

# City of San Antonio



## Minutes

### Community Health Committee

2023 – 2025 Council Members

Chair: Teri Castillo, Dist. 5

Dr. Sukh Kaur, Dist. 1 | Phyllis Viagran, Dist. 3

Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, Dist. 4 | Marina Alderete Gavito, Dist. 7

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Monday, December 4, 2023

2:00 PM

City Hall

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The Community Health Committee convened a regular meeting in the City Hall Council Briefing Room beginning at 2:04 PM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

**Members Present:** Teri Castillo, *Chair*  
Dr. Sukh Kaur, *Member*  
Marina Alderete Gavito, *Member*

**Members Absent:** Phyllis Viagran, *Member*  
Dr. Adriana Rocha Garcia, *Member*

#### Approval of Minutes

1. **Approval of minutes from the Community Health Committee meeting on Thursday, October 26, 2023.**

Councilmember Kaur moved to Approve the minutes of the October 26, 2023 Community Health Committee meeting. Councilmember Alderete Gavito seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Castillo, Kaur, Alderete Gavito  
**Absent:** Viagran, Rocha Garcia

#### Public Comments

There were no members of the public signed up to speak.

#### Briefing and Possible Action on

**2. Overview of the Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) Control & Prevention Program at Metro Health** [Anita K Kurian, Deputy Director, Metro Health]

Dr. Anita K. Kurian, Deputy Director of Metro Health, provided an update on the Program. Kurian stated that there were 60 positions within the Communicable Diseases Division of the Epidemiology Program which was mostly grant funded for the team that tracked conditions with reporting from hospitals and other medical facilities. The staff also performed outreach, awareness and clinical activities. Kurian provided a flow chart of the Public Health Follow-up Process.

Kurian reported the 2023 STI cases compared to 2019 which was prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic including 14,084 cases of Chlamydia (a 64% increase), 6,749 cases of Gonorrhea (121% increase), 470 cases of Syphilis (85% increase), and 96 cases of Syphilis among newborns (16% increase). Kurian stated that rates for men and African Americans were higher than other populations.

According to Kurian, Metro Health's Healthy Beats Program provided prenatal case management including monthly follow up until the baby was born. Kurian stated that the Program also helped pregnant women access and maintain prenatal care and offered referral services for needs identified and ensured routine screening and treatment for Syphilis. Kurian reported that 1,450 of pregnant women had been enrolled in the Healthy Beats Program since its inception.

Kurian reported that Metro Health had conducted a Fetal Infant Morbidity Review – Congenital Syphilis (FIMR-CS) with enhanced reviews of Congenital Syphilis (CS). She recommended the creation of a Community Review Board (CRB) that would convene on a quarterly basis and used case summaries consisting of medical chart abstractions and maternal interviews to identify missed opportunities for disease intervention and barriers to medical care engagement that may have contributed to a CS.

According to Kurian, formulation of a Community Action Board (CAB) was in process to develop and implement strategies to address missed opportunities and identify barriers. Kurian concluded her presentation by providing a list of opportunities.

Chair Castillo thanked Metro Health for their work and asked if the clinics were accessible to minors. Kurian stated that the State of Texas allowed anyone over the age of 13 to access STI services without parental consent. Chair Castillo requested a breakdown of the ages of individuals with STIs. Kurian stated that most were aged 15-30 but that she would provide a report.

Chair Castillo suggested that the positive rates could be a result of more utilization of the clinics and mobile events and requested a report of the zip codes. Kurian stated that Metro Health targeted areas for the mobile clinic where the department was seeing higher rates of infection. Chair Castillo recommended targeted marketing and education.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito agreed that more marketing was needed.

Councilmember Kaur stated that she would have thought the STI incidents would have decreased during COVID, instead they increased. Councilmember Kaur asked about the significant increase in Syphilis. Kurian stated that Syphilis was often the “canary in the coal mine” as it was often the first illness to increase and led the others. Councilmember Kaur requested more information about tracking of sexual networks. Kurian stated that the Metro Health Team would ask those who were infected about their sexual partners so they could test and treat them as well. Kurian speculated that 25-30% of partners did not go to the

clinic.

Councilmember Kaur asked Kurian about hurdles to get the hospitals to test for STIs. Kurian stated that funding was a barrier and most of these programs were grant funded.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked what long term health issues there were for infants born with Syphilis noting that 96 cases was a large number. Kurian noted that 96 was the largest number ever reported and warned that the disease could cause blindness. Kurian noted that the City was a part of a clinical trial for a new sensitive test to diagnose when the baby was born because they were often asymptomatic. Councilmember Alderete Gavito supported trying to help make the services more available.

Chair Castillo suggested that the expansion of Medicaid should be on the legislative agenda and noted that the Reproductive Justice Fund could be used to help fund these initiatives. Chair Castillo requested information on access by Council District 5 residents and offered to use the City Council Project Fund (CCPF) to help incentivize testing.

The Item was for briefing purposes and no action was taken.

### **3. Arts Funding Guidelines for Nonprofits and Individual Artists [Krystal Jones, Director, Arts & Culture]**

Diana Hidalgo, Assistant Director of the Department of Arts & Culture, reported that the department managed seven different grant programs and the guidelines were updated every three years. She reported that the community input process included an online survey to gather input from July to September 2023, and that eight community feedback and review sessions were hosted between August 15, 2023 to September 15, 2023. Hidalgo stated that the feedback informed a new policy document that included all funding programs managed by the department.

Hidalgo reported that under the Base Operational Funding Grant, arts producing non-profits with a three-year history were funded using a scale based on the prior three-year average of total expenses. She indicated that the revised guidelines called for no decreases to currently funded organizations, opportunity for new organizations to apply annually rather than every three years and a three-year phase-in of new organizations.

Hidalgo noted that operational grantees that had a mission and programming to preserve, promote or enhance the cultures of Latino, African, American, Native American, Asian, Women and/or LGBTQIA+ cultures were eligible for additional funding under the Culturally Specific Program. According to Hidalgo, key changes would include the addition of Middle Eastern Culture as a new category, allowing new organizations to apply annually with new organizations to be phased-in over three years. She added that however, new organizations were required to have a three-year track record of mission and programming dedicated to showcasing the identity and cultural character of the specific community.

Hidalgo stated that grants for San Antonio artists to create and display new artworks were recommended to be updated to include increased grant amounts with tiered grants (\$7,500 for individual artists and \$15,000 individual artists and/or artist collectives and ensembles presenting a larger production) with a 12-month waiting period beginning in FY 2026 before being able to receive a grant. She stated that artist grantees would be ineligible for consecutive year funding to ensure their funded project was completed to allow others access to the grant and the program would add preference points for applicants with disabilities.

Hidalgo reported that Film Festival investments to further develop the local film culture and community in San Antonio would move to a three-year funding process and would be required to include at least one in-person industry workshop, panel discussion or presentation that would be open to the public and encourage film education, networking opportunities or workforce/professional development of the San Antonio film industry. Additionally, she noted that Film Festivals would need to make a good faith effort to engage with the program new work by San Antonio-based filmmakers. She indicated that the Film Festival Grant would award up to 20% of the festival's overall annual budget, with a maximum award of \$15,000.

Hidalgo recommended that the Committee approve the new Arts Grant Guidelines to be presented to City Council at the December 12, 2023 A Session.

Chair Castillo stated that her team had met with the West Side Arts Coalition and those organizations reported that these grants were very impactful.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito supported inclusion of Middle Eastern culture as culturally specific. She asked if the grants were funded by the Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT). Hidalgo replied that all grants were funded by the HOT at 15%.

Councilmember Kaur asked how the Public Art Program was different from the individual artist grants. Hidalgo stated that they were two separate programs and visual artists were eligible for both, however, performing artists could only qualify for the individual artist grants. She added that the individual artist grants were more flexible as far as the projects and locations that could be funded.

Councilmember Kaur recommended a large public art strategy and suggested that preference points could be provided for nontraditional locations. Hidalgo stated that artists proposing a project in an underserved or nontraditional location, would receive more points within the individual artist grants. Councilmember Kaur recommended a heat map of artwork for the panelist to refer. Hidalgo stated that the team had a comprehensive list of venues but they were always adding to the list.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito moved to recommend and forward the new Arts Funding Guidelines to the full City Council for consideration. Councilmember Kaur seconded the motion.

**Aye:** Castillo, Kaur, Alderete Gavito

**Absent:** Viagran, Rocha Garcia

**4. Briefing on COSA Programs Empowering and Supporting San Antonio Youth.** [Melody Woosley, Director, Department of Human Services]

Rebecca Flores, Education Program Administrator with the Department of Human Services (DHS), stated that there were 345,000 children in public school and our schools had a 91% graduation rate, however, 73% did not go to or graduate from college. Flores reported that the work around Youth Voice and Empowerment was nominated for an All American Cities Award. DHS Youth programs included work by the San Antonio Youth Commission, Ambassador Internship Program and the NXT LEVEL Youth Opportunity Center.

Chair Castillo commented that services for at-risk youth could help reduce crime and suggested that the Ambassador Program could be expanded through age 24, not only college students. Chair Castillo

suggested asking Delegate Agencies to participate in the Ambassador Program and noted that 40% of the participants in Ready to Work Program were under the age of 29. Chair Castillo recommended connecting youth that might need community service hours through Municipal Court with meaningful work.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito noted that getting into internships could be difficult and she liked the accessibility of the Ambassador Program. She supported the idea that Delegate Agencies should provide internships. Councilmember Alderete Gavito asked how many youth were unsheltered in San Antonio and suggested that more services were needed for them. Flores stated that the point-in-time survey tracked 160 youth and 20% of the 500 youth in the NXT LEVEL program were unhoused. She noted that it was difficult to get them housed. Councilmember Alderete Gavito requested more data on the unhoused youth.

Councilmember Kaur asked about the City's relationships with Greater SATX for their SA WORX Partnership High School Internship Program. Flores stated that the Human Resources Department managed the program. Councilmember Kaur requested a report on the utilization of both internship programs and recommended more outreach and information through methods that more youth used such as SnapChat and other social media as well as the website.

Councilmember Kaur requested information on the other resources available to youth. Flores stated that the partnerships were planned to be a part of the new website InternHub SA and San Antonio Community Resource Directory (SACRD).

Chair Castillo stated that she had visited some high schools to recruit for the SA Youth Commission and she noted that there was high interest once they learned about the work of the Commission. Chair Castillo commended the work of the SA Youth Commission to survey youth on mental health and recommended partnerships with UT Health. Jessie Higgins, Metro Health Chief Mental Health Officer, stated that telemedicine including psychiatric services were offered in high schools through Texas Child Health Access through Telemedicine (TTCHAT).

The Item was for briefing purposes and no action was taken.

**5. Older Adult Programming and Services [Melody Woosley, Director, Department of Human Services]**

Melody Woosley, Director of the Department of Human Services (DHS), provided an overview of the programs offered by the department as well as partnerships with other agencies. Woosley reported that older adults age 60 and above comprised 17.4% of the population, of those, many were still in the workforce, 27% lived alone, 45% could not access a home computer and 29% self reported that they were living in poverty.

Woosley stated that the 2019 Senior Services Strategic Plan which aligned along World Health Organization (WHO) Age Friendly Cities Network included rebranding the senior centers, enhancing equity based programming, increased social and financial services, extended service hours, enhanced health and wellness services and diversification of meal options and integration of age- friendly policies citywide.

Woosley reported that DHS operated 12 comprehensive senior centers throughout the City with another planned to open in November 2024 in Heritage Park and there were 33 Nutrition Centers. She stated that older adult programming included opportunities for recreation, education, support services and food security. Woosley listed multiple community collaborations and partnerships.

Woosley concluded her presentation by noting that expansion of volunteer opportunities, promotion of employment opportunities, expansion of access to senior centers, increased use of community services and implementation of the San Antonio Volunteer Exemption for Seniors (SAVES) Pilot Project to help pay city property taxes were FY 2024 priorities.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito suggested outreach to senior centers at Opportunity Home public housing to provide educational programs to help them deal with scams and other issues. Woosley stated that DHS provided congregate meals to those Opportunity Home senior living facilities but offered to partner with the public housing authority more.

Councilmember Kaur noted that Kenwood Center was not shown on the map of Comprehensive Centers and she expressed support for the improvements that were currently being made to the Kenwood Center. Woosley reported that the Kenwood Center was previously a part time site but was planned to become a comprehensive site.

Councilmember Kaur requested data and metrics on the San Antonio Volunteer Exemption for Seniors (SAVES) Program. Woosley stated that DHS began enrollement in November 2023 and had 14 enrolled with a capacity of 200 people who could receive a \$400 credit at \$7.25 per hour of volunteer work. Woosley stated that seniors in the SAVE Program typically served in the senior center near their home. Councilmember Kaur suggested that direct mail might be the most effective outreach method for senior citizens.

Chair Castillo reported that the seniors have commented on how good the food was at the senior centers. Chair Castillo asked if some of the requirements could be relaxed to increase access such as including individuals that did not own their homes outright but were making payments. Woosley stated that the concern was to subsidize an asset that could be repossessed. Chair Castillo suggested pairing the Home Rehab Program with SAVES.

The Item was for briefing purposes and no action was taken.

## **Adjournment**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:56 p.m.

**Approved**

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*Teri Castillo, Chair*

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*Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk*