



RESILIENT LOUISIANA COMMISSION

CO-CHAIR DON PIERSON

CO-CHAIR TERRIE STERLING

Healthcare and Human Services Task Force

May 12, 2020

Meeting called to order at 3:00 PM CDT

Task Force Members Present

- Veneeth Iyengar (Co-Chair)
- Randy Morris (Co-Chair)
- Terrie Sterling (ex-officio)
- Todd Stevens
- Dr. Lester Wayne Johnson
- Scott Wester
- Warner Thomas
- Greg Feirn
- Steve Udvarhelyi
- Teddy Price
- Demetrious Porche
- Lisa Bruhl
- Clay Countryman
- Renee McCuller
- Edgardo Tenreriro
- Richard Vath

Guest Speaker

Dr. Alex Billioux

I. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Veneeth Iyengar at 3:00 p.m. A roll call indicated that a quorum was present to conduct official business of the task force.

II. Task Force Discussion

Mr. Iyengar led the discussion of the task force members to discuss the tasks presented on behalf of Governor John Bel Edwards. In response to the pandemic, Governor Edwards has called for the state to increase testing and to implement a contact tracing system to account for all positive cases. The Governor has challenged the task force with addressing the needs of the state's workforce by addressing immediate and emergent concerns.

The task force meeting was opened by Dr. Alex Billioux, the Assistant Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health, who discussed the state's progress throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

Dr. Billioux stressed the importance of public-private partnership in Louisiana's response and recovery efforts.

In regards to reopening, the task force continued their discussion on the concerns of the implementation of contact tracing and testing systems, as well as how to build resiliency through the integration of existing systems.

III. Contact Tracing

Contact tracing tracks down anyone who might have been infected by a person who was recently diagnosed so those contacts can quarantine themselves and prevent further spread.

The state currently has two call centers that can be used for contact tracing, and is in the process of establishing a third; LDH is examining other states to establish best practices as we move forward.

LDH is looking to have 215 contact tracers by the end of the week and currently has over 5,000 resumes to process. Contact tracers will engage in training featuring curricula from institutions such as John Hopkins.

As the state transitions to Phase One, the task force is concerned that contact tracing will prove nearly impossible with the drastic increase of contact and community transmission.

IV. Testing

The task force has concluded that the key to a successful contact tracing system is an effective, statewide, testing infrastructure.

The task force recommends focusing testing efforts on vulnerable populations; individuals with underlying conditions and comorbidities, communities with low testing numbers, and those over 65 years old.

Many residents are seeking antibody test in an effort to see if they have contracted the virus at any point during the pandemic—studies show these tests are not effective in this capacity—the task force recommends conducting antibody testing on confirmed positive cases to study the relationship in the data.

The task force recommends integrating the Louisiana Department of Health’s testing initiative with employers across the state to limit the spread of the virus and create a stronger contact tracing infrastructure, as employers fill a key role in contact identification.

It is noted that the Louisiana Department of Health is looking to allocate resources for deployable testing units.

V. Healthcare

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, healthcare providers have noticed a downward trend in patients seeking medical care. It is critical for government leaders and healthcare providers to continue to communicate the need for regular care.

Due to mitigation efforts, the task force anticipates innovation and procedural change in the medical field. A heavy reliance on telemedicine, when possible, is anticipated in the future.

The implementation of telemedicine requires technical training of the existing workforces and technical training for upcoming generations of employees.

Telemedicine, while effective, can widen the existing gap in healthcare access and disparity.

Those without access to service or smart devices could be limited in the care they receive. The task force recommends a statewide broadband increase, ideally 5G, to increase healthcare accessibility to those residing in rural parts of Louisiana.

In order for our state to transition, it is critical for our healthcare system to increase their patient capacity in order to prepare for an influx of patients, whether due to the coronavirus or a future disaster. The task force recommends tightly integrating the partnership of the state and healthcare providers to collaborate in improving healthcare capacity and protocol.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.