

## **Meeting Notes**

Serena Muhammad starts the meeting by introducing our first speakers for today, Steering Committee Members Aimee Wehmeier and Julia Ho to discuss recent challenges in relation to Vaccine Distribution. Later in our conversation we will hear from Dr. Fredrick Echols from the City of St. Louis Department of Health, Spring Schmidt from the St. Louis County Department of Public Health, Debra Moore from St. Clair County and Brenda Fedak of the St. Clair County Health Department.

Aimee Wehmeier with Paraguard and RRT Steering Committee Member starts the conversation by raising the issue of vaccination access for individuals with disabilities and senior citizens within the community. A major issue being registering for the vaccination as it relates to technology. There is currently a low supply of vaccinations in our region but once we do have more, those same individuals are going to face the challenge of having transportation to receive these vaccinations. This could be very difficult if not impossible especially for those who are homebound. There would almost need to be some way for healthcare professionals to visit the homes of these individuals in order to distribute the vaccine.

Julie Ho with Mutual Aid and RRT Steering Committee Member speaks on the audience their organization supports which are individuals who are unhoused, undocumented or do not qualify for many community programs. Julie also summarizes the current challenges are, Transportation, Technology and Transient. Julie reiterates that many people do not have transportation or simply physically cannot leave their homes. There are also many people that do not have access to a computer, do not have internet access or simply are not tech savvy. Lastly, those who are transient and are constantly moving or their phone number is frequently changing. We need to find a way to stay in contact with those people to get them the resources they need for the vaccination.

Katie Kaufmann introduces Dr. Fredrick Echols to share some St. Louis City Health Department updates.

Dr. Fredrick Echols starts by sharing some challenges that we have been facing for most vulnerable populations which are homebound and elderly individuals. The City of St. Louis has been working with St. Louis Area on Aging as they have a list of individuals in the region facing these exact challenges. They use a voice message system to reach these individuals and share recent updates. As of this past week they sent a voice message to their list of 4,000 people to contact them to register them for the vaccination. There is a dedicated staff person to register these individuals. As well additional staff/interns that can reach out to the individuals' caregivers to figure out the resources they have to get them both registered for the vaccine and

get to a vaccine location if eligible. Early discussions have been started with healthcare partners to see if we can leverage resources between public health and the health care system to implement a home visitation program where either EMS or another platform could deliver the vaccine to homebound individuals. The plan is to map those individuals out and roll out the distribution in an efficient manner. We are working with the State to make sure funds from the CDC and FEMA are allocated for those that lack IT Services and are homebound. The supply of vaccine continues to be a challenge, but the State has reported additional vaccines are coming with 900 doses each week. This should all start in the next few weeks and when that information is available the RRT will be updated.

Katie introduces Spring Schmidt for St. Louis County Department of Public Health updates.

Spring Schmidt shares updates on the limited amount of vaccines and the challenges in distribution. Contracts have been made with ambulance district in St. Louis County to provide mobile vaccinations to elderly communities, disabled individuals and those who are homebound. There was a struggle in the early rollout in the technology needs for seniors but there have been many volunteers to help with the average of 7,000 calls per day for the vaccine registration. Springs feels as if a call center would not be ideal for this but instead working with community providers to facilitate these calls. St. Louis County did not receive any vaccines from the State for three weeks. Spring was informed on Tuesday that there will be more vaccines available in the coming weeks. Spring shares that no one should be charged for the vaccination. However, if you do have insurance it can be billed, and it does help with the funding.

Katie introduces Brenda Fedak and Debra Moore for Illinois and St. Clair County updates.

Brenda shares that the National Guard is helping to run a vaccination site at the Fairground with up to 1,000 people per day getting vaccinated. They started with a call center to help seniors and it was quickly overwhelmed. The call center is at max capacity, so they are looking to expand the call center and add more people and more phone lines. They have Bi-State and Metro helping to provide transportation to and from the Fairground Vaccination Site. ATS has launched free transportation to those who have an appointment to receive the vaccination. As the vaccine becomes available, they will have more troops from the National Guard to help facilitate the site. There are plans to go out into the community for in home vaccinations as well.

Katie shares the questions if Illinois is only vaccinating those Illinois residents or can Missouri residents drive to Illinois to receive the vaccination.

Brenda shares they are only vaccinating Illinois residents at this time. Individuals from Missouri have registered in Illinois but right now they are focusing on those within the State.

Debra Moore shares that there are two independent health departments in St. Clair County. One serves a couple townships East St. Louis, where there is a concentration of the minority and underserved population. Of the over 2,000 vaccines administered about 98.5% have been

distributed to that minority community. Director, Elizabeth Patton has established vaccination events, she has worked with pastors from the minority community to speak in front of their congregation and share that they have received the vaccine. There are also vaccination sites in the local high school, so educators have begun to get vaccinated as well. Starting this week, the department is working on homebound individuals. It's a complex issue but they are working with Age Smart a local senior services organization and St. Clair County Transit District to get seniors to and from the sites.

Katie shares that RRT is not taking a stance on encouraging people to get vaccinated but getting information out so that community members can make the best decision for themselves and their family members. There are many community partners working together to get as much information out as possible and sharing resources on how to make an informed choice. Katie introduces our next speaker, Director of the United Way Volunteer Center, Katelind Hosie.

Katelind starts by sharing the website United Ways Volunteer Center Website, [www.stlvolunteer.org](http://www.stlvolunteer.org) where non-profits, health departments and government agencies can create an account and post their volunteer needs. They are currently working with the Jefferson County Health Department to request volunteers for their call center to register people for the vaccine. If you have volunteer needs the United Way will help to create an online profile to recruit volunteers find a centralized place to keep track of volunteers.

Serena shares questions from the chat. Is there an effort to increase the coordination between the registration process for the local health department and the State system?

Spring shares that there not an integration between the systems. The State built their system almost a month after local healthcare systems were already running so individuals had to re-register with the State. There is not a shared registration locally, but the State registration just went live this week.

Paul Sorenson of UMSL shares that there are layers of challenges, from the State and the local systems not in communication. Paul asks the group if it would be helpful to have an additional place to navigate the other registration sites you would need to go to in the absence of any connected registrations systems? People in the chat expressed yes. The challenge arises that the system is very complicated to navigate to those who are tech savvy and speak in English. Therefore, it is extremely challenging for those who are not. As well as the fact that it's not in different languages, so a translator is needed.

Serena revisits the conversation for those that are part of the homebound population. Is there a need to coordinate to find the resources for this population?

Dr. Echols shares that we are in the early stages of in-home vaccine distribution and we are taking our time to make sure the plan is executed properly. For those third-party organizations that would like to use their personal network to help facilitate this, please email [health@stlouismo.gov](mailto:health@stlouismo.gov) or call (314) 657-1499.

Serena shares that it's important to know what happens with the Health Department so that we as organizations and institutions can jump in and help if we know someone within our network that could provide some sort of assistance in the process.

Katie introduces Consultant Courtney Mueller from Vector Communications for a RRT Communication's poll and update.

Courtney shares a poll to the group to get a vote on the best medium for information sharing for COVID-19 resources. This information includes vaccine distribution, informed choice information and facts/data that can be shared as a resource to clients or your organization. The poll results showed that, Information for Vaccine Distribution, Equitable information and Informed Choice materials is the most requested information. The best way to share this information would be via email blasts and website updates.

Katie concludes the meeting.