



## 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 October 3, 2023

*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>

*In alignment with the California Department of Public Health, we will no longer report on COVID-19 case data. More people are now testing themselves at home for COVID-19 and we do not get data from at-home testing. This affects the accuracy of data on testing volume. We will continue to report on key indicators of COVID-19 severity and spread including [hospitalizations](#), [deaths](#), and [test positivity](#).*

## **DPH DRUG OVERDOSE AND TREATMENT DATA INFORMATIONAL DASHBOARD LAUNCHED**

On September 18, DPH launched the drug overdose and treatment data and reports [informational dashboard](#) to highlight and increase awareness of overdose and treatment trends in San Francisco.

The dashboard features the most recent available data related to substance use treatment and overdoses. This data helps guide the City's response to the fentanyl emergency. The dashboard will be updated on a monthly basis with [preliminary unintentional overdose death numbers](#) from San Francisco's Office of the Chief Medical Examiner by month and by year as well as [by race and ethnicity](#).

The dashboard includes the following:

- The amount of [naloxone distributed](#) by the DPH and our community partners,
- The number of [overdose-related 911 calls](#) received each week,
- The number of people accessing [residential treatment](#) and [withdrawal management](#) programs, and
- The number of [methadone](#) clients and [buprenorphine](#) clients by year.

## **WELCOMING LAGUNA HONDA HOSPITAL'S NEW DIRECTORS OF NURSING**

We are excited to announce that Laguna Honda Hospital (LHH) has hired two exceptional and exceptionally qualified leaders to join our executive team as our new Directors of Nursing.



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Tracey Brown and Michael Collins both have had remarkable careers in healthcare including extensive experience in skilled nursing facilities and long-term care. At LHH, they will fill roles that are essential to the restructured nursing organization that we have created in our transformation into a world class skilled nursing facility.

Each of them will be the chief nursing executive responsible for nursing in one of our two Towers: Tracey for the North Tower and Michael for the South Tower. They will be responsible for, and oversee, all operations planning, organization, direction, supervision, evaluation, and quality assurance and performance improvement of nursing services. They also will be responsible for building on the work of the organization for the past 18 months to implement continued improvements, ensure ongoing sustainability and compliance with all regulations, and monitor policies and procedures we put in place as part of our recertification efforts.

When they begin their duties on October 10, Tracey and Michael will report to Nursing Home Administrator-Chief Executive Officer Sandra Simon. This dual-Director structure aligns with industry standard best practices and, as we have demonstrated over the past several months, is the most appropriate structure for LHH. This structure endows each of them with the authority to maintain quality standards of care, and to advise the medical staff, department heads, and administrators in matters related to nursing service. These are key tasks to provide the best possible care to our residents, and to maintain the high functioning level that will maintain our certification in the long term.

We are grateful to LHH Nursing Directors Rowena Patel and Susan Duong who participated in a pilot of this traditional Skilled Nursing Facility leadership structure over the past several months and helped to validate the benefits of this structure at LHH. Susan and Rowena will continue to serve as LHH Nursing Directors with assigned areas of responsibility. We also thank Terry Dentoni who has served as the Interim Chief Nursing Officer for LHH since May 2022. Terry will remain with LHH, supporting Tracey and Michael's transition.

### **SF LAUNCHES CARE COURT FOR THOSE STRUGGLING WITH SERIOUS MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES**

As of October, San Francisco will be one of the first seven counties in California to implement the Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Act, a state law to help those with mental health disorders access wraparound care and stabilized housing. The CARE Act, which passed the State Legislature and was signed by Governor Newsom last year, includes a new civil court process that provides community-based behavioral health services to residents who are living with untreated schizophrenia or other psychotic disorders. While participation in the program is



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voluntary, it will provide another tool to engage those who are not currently seeking care.

[CARE Court](#) allows for a wide range of individuals who can make a referral or directly submit a petition for a client or loved one. This will remove barriers to care and allows first responders, family members, people who live with the respondent, and behavioral health providers, among others, to directly petition the court. If the person subject to the petition meets the qualification threshold, the Court will oversee the development of a CARE Plan for each individual. The plan will consist of holistic components, which can include treatment and housing plans. CARE Court participants may be eligible to receive prioritized housing placements and care by way of the State's Bridge Housing Grant, which has allocated \$32 million over four years towards new stabilizing housing options in the City.

Many people who would benefit from help may not recognize that they need it. CARE Court goes upstream prior to more restrictive conservatorships or incarceration. For example, persons can be referred to the program while they are under a 72-hour psychiatric hold, known colloquially as a "5150." Also, those in the conservatorship process or in the early stages of some criminal cases, can be diverted to CARE Court instead as a way to focus on behavioral health and get them into the right level of treatment. The participant will have a court-ordered CARE Plan or voluntary agreement for up to 12 months, with the possibility to extend for an additional 12 months, and the court will provide consistent oversight.

CARE Court is the result of a law championed by Governor Gavin Newsom to help address challenges in getting people with mental health and substance use issues into treatment. The law was passed last year, and the implementation date is set for October 1<sup>st</sup>. Over the last several months, the Mayor's Office, DPH, the City Attorney's Office, the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing (HSH), the Public Defender, the San Francisco Superior Court, and non-profit legal aid providers have worked to prepare for implementation. Starting on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, San Francisco will be ready to accept its first CARE Court petition.

### **Expanded Behavioral Health Support**

The CARE Court effort will be one of many interventions within the Behavioral Health system of care to support people with untreated mental health and substance disorders.



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During the last several years San Francisco has added over 350 new mental health and substance use disorder treatment beds to the 2,200 existing beds, and another 50 are in the pipeline. These beds range from withdrawal management (detoxing from substances), crisis stabilization for people experiencing a psychiatric emergency, intensive mental health and substance use disorder treatment, long-term residential care and support, and step-down care for people transitioning out of long-term treatment. On average, these beds are at 87% utilization and there is availability for new people to get placed daily.

DPH has added evening and weekend hours to the Behavioral Health Access Center, where anyone can walk in to access mental health and substance use disorder treatment. The City has also taken a comprehensive, multi-department approach to help people in crisis on our streets, coordinating Police, Fire, Emergency Management, Public Health, and Homelessness and Supportive Housing. San Francisco has also expanded street care teams to provide medical and behavioral health care to people experiencing homelessness in streets, parks, and encampments.

CARE Court is one of various efforts Mayor Breed has supported to provide services to people who are in the most desperate need of care, including Senate Bill 43. Under the Bill, which is awaiting signature by Governor Newsom, individuals could be compelled to treatment by adding severe substance use disorder as a basis for grave disability conservatorship.

More information about the CARE Act may be found at [chhs.ca.gov/care-act](https://chhs.ca.gov/care-act). For details on CARE Court, visit this link: <https://sf.courts.ca.gov/divisions/civil-division/care-court>.

### **DPH STAFFER APPOINTED AS REFUGEE HEALTH COORDINATOR FOR SF, SAN MATEO, AND MARIN COUNTIES**

DPH staff person Sammi Truong, MSW (she/her), has been appointed as the new Refugee Health Coordinator for San Francisco, San Mateo, and Marin counties and will oversee DPH's [Newcomers Health Program](#)'s Refugee Health Assessment services, partially funded by the CDPH Office of Refugee Health.

There are 11 Refugee Health County Coordinators across California, and we are pleased that Sammi is in this role for San Francisco as it highlights her exceptional work with the community.



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Sammi, raised by parents who came to the US as refugees, will build on her six years as the Clinical Services Coordinator role with DPH Newcomers Health Program to ensure equitable health care access, health assessments, and service linkage to newly granted refugees, asylees, and other federally supported immigrants in San Francisco.

### **12<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL DISEASE INTERVENTION SPECIALISTS RECOGNITION DAY**

Friday, October 6, 2023, will mark the 12th National Disease Intervention Specialists Recognition Day. Within DPH, the staff that conduct the critical work of case investigation, contact tracing, and partner services have many different titles, including Disease Intervention Specialists, Disease Control Investigators, LINCIS Navigators, and Health Workers. On October 6, we will celebrate and honor all of these remarkable team members. They are a core part of the backbone of public health in our city, and work tirelessly, compassionately, and sensitively to connect people to prevention services, medical care and treatment, provide important education about disease transmission and health, and gather critical public health data that inform citywide policies and interventions.

In addition to the crucial work done every day by Disease Intervention Specialists, in the past several years, they have also responded to COVID-19 and MPOX, capably rising to the challenge of new outbreaks and providing life-saving education, interventions, and contact tracing. We would like to use this opportunity to share our sincere gratitude to every Disease Intervention Specialist in our city. Their professionalism, commitment to equity, creativity, perseverance, and sensitivity have changed the lives of many San Franciscans for the better. Thank you San Francisco Disease Intervention Specialists for serving the community, and for your ingenuity, flexibility, empathy, and dedication!

### **PHEARLESS INITIATIVE**

On September 26<sup>th</sup>, DPH staffers Jenny Chacon, Isela Ford, and community partners (Instituto Familiar de la Raza and MEDA) were selected as one of 15 teams of rising public health and community leaders from around the country to participate in the inaugural cohort of the Public Health Regenerative Leadership Synergy (PHEARLESS) initiative. Supported by an investment of more than \$8.5 million from the Kresge Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the de Beaumont Foundation, the PHEARLESS initiative integrates regenerative leadership education and experiential learning with innovative collaborative tools that will help public health and community leaders build the skills they need to co-create sustainable solutions that advance health equity and well-being for all.

Through the 12-month PHEARLESS experience, comprised of four learning modules and a culminating capstone activity, participants will develop the mindset and skills to transform systems,



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structures and policies, in partnership with community, toward a just and equitable future. Each four-person team will receive a \$100,000 grant to support their activities. Congratulations to Jenny and Isela for being selected for this opportunity!

### COVID-19 UPDATE

As of 9/28:

- San Francisco's 7-day rolling average of COVID test positivity is 5.7% and there are 42 COVID hospitalizations.
- Eighty-eight percent of all SF residents have been vaccinated and 65% have received booster dose(s). Forty-two percent of residents have received a bivalent booster.

### [DPH in the News](#)