

Healthcare Equity Advisory Council

Tuesday, May 20, 2025

MINUTES

Community Voting Members Present

Alejandra Valencia – Co-Chair
Hugo Tapia
Juana Zaragoza
Kimberly Kelley
Dr. Liz Diaz-Querol
Yvonne Gutierrez

Community Voting Members Absent

Emily Bridges
Kimberly Cofield
Bianca Farmer
Jacqueline Avena
Martha Shapiro
Tess Allen

Interpreter

Theresa Allen

Attendees

Amy Towner
Andrew Berner
Dr. Vikram Kumar
Connie Moreno-Peraza
Sarah Garcia
Selfa Saucedo
Dr. Minako Watabe
Jorge Mejia

Administrative Voting Members Present

Dr. Theresa Cho – Co-Chair
Dr. John Fankhauser
Kristina Swaim
Lizeth Barretto
Dr. Loretta Denering
Rigoberto Vargas

Administrative Voting Members Absent

Shannon Burke
Deanna Handel

Minutes

Andrew Berner

Grissel Marquez
Martha Garcia
Luis A Gonzalez
Armando Vargas
Lupé Reyes-Castillo
Cynthia Salas
Kristinna Swilling

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:37 p.m. by co-chair, Alejandra Valencia.

2. ROLL CALL

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: February 18, 2025, meeting minutes were reviewed.

ACTION: Upon a motion made by Hugo Tapia, seconded by Kimberly Kelly, the February 18 minutes were approved as submitted.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR AGENDIZED ITEMS & ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Lupé Reyes-Castillo, a community member, shared comments about immigrant populations being targeted in our communities. Would like to know where the Council is on this issue, what services are

being provided and how soon can we start?

Cynthia Salas, a community member, shared comments about the need to assess the mental health impacts the current state of uncertainty is having on the community.

5. INTRODUCTIONS

Introduction of Alejandra Valencia

This is Alejandra's first meeting attending as the co-chair and is looking forward to collaboration and dialogue with the community.

Introduction of Dr. Vikram Kumar, Dr. Theresa Cho

Dr. Kumar is HCA's Ambulatory Care CEO and comes to us from Riverside County where he worked as the Chief Information Officer at Riverside University Health System.

Introduction of Andrew Berner

Andrew will take Erin Fink's place on the Council and will be responsible for tonight's minutes.

6. EXECUTING ON OUR CHARTER. Discussion led by Theresa Cho, MD

Theme 1: Outreach and Communication

Challenge: Ensuring continued patient access and welcoming marginalized communities amidst misinformation and fear.

Discussion Summary: Participants emphasized shifting outreach to the community using new platforms, tailoring messages to end-users, and identifying trusted sources to build trust. The importance of word-of-mouth was highlighted, along with exploring social media and collaborating with CBOs and influencers.

Next Steps:

- Explore new platforms and methods for community outreach.
- Identify trusted community sources and influencers.
- Tailor communication to the end-user.
- Consider compiling a list of CBO contact information.
- Integrate new PIOs into communication discussions.
- Assess the effectiveness of current communication efforts.
- Consider collaborating with trusted individuals on social media.

Theme 2. Delivery of Care:

Challenge: Ensuring continued access to care and addressing anxieties.

Discussion Summary: It was noted that many clinics are Federally Qualified Health Centers providing comprehensive care, with concerns about costly outcomes if care is delayed. The group discussed the availability of telehealth (especially for immigration-related concerns, as immigration status isn't tracked) and the co-location of staff with CBOs.

Next Steps:

- Continue to offer and encourage telehealth services.
- Continue monitoring relevant metrics.
- Continue co-locating staff with CBOs.

Theme 3. Internal Messaging and Training:

Challenge: Ensuring staff are comfortable and can effectively communicate the organization's stance.

Next Steps:

- Explore additional training opportunities for staff.

Theme 4. Return of Sub-Committees:

Discussion Summary: There were mixed views on past sub-committees, with some finding them valuable for connection and others deeming them counterproductive. The group discussed revisiting the idea of forming new sub-committees, potentially for areas like social media content, to assess their value.

Next Steps:

- Further discussion is needed to determine the need and purpose of new sub-committees (e.g., social media content).

7. MEMBER COMMENTS AND CALL FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEM(S)

Ventura County Behavioral Health update from Dr. Loretta Denering, Director. VCBH has been awarded \$93,760,044.27 in funding from the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) through Proposition 1's Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP) Round 1: Launch Ready funds. The competitive grant will support the development of three major behavioral health projects that will expand access to care throughout the region: the Lewis Road Mental Health Rehabilitation Center (MHRC), the East County Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU), and the East County Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF).

Ventura County Public Health update from Rigoberto Vargas, Director. VCPH is close to releasing its health equity action plan. Public Health has also scheduled a 40-hour interpreter training course with our level 3 staff with Jorge Mejia.

Ventura County Ambulatory Care update from Dr. Vikram Kumar, CEO. VC Ambulatory Care continues to do well with quality of care, and we have opportunities to improve access. We Ambulatory Care is focused on making sure patients can be seen on time for both primary and specialty services. Geography is also on our radar along with improving retention and patient satisfaction.

VCMC and Santa Paula Hospital update from Dr. John Fankhauser, CEO. The hospitals are always working to make our spaces safe for everyone regardless of immigration status.

8. CALL FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEM(S)

Presentation of clinic data and patient populations that HCA serves. (Requested by Hugo Tapia).

Return of sub-committees. (Requested by Dr. Cho).

Legislative updates. (Requested by a community member).

Introduction of Ventura County Health Care Agency PIO and Assistant PIO. (Requested by Dr. Cho).

Upcoming meetings of the HEAC scheduled for the third Tuesday of every other month. The next meeting is scheduled for July 17, 2025.

9. ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 6:58 pm.