



Hospitals and Clinics Administration

May 20, 2021

TO: Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors
Jeffrey V. Smith, M.D., J.D., County Executive

FROM: Paul E. Lorenz, Chief Executive Officer
Santa Clara Valley Medical Center

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Paul Lorenz
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SUBJECT: Board Referral on Valley Homeless Healthcare Program's Vaccinations and Testing

Under advisement from the March 23, 2021, Board of Supervisors meeting (Item No. 11), this memorandum provides information on three separate items: 1) alignment of VHHP practices with recent CDC guidelines, 2) strategies to address vaccine hesitancy, and 3) communication with city partners related to VHHP's vaccination efforts.

Alignment of VHHP practices with recent CDC guidelines

Vice President Ellenberg requested that Administration provide an off-agenda report relating to the potential need to align VHHP practices with recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance regarding COVID-19 testing of unhoused populations and congregate site residents.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to update its guidance on testing frequency in congregate settings and the unhoused community as more data emerges and plans to revise guidelines as more people become fully vaccinated. At this time, the CDC recommends that the testing frequency and response testing follows the data on the community transmission level. Santa Clara County is considered to be in the "moderate" transmission level by the CDC, therefore they are recommending that regular active surveillance testing continues, and the same quarantine/isolation placement and response testing that we have been providing throughout the pandemic remain in place.

Strategies to Address Potential Vaccine Reluctancy

Vice President Ellenberg requested that Administration provide an off-agenda report to the Board relating to the VHHP COVID-19 vaccination refusal rate and strategies to address potential reluctance to vaccinate.

In a recent Homeless Patient Satisfaction Survey conducted in April, when asked if patients had/would get a COVID-19 vaccine and why, out of 150 respondents, 85% said yes, citing safety



reasons for themselves and others. The 15% of respondents who said no generally felt they were healthy without the vaccine, and a few expressed ambivalence as well as not having enough information to make a decision on vaccination.

VHHP has implemented several strategies to address potential vaccine hesitancy. One of these strategies is to provide extensive vaccine education and outreach to individuals in encampments. From working in the field, VHHP vaccine teams have found that some encampments have “chiefs” who strongly discourage the vaccine and have told others not to get the vaccine. The Outreach teams have provided vaccine information and outreach to the “chiefs” in an attempt to dispel the myths related to vaccine safety. Educational materials and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on vaccine safety and efficacy have been created specifically for the homeless community. These materials have been widely distributed to both congregate shelters and encampments. The vaccine teams have also found that when they return to the same site multiple times, the acceptance rate increases. VHHP believes that this is due to clients seeing more and more of their encampment neighbors getting vaccinated that they end up wanting the vaccination as well.

Additionally, VHHP’s service delivery model of meeting clients where they are is at the core of VHHP’s work. This is true in the way that VHHP delivers care through its Mobile Medical Units and Backpack Medicine Program and is particularly true when it comes to vaccinations. By deploying the VHHP vaccine teams that bring the vaccines to the clients at the shelters, encampments and wherever they are staying, it has greatly reduced the access barrier to the vaccine. Those who may have been undecided about the vaccine have ended up getting the vaccine because the vaccine team was at the shelter or encampment site with vaccines on hand and ready to be administered. The vaccine team received client comments such as, “I wasn’t going to make an appointment, but since you are here and it fell in my lap, I will get the vaccine.”

Lastly, to provide the vaccinations at the time the client requests it, VHHP has scheduled the vaccine team to follow the Backpack Medicine team on the same day that the Backpack Medicine goes out to encampments to provide medical care. Because the Backpack Medicine team knows the encampment clients quite well, the Backpack Medicine team will ask clients if they would like to get the vaccine as the vaccine team is trailing behind on the same route through the encampment doing the vaccinations. Clients often have a trusted rapport with the Backpack Medicine provider and the Backpack provider is able to initiate the vaccination discussion before the vaccine team arrives. If the client agrees to the vaccination, the Backpack Medicine Team lets the client know that the vaccine team is on their way to administer the vaccine. This staggering of the two teams has worked out well as it allows clients to hear directly from their trusted provider about the vaccines before the vaccine team arrives to administer the vaccines.



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Partnering with City Departments Related to VHHP's Vaccination Efforts

Supervisor Chavez requested that Administration communicate in writing or provide a presentation or presentations to city partner housing departments relating to the VHHP vaccination process.

On April 2, 2021, VHHP provided a presentation on our vaccination efforts at the biweekly Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) meeting organized by the Office of Supportive Housing. Attendees at the meeting included housing department staff from cities throughout Santa Clara County, Housing Authority, SV@Home, and Destination Home. VHHP will attend this meeting periodically to provide vaccination updates as needed.

Cc: Chief Board Aides
Miguel Marquez, Chief Operating Officer
James Williams, County Counsel
Megan Doyle, Clerk of the Board