

**OKANOGAN COALITION FOR HEALTH IMPROVEMENT (CHI)**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**APRIL 30, 2020**

**AGENDA:**

- **COVID-19 Public Health plan as economic activity returns:** Okanogan County Public Health
- **Communication strategies with Spanish-only speakers:** Jesus Hernandez, Family Health Centers
- **Hospital plans and updates:** Scott Graham, Three Rivers Hospital; Alan Fisher, Mid-Valley Hospital; John McReynolds, North Valley Hospital
- **NCACH funding and community building opportunities:** Mariah Brown, NCACH
- **Contact tracing, local best practice example:** Confederated Tribes of Colville Reservation
- **Housing information and resources:** Nancy Nash Mendez, Okanogan Housing Authority
- **CHI Seat on NCACH Board:** Michelle Sandoval

**MEETING NOTES:**

**1. COVID-19 Public Health plan as economic activity returns:  
Laurie Jones**

- Washington State is trying to establish a data-driven approach to social distancing with the collaboration of many others such as the Governor, local healthcare providers, and the Department of Health.
- WA State has taken a proactive approach to covid-19; we were able to recognize early that there was a problem and in turn put safety measures in place long before others in the state.
- WA State disease modeling data is important for each community to track. The Secretary of Health is working on developing specific disease metrics for Okanogan County.
- Like many other areas we lack sufficient testing across the county. Confluence and Family Health Centers have received some testing kits.
- The rest of the state is decreasing in case numbers but there are concerns in the Puget Sound area, as they are seeing roughly 200 new cases per day.

- Okanogan County disease rate started out slow, but we had a steadily increasing number of cases between March 13th and April 30th. 26 confirmed cases may not sound like a lot, but we know that number can double rapidly and we need to monitor our local data carefully.
- Some community members are foregoing safety precautions such as social distancing – we saw this at the most recent protest at the commissioners office. This is very concerning for public health.
- Each week public health continues to learn more about covid-19. They have learned that not everyone who has tested positive had fevers, shortness of breath or a cough. It can be as subtle as a sore throat; loss of taste or smell is one of the most common indicators public health is seeing. Some folks feel completely fine and others feel terrible, everyone responds differently.
- Public health is working closely with hospitals to ensure we have adequate beds and healthcare staffing.
- Today Okanogan has distributed around 700 tests, which is still an inadequate number. We need to make sure we have access to masks and we need to do more contact tracing. Contact tracing is similar to investigating and involves working with a positive covid-19 patient to retrace their steps/interactions with others for the two weeks prior to testing positive.
- In the event of a second surge of folks testing positive for covid-19, public health will need volunteers to help with contact tracing. Many community members have reached out to volunteer. Public health is looking into creating video trainings on “how to do contact tracing” for volunteers, they also have new technology coming to the surface (Health Space) that can help monitor and check in on folks who are in isolation from a digital device.
- Volunteers would be immediately identifying people with covid-19 and contact them, support their isolation, check in daily to make sure they have essential items. The goal is to provide them with the things they need in order to keep them in isolation.
- Ways we can stay safe: encourage businesses to provide a plan for a safe reopening, keep vulnerable folks working from home, insist workers and customers wear masks. Help make sure businesses have the information and tools for a safe reopen. Take personal responsibility for prevention.

## **2. Contact tracing, local best practice example: Confederated Tribes of Colville Reservation**

- Presenter was not on the zoom call. CHI will send follow-up

### **3. Communication strategies with Spanish-only speakers: Jesus Hernandez, CEO Family Health Centers**

- FHC has increased their utilization of bilingual and bicultural staff and healthcare providers.  
Last year FHC purchased a mobile clinic, which has helped them have a broader reach to folks in the community.
- FHC has a great collaboration with Work Source, together they are gearing up to take care of growers and workers. They anticipate that testing is going to be crucial for ag workers and want to make this a quick and easy process for them. There is also collaboration with hospitals and growers directly.
- FHC has a call with the Director of Agriculture to share our concerns and inquire about their efforts to keep workers safe. We will be asking for any specific guidance or instructions for the industry.
- Okanogan will need more cloth masks for workers; right now Okanogan Community Coalition has been providing FHC with masks, which has been very helpful.
- FHC has heard a desire from other community organizations to get involved in supporting ag workers. Currently they are working to establish their own strong connection with them but will assess how others can also lend support and will follow up with organizations regarding that information soon.
- FHC is looking into resources to produce an informational spanish speaking radio station. This will be available for streaming online and will be utilized for more than just covid-19 updates in the future. Their hope is to better disperse information regarding resources and safety recommendations to our spanish-only speaking population as soon as possible.
- Reminder to other organizations to make all publicly available information regarding covid-19 available in a spanish as well.

### **4. Hospital plans and updates:**

- Scott Graham, CEO of Three Rivers Hospital: The Hospital has received some financial support from the government and are able to continue offering healthcare services with sufficient cash-on-hand for now. They have strong staffing and haven't had to entertain the idea of laying folks off. The levy to fund the hospital has passed.
- Alan Fisher, CEO of Mid-Valley Hospital: Facing a 1 million dollar shortfall in revenue calculation, however we have received over 5 million in funds, though much of these are loans that will need to be repaid and they are trying not to use that funding. They are fairly stable financially, given the circumstances. The hospital is getting great support from legislators and are very thankful for that.

- “Get Care When You Need It” – Mid Valley is participating in a statewide campaign that is encouraging people to come in for clinical and emergency visits still. Data is showing that people are waiting to come in and this is causing their condition to become more severe before seeking help. Their goal is to inform people about what to expect when they come in the door – let them know how this hospital is working to keep healthcare providers and patients safe. They now have a video called “What to expect for a laboring patient who is covid positive, and one who isn’t covid positive.” They’ve had 25 deliveries this April.
- John McReynolds, COO of North Valley Hospital: Hospital has an aging care facility connected to its main hospital and are not allowing visitations to ensure the population remains safe. Because North Valley has a unique service for vulnerable aging adults, positive COVID patients will be hospitalized at either Mid-Valley or Three Rivers (not North Valley) Hospital.
- Hospitals are not reusing masks at this time and are providing staff with the PPE they need, there is no need for staff to bring their own.

## **5. North Central Accountable Communities of Health (NCACH) funding and community building opportunities: Sahara Suval**

- Special covid-connected newsletter that went out for the community in collaboration with Okanogan Public Health and Okanogan PUD.
- “Hello Neighbor” postcards have been circulating around the community to help identify folks who may need extra assistance during this time of covid.
- NCACH helped with the production and distribution of handmade personal protective equipment.
- NCACH has a special opportunity for local youth to get involved with spreading community information about covid-19: Co-Video Contest. They are seeking video submissions from local k-12 students showing one or more ways to stop the spread of covid-19, and will be giving out prizes (chromebooks, airpods, apple watches, etc.). Accepting video submissions until May 15<sup>th</sup>.
- NCACH has launched a community support fund of \$150,000 and will be giving out awards of up to \$5,000 to community groups, schools, and non-profits for projects and initiatives that are helping promote our community staying home and staying healthy. Accepting applications and funding them until May 29<sup>th</sup>.

## **6. Housing information and resources: Nancy Nash**

- Presenter was not on the zoom call, CHI will send more information

## **7. Okanogan CHI seat on NCACH Board: Michelle Sandoval**

- There is an open board seat on the NCACH to represent the Okanogan County CHI. The CHI has four nominees who are moving forward in running for this position: Stacey Oakey, Melody White: Family Health Centers, Crystal Eshelman and Lisa Apple.
- Voting will take place via survey monkey. Michelle will send out a link along with the charter agreement. Those who have not signed the membership agreement, the CHI encourages you to do so. Only members who have signed the charter will have their vote counted.