Health Equity Unit (GHEU), OHE

**Speakers from the Public:**

Sonya Young Aadam	Kiran Savage-Sangwan
Stacie Hiramoto	Juliet Sims
Steve McNally	Daniel Toleran
Mechelle Perea-Ryan	Weiyu Zhang

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**9:00 a.m. Convene Meeting and Welcome | Roll Call | Agenda Review | Meeting Minutes**

Sarah de Guia, Chair of the Office of Health Equity (OHE) Advisory Committee (AC), called the OHE-AC meeting to order at 9:02 a.m., welcomed everyone, provided a brief overview of the meeting agenda, and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

Amanda Hooker, Stakeholder Engagement Coordinator, OHE, reviewed the meeting protocols.

Approve June 15, 2021, Meeting Minutes and July 29, 2021, Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

**MOTION:** Ms. Woodberry moved approval of the June 15, 2021, Office of Health Equity Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes and the July 29, 2021, Subcommittee Meeting Minutes as presented. Ms. Kayali seconded. Motion carried 18 yes, 0 no, and 0 abstain, per roll call vote as follows:

The following OHE-AC Members voted “Yes”: Abwoon, Antony, Ball, Buendia, Gardner, Gonzalez Seda, Julien, Kaur, Kayali, Lee, Mouanoutoua, Ramirez, Rodriguez, Russell-Slavin, Witte, and Woodberry, and Vice Chair Malekafzali and Chair de Guia.

Public Comment

Stacie Hiramoto, Director, Racial and Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition (REMHDCO), wrote in the chat asking about the availability of the meeting minutes to the public. The speaker stated the public should have access to meeting materials.

Ms. Hooker stated they are currently not available on the website but she offered to send them to anyone who asks.

Steve McNally, family member, reminded everyone about the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act and cautioned against emailing meeting participants individually for transparency.

**9:15 a.m. Updates from CDPH Leadership**

**Presenters:**

- Christine Siador, Assistant Director, CDPH
- Rohan Radhakrishna, Deputy Director, OHE

Chair de Guia stated the OHE-AC will hear updates from the CDPH leadership regarding CDPH’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Department’s equity priorities.

Rohan Radhakrishna, Deputy Director, OHE, introduced Assistant Director Christine Siador.

Christine Siador, Assistant Director, CDPH, provided a brief overview of her background, priorities, and her department. She stated Director Aragon was sorry he

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was unable to be in attendance. She stated Dr. Aragon's three key priorities for the Department are equity and anti-racism, performance management, and develop our people to become a learning and healing organization.

Assistant Director Siador provided an overview, with a slide presentation, of the Future of Public Health Workgroup, which was tasked with developing a framework for building California's 21<sup>st</sup> century public health system and identifying core infrastructure investments capable of meeting current and future public health needs, foundational public health service areas, and key trends and aspirations in workforce of the future public health system in California. She stated key initiatives were identified across each foundational service to help fill capacity gaps and achieve aspirations, such as workforce, emergency preparedness and response, IT, data science and informatics, community partnerships, communication and public education, and community health improvement.

Discussion

Chair de Guia stated one of the things that caught her attention during the presentation was the shift from disease management to thinking about life force and that it will be centered on equity and prevention. She asked for examples on how this has been successful or how it is being incorporated into planning and discussions.

Assistant Director Siador stated the need to focus on structured planning for policies and community education around the social determinants of health and moving more upstream to prevent the development of chronic diseases communitywide.

Mr. Ramirez stated the need for an intersectional approach to anti-racism work to include gender orientation and disability status. He stated concern about the lack of focus on disability equity and that they are not prioritized in an equitable manner, particularly the Latino/Hispanic, Native American, and immigrant communities.

Mr. Ramirez stated Los Angeles County has begun to pilot a program that hires undocumented Californians who are awaiting certain provisions to work within the county. He suggested including an exploration of that option for all Californians. It is important to work with peer agencies for peer certification that do direct peer work such as Cal Voices, Black and indigenous people of color (BIPOC) peer organizations, and other community-based organizations that work in communities of color, particularly system-impacted agencies that work with peers coming out of the criminal justice system and the domestic violence workforce that oftentimes intersects with many health fields.

Assistant Director Siador asked to follow up with Mr. Ramirez offline to learn how Los Angeles County is engaged in hiring the undocumented population.

Ms. Julien stated she will share a set of competencies for public health professionals around disability equity with staff. She stated this information will help all public health departments across California as they design programs, policies, and services for the disability community. She asked if there is a playbook on the social determinants of health and Health in All Policies (HiAP) for state officials and local departments. She asked about the vision of how local health departments and state public health will

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tackle big-ticket items such as housing, good quality schools, and safe communities that require policy coherence at the local, state, and federal levels.

Assistant Director Siador stated this is one of the key areas that looks upstream. Because of categorical funding, entities are only able to focus on what is being funded and staffed at the moment. The vision of community health improvement is to ensure that there is staff at the state and local levels working collectively to advance this work and set policy. Having staff dedicated to prevention and looking upstream at the social determinants of health has been needed for so long.

Chair de Guia stated many health departments are struggling with having the capacity to do what needs to be done at the state level and also to partner at the local level. Community-based organizations can help build that capacity. Although there is an understanding of the connection between the work being done, everyone is still operating in a siloed fashion, which will take a broad movement to change.

Assistant Director Siador stated the importance of building a statewide movement by building on what already exists.

Public Comment

Mechelle Perea-Ryan asked about the plan to support the changes needed for climate change so the impact of climate on health is improved. She also asked for access to the presentation slides.

Assistant Director Siador stated the impacts of climate change is one of Dr. Aragon's priorities. She stated the need to look at policy and infrastructure. Staffing will be built into the workforce at the state and local levels to focus on climate change. This is critical.

Daniel Toleran, Senior Research Associate, Center for Applied Research Solutions (CARS), offered the support of the Cross Population Sustainability Committee of the California Reducing Disparities Project (CRDP).

Chair de Guia read comments from the chat section:

- Deputy Director Radhakrishna posted a link to the press release of the federal Health and Human Services Agency's new Office of Climate Change and Health Equity (OCCHE) department.
- Ms. Julien posted a link to [disabilityinpublichealth.org](https://disabilityinpublichealth.org)'s alignment with core competencies for public health professionals.

Office of Health Equity Update

Deputy Director Radhakrishna provided an update on the OHE:

- The Gender Health Equity Unit (GHEU): the Transgender Wellness Equity Fund was funded for \$13 million and kicked off a couple of weeks ago.
- Advisory Committee: over 40 applications have been received for AC Membership. Applications for the four open spots have closed. Six additional spots will become available next year as AC Members term out.

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- Health in All Policies and Racial Health Equity Initiative: staff will be hired in the fall to advance Director Aragon's priorities.
- Climate Change and Mental Health: the Secretary General of the United Nations has issued a Code Red for humanity.
- CRDP: the budget includes funding to expand and extend the CRDP. This will build off of and inform the Child and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative.

COVID-19 Update

Deputy Director Radhakrishna provided an update, with a slide presentation, on the COVID-19 vaccinations, data, and goal-setting for the state in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He discussed vaccination disparities by place, race, and insurance type. He noted the need for specific strategies to narrow gaps, the importance of continuing to stay alert and guarding against COVID-19 coming into the fall, and the clear stepwise increase in vaccination coverage that lowers mortality rates.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna stated the importance of reaching the target vaccination rate prior to Thanksgiving before holiday gathering and travel to minimize a winter surge. He offered two example equity goal options based on the Healthy Places Index and on racial and ethnic groups. He reviewed the equity milestones and the COVID-19 Health Equity Playbook, which was updated in July.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna noted an important article that came out in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) this week showing that eviction moratoriums decrease transmission rates and that individuals who have lost their housing protections were at greater risk for contracting COVID-19. The link for the article is [jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2783612](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2783612).

Discussion

Vice Chair Malekafzali asked about methodologies to identify vaccine rates in racial categories to better understand disparities in those categories.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna agreed that this is a challenge that must be overcome. He stated he met with the Department of Finance yesterday to discuss specific data on categorization, redefining multi-racial and unknown categories, and disaggregating as much as possible. He asked for strategies and suggestions from AC Members.

Public Comment

Mechelle Perea-Ryan asked about the political determinants of health and the COVID-19 vaccination and how to debunk the myths.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna stated mis- and dis-information around the COVID-19 pandemic are deadly. The national Surgeon General has named mis- and dis-information as a public health threat and emergency. Information is power and saves lives. The communications team is paying regular attention to mis- and dis-information. The CDPH has an email called "rumors" as a way for members of the public to notify the communications team about rumors, especially on social media platforms. It is

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important to steer communities to trusted sources such as the CDPH for specific guidelines.

Sonya Young Aadam, CEO, California Black Women's Health Project, stated concern about vaccination inaccessibility in communities and asked about impacts on those communities. The speaker asked about ways to elevate the single dose vaccine as a way to encourage individuals to get vaccinated, especially young people.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna stated there is currently a demand problem, although there was a supply problem last spring. He stated he was unaware of data on one-shot versus two-shot vaccines for particular racial or ethnic communities. He suggested forwarding concerns to him that are being seen.

Ms. Abwoon asked when the eviction moratorium will be over in California. She asked about the Supreme Court's ruling stating that moratoriums were illegal.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna asked that that question be asked later during the housing portion of the agenda for a deeper discussion.

**10:00 a.m. OHE Deputy Director Present on Community Partnerships Survey and His Vision for OHE and the Advisory Committee's Role**

**Presenter:**

- Rohan Radhakrishna, Deputy Director, OHE

Chair de Guia stated the OHE-AC will hear a presentation on the role of CDPH's community partnerships and vision and ideas for working with the OHE A-C.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna provided an overview, with a slide presentation, about community partnerships and the future public health system in California, key trends related to community partnership development in California, and Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the federal government.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna stated a survey on community partnerships was given to AC Members and other groups last July. He asked today's meeting participants to participate in a poll about where California's public health system is now in general and in its community partnerships, where it should be in 2030 in general and in its community partnerships, and the roles that community partnerships most need to play for public health. He reported that the survey results were consistent with what has been seen.

Discussion

Mr. Ramirez stated the need to take accessibility into consideration when putting out information and giving presentations, especially when collecting important data. This data was collected over a short period of time and had much content with difficult language. He stated he likes the interactive platform with Zoom, but displaying the presentation materials interferes with accessibility technology that results in false

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information. Also screen readers do not work in those instances. Presentation materials are also not available to individuals participating by phone or who have limited bandwidth or browsing capabilities. He suggested looking into accessible hybrid or remote strategies to ensure robust and meaningful stakeholder engagement so the information provided is as accurate as possible so policy decisions are not based on faulty information.

Ms. Abwoon stated concern that initiatives and strategic plans begin from the community but change when they get to the county. Getting faulty information is problematic.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna stated the State Racial Equity Action Plan is a deliverable due by July 1, 2023, from the COVID-19 disparities funding. The plan is that it will be broad enough and yet specific enough for the whole state while providing flexibility for local jurisdictions. Some of the platforms being considered for added accessibility for grant applications can provide state best practices and guidance at the local level.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna stated the OHE will begin its strategic planning process next year and will use a variety of platforms and techniques to go slower and have a more thoughtful engagement.

Vice Chair Malekafzali stated the question about ranking activities and community engagement can be read differently depending on the group being queried. It is important to keep that in mind while analyzing the data.

Chair de Guia asked about next steps for data collection and where the AC might be able to weigh in again in the process.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna stated the data collection project is ongoing and continuous. A memo is currently being finalized and sent to the Secretary to inform the budget process. This memo will continue to get feedback from partners as it gets more specific around which areas to prioritize. This is long-term work that needs to be done better, more authentically, and in the right ways with available resources.

Deputy Director Radhakrishna stated the hope to get more specific around the relationship between the OHE and the AC at the next meeting. He stated the hope that he can send surveys out to AC Members without waiting for a quarterly meeting to get feedback. He suggested not only relying on quarterly meetings but calling meetings and forums to get feedback from partners and community-based organizations that are subject matter experts in particular areas to inform important issues.

Public Comment

Kiran Savage-Sangwan, Executive Director, California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN), thanked Deputy Director Radhakrishna for taking the time to speak to a group of community-based organizations. It is helpful and models some of the positive changes being made in the OHE and CDPH. The speaker agreed with the comments about improving accessibility.

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**11:00 a.m. Break**

**11:10 a.m. COVID-19 Updates from Community-Based Organizations**

**Presenters:**

- Weiyu Zhang, Community Advocacy Manager, California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
- Juliet Sims, Associate Program Director, Prevention Institute

Chair de Guia stated the OHE-AC will hear a presentation from representatives from the COVID-19 Public Health and Equity Collaborative. The collaborative, made up of the Prevention Institute, ChangeLab Solutions, and CPEHN, put together a joint report, which will be finalized next week, that shows the impacts of COVID-19 in California communities. She asked the representatives from the collaborative to give their presentations.

Juliet Sims, Associate Program Director, Prevention Institute, stated the report is titled *How California's Community-Based Organizations Filled the Gaps for Underserved Communities - Meeting the Needs of Racially and Ethnically Diverse Communities During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. She provided an overview, with a slide presentation, of the report trajectory, vision for equitable recovery, and challenges encountered by communities and community-based organizations during the pandemic.

Weiyu Zhang, Community Advocacy Manager, CPEHN, continued the slide presentation and discussed the interview methodology, community-based organizations that participated in the key informant interviews, the role of community-based organizations, how community-based organizations filled gaps in COVID-19 response, and recommendations to engage community resources and improve governmental infrastructure.

Discussion

Ms. Russell-Slavin stated her frustration that there continues to be no meaningful data on LGBTQ communities, even after going through this massive health crisis with laws in place in California.

Ms. Zhang stated COVID-19 testing data collection began later in 2020 for the LGBTQ population. She agreed that data is needed to better understand disparities.

Ms. Russell-Slavin stated the response to the COVID-19 pandemic was often to try to get funding out through existing funding streams and partners when these funding mechanisms continue to perpetuate inequities.

Ms. Sims agreed. This raises questions about why existing funding structures remain. She suggested looking at the role of intermediaries, organizations that have typically been used to get the funding out, organizations that are prepared to receive the funding, and nuanced issues longer-term. Now is the time for this issue to be scrutinized.

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Chair de Guia stated the collaborative expected the report to focus on how to improve food security and housing. Although those issues are important and the report does touch on them, what was found was the reasons why disparities and inequities continue to be seen is because of structural issues such as funding. She suggested reviewing the recommendations made in the report to see if there are things that the AC can encourage the CDPH and the OHE to do differently.

Ms. Abwoon stated she has issues with the term equity in the report. Data collection for American descendants of slaves (ADOS) is dismal. All BIPOC communities have different issues; issues experienced by the ADOS community have not been addressed. She asked how the data in the report focuses on the ADOS community.

Chair de Guia stated the report is limited by the populations interviewed. The recommendations given in the report are driven from the data collected. Some will be applicable to multiple groups but they are not universal.

Ms. Zhang stated the term BIPOC was used in the report to elevate a different historic context for Black and indigenous communities in California. The report is meant to start the conversation.

Mr. Ramirez stated something that stood out in the report is the evidence of how important equity and diversity in the workplace and the health force has been to communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lessons learned during the pandemic have been the importance of stakeholder engagement and the importance that community-based organizations have had in communities.

Public Comment

Stacie Hiramoto posted in the chat section that REMHDCO completed a report on how the CRDP member organizations dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic, which included recommendations. The report will be distributed upon CDPH approval.

Lazaro Cardenas, Racial and Health Equity Initiative Project Lead, OHE, posted in the chat section that the Office of the Attorney General is the state entity of the Assembly Bill (AB) 3121 Reparations Task Force. Past meeting information can be found at [oag.ca.gov/ab3121/meetings](http://oag.ca.gov/ab3121/meetings).

Daniel Toleran stated an earlier poll conducted by Deputy Director Radhakrishna indicated that the perception among participants was that they tend to be “clubby.” The speaker noted that this perfectly mirrors the three organizations of the COVID-19 Public Health and Equity Collaborative. The speaker agreed with Chair de Guia and the presenters that this is a limiting perspective. Investigation needs to be done in terms of changing all practices to be much more responsive to ensure that as many voices as possible can be included.

Chair de Guia stated a missing voice has been community-based organizations. On one hand, the report seems exclusive, but, on the other hand, it leverages current relationships and lifts up places where community-based organizations were stepping in to fill gaps and provide potential models for how the state might do things differently and

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to highlight what is not working well for communities. The collaborative has limited resources and worked within a limited timeframe.

**11:35 a.m. Role of CDPH/OHE in Housing**

**Presenter:**

- Meredith Lee, Health in All Policies Team Lead, OHE

Chair de Guia stated the OHE-AC will hear updates from OHE Health in All Policies program about housing work being done in the Department and potential future for CDPH in homelessness prevention. She asked staff to present this agenda item.

Meredith Lee, HiAP Team Lead, stated key questions are how to narrow the housing and homelessness issue so that public health, the state, and local health jurisdictions can have a measurable impact and how the OHE-AC can help in that process. She discussed current work and opportunities for future work within public health. She provided an overview, with a slide presentation, of the public health framework for reducing health inequities and potential upstream and downstream CDPH-related approaches to address housing and prevent homelessness. She stated BIPOC and LGBTQ communities are disproportionately represented in individuals experiencing homelessness. When discussing housing and homelessness, it is important to also discuss interventions.

Discussion

Chair de Guia invited Ms. Lee to present at the upcoming Subcommittee meeting on September 28<sup>th</sup> to dig deeper on the housing issue. She asked for more information on the housing moratorium.

Ms. Lee suggested the Housing is Key website, which is the best source of information on the housing moratorium, along with [tenantstogether.org](http://tenantstogether.org), [housing.ca.gov/tenant/protection](http://housing.ca.gov/tenant/protection), and [stayhousedla.org](http://stayhousedla.org).

**12:00 p.m. OHE Program Updates | Public Comment | Adjourn**

Chair de Guia asked AC Members to ask questions or make comments on OHE Program written updates circulated before the meeting. She asked the Unit Chiefs if there was anything to add to their written updates.

Ms. Lee stated the Advancing Community Equity Branch is actively recruiting a number of positions. She asked everyone to get the word out to help with the recruitment.

Jason Tescher, Chief, Gender Health Equity Unit (GHEU), OHE, stated the GHEU recently went through a strategic planning process. Details are posted on the website. A town hall was held in August; a second town hall will soon be scheduled.

Future Agenda Items

Chair de Guia asked for suggestions for future agenda items.

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Ms. Abwoon asked for information on how the medical/legal partnership preventing evictions is structured.

Ms. Lee stated she will send information to staff to distribute to AC Members. The crux of the problem is how to fund medical/legal partnerships.

Chair de Guia suggested a presentation on budget requests or funding that has gone into the state to try to prevent evictions and who is charged with keeping individuals housed.

Mr. Ramirez suggested exploring Deputy Director Radhakrishna's three priorities, how the AC can contribute to those efforts, and how they can be funded. He suggested having a conversation on the role of partners and providers in the private health sector, which tends to take away from the general sources for funding to fight equitable issues.

Ms. Julien spoke in support of the need for a unique discussion and effort on behalf of the ADOS community. She suggested having a discussion on structural racism, how it undergirds everything else, and how to operationalize and embed racial equity and health equity in the practice of public health.

Public Comment

Steve McNally stated the California legislator page report data is still good. Members of the public are rarely called to concrete action in meetings and yet action is what is needed. The speaker agreed with Mr. Ramirez in that, unless the funding mechanism is changed at the local level, it will be difficult for any CBO that works with communities to get funding through these complicated, cumbersome procurement systems. Someone must champion responsive funding mechanisms because California does not implement funding well. Rarely do people ask for system users or frontline workers to provide input. There may be a simple process step that does not require millions of dollars but only requires whoever manages that program to manage it better.

Adjourn

Chair de Guia thanked everyone for participating and ended the proceeding at 12:35 p.m.