

Latinx Community COVID-19 Response

May 18, 2020 - Meeting Minutes

Minnesota Department of Education

Commissioner Mary Cathryn Ricker

<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/about/cmsh/>

- MDE overview: MDE is a unique state agency—indirectly support 900,000 students in state. 530 public school districts and charter schools. 165 charter schools.
- Overview of implementation of distance learning and support to students
 - Student care plan for schools: In 1st 6 weeks of distance learning, delivered over 12 million meals to students across the state and over 6000 students per day are being cared for in critical care sectors across the states
 - Teachers had 8 days to design distance learning plans.
 - Working to provide guidance and professional development to our schools to address accommodations our students need and that we anticipated being needed--- accommodations include: language services, additional needs
 - Worked to present equitable distance learning plans to students on March 30.
- Grading system/additional recommendations:
 - restricting grading system to make sure we were measuring progress students making not privilege;
 - implementation of policies that would hold students harmless and suspend truancy—work harder at connecting students and families.
- Phases relating to distance learning:
 - Phase 1: Need to improve in helping students better connect. Students were better connected when relationships were/didn't just rely on email—combination of email and posting on social media, phone calls home from paraprofessional, in addition to US mail
 - End of April: did webinars for educators.
- Education plans:
 - It is up to individual school community to determine education plan. Each school has plan on website.
 - First step for families with questions: talk to teachers and school leaders. Can also call MDE about support and guidance and to sharing their experiences. 651 582 8200. We want to hear directly from students and families
- Summer learning:
 - Just offered summer learning guidance can choose hybrid model for education. Can provide in person support to students as well as distance learning.
 - We have asked our school communities to continue to provide school age care
 - Focal points: Meal delivery, student care, distance learning
- Safety/returning to school: we will work with MN Dept of Health about health of our communities and risk/safety of students in a school setting
- Technology:
 - opportunities for in person student instruction over the summer but we do know that when students have access to a device that kids have access to more resources. Inequalities

- Governor has coordinated an Education working group to find public/private partnership to increase access to internet. Technology funding is a priority under CARES Act dollars. Working on allocating and distributing funding to schools as quickly as possible

Question/Answer for Commissioner Ricker:

Q: What is MDE's plan to prioritize funding for Latinx community given racial inequities within community that are now exacerbated due to COVID-19?

A: We have an opportunity to help address some of the very inequities that we noticed in first phase of distance learning. This is an area where we need to improve. Even where educators try to design lessons that don't require technology, students who had their own access to technology had better resources. Students who needed more accommodation than distance learning provides—summer hybrid learning will provide opportunities for more meaningful instruction for these students.

We are explicit about addressing who were underserved. An example: Mental health services—this will be a focus of CARES funding directed to MDE—we want to make sure we can address mental health issues and offer support so that students feel strengthened by experience and do not feel like they are navigating this by themselves.

Based upon feedback from school communities we have prioritized the following:

- Access to technology
- High quality summer opportunities
- Mental health and wellness

Q: Follow up question: restructuring grades. People want to know how to support their kids at home but are not getting access to information due to language barriers. Is there any measure of accountability so that family understands how grading has been restructured, keeping in mind that just because we communicate something doesn't mean families understand? —that bar has been lowered by some kids who are already significantly impacted and what can do at home to support children?

A: We realized that we needed to do better in this area. MDE put in guidance on March 15 that school communities needed to share distance learning plans on their websites. But families don't necessarily know where to look for it. When second executive order was issued—we elevated the expectation that not only would you post information but that there would be active sharing of the info.

In 3rd executive order on summer learning raised expectation further, not only to share with families but also share in a language that families understand. School communities need to share learning plans in language that families understand.

Also, the Dept of Education is expanding materials that we are translating on our website, and this began with family engagement documents.

Q: Latinx leaders and Spanish speaking residents find it hard to navigate the MDE system for specific information. Can there be a point person on Latinx issues at MDE? Also Who is a person we can follow up with on this subject with MDE?

A: Yes we are working on it, determining how we can hire that person. We are in a hiring freeze. At MDE our focus has been school community focused—we realize we did that at expense of not having a community facing focus. Appreciate the suggestion of having someone dedicated to being conduit. We are reassigning people to take on additional responsibilities including communicating with general community. Long term obligation is to carve out additional positions. A follow up contact for this subject would be Kami Funk—Human Resources director within MDE

Q: Can MDE host listening sessions with spanish speaking parents throughout the state to learn about concerns. Our community will not be calling # as a first thought—important for MDE to hold listening session on our community. Would MDE be able to create a forum itself? Consideration of the different needs between city/outside city.

A: We would be grateful to be a partner or be a part of listening sessions that you have the power to convene. I am sure that info that I would hear would be valuable to MDE in design of next phase of support.

Minneapolis City Council Vice President Jenkins

Thank you for incredible service for communities you are working in and for the state for sheltering at home and taking Governor's message and state message seriously. This pandemic is hitting black and brown communities incredibly hard. Government has a role, but we have to save ourselves too. Thank you for advocating and pushing and being a part of what our own communities can do to get through this crisis.

Additional Q/A with Cassondra Knudsen of MDE

Cassondra.Knudson@state.mn.us

Q: Considering health safety and return to school in the fall, what will be the guidelines, and will they be differentiated based upon risk (ex students who work within service industry)

A: Schools can adapt to what they feel is necessary. We will provide guidance along with MDH for schools, we will also continue to update our educational guidance for schools. In regards to technology integration - we will be working with schools to support them as we can with providing devices and internet access.

Here are links with some information: <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/health/COVID19/>.

Health guidelines around summer programming -

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf>

Translated information for families explaining distance learning, meal availability, school age care - <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/DSE/mde032627>,

https://education.mn.gov/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=MDE032745&RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary

Q: even before COVID-19 mental health resources were in short supply for students and teachers. Huge demand at CLUES from teachers regarding mental health services. How does the department plan to use CARES funding with organizations on the ground that are seeing huge demand but no resources.

A: We will follow up and get information to CM Cano.

Q: Adult learners—there is a huge demand for instruction support. How can we make sure that adult learners are included in access to technology concerns. Also please consider uninsured and underinsured students are the ones who are most in need.

A: never want to forget our adult learners, those who are going back for their GEDs. Also aware of challenges for educators. Please feel free to connect with me: Cassandra.knudson@state.mn.us

Comment: Having an MDE point of contact/Staff that can serve the unique needs of Spanish speaking, undocumented, and Latinx families is very important. It would be important for the person to be culturally connected to the community and be bilingual. I am hoping that Aara Johnson from the Governor's Office who is here in this meeting can help us to continue to raise this request with MDE. Also, the Mn Education Equity Partnership led by Carlos Mariani and Jennifer Godinez, is a part of the MDE task force they have put together to help them with distance learning/COVID19 issues so we should also engage them in the request.

City of Minneapolis Updates

Director of Housing Policy and Development: Andrea Brennan

- Received 8000 applications. Spent a lot of time going through the list and eliminating duplications—some households applied more than 1x, some applicants do not reside in Minneapolis—ended up with 6500 applications
- Sent email to households at end of last week. Some emails bounced back. Sending out letters today. Everyone should receive some form of communications by Wednesday
- Of the 6500, 1500 will be referred to community prevention provider partners through tenant resource center. There is some staggering. 500 within 1 week, 500 within 2 week, 500 within 3 weeks.
- There are more people who have applied and are not eligible because:
 - Currently live in public housing or housing where there is an income based subsidy (for example Section 8)—asking community prevention providers to contact households and tell them to contact Minneapolis Public Housing Authority
- We also have information on COVID-19 page
- July 1: Hennepin County funding will be available—this will be open to Mpls residents. Also Hennepin County approved \$15 million out of CARES act funding—working on an RFP for

partners—that's how they plan to release. If there is insufficient capacity in nonprofit community, may staff up current county emergency funding network



- Also making sure that we're able to push information out and have the most up to date information on resources on our website.
- Shout out to CLUES—without CLUES we would have not been able to serve the high number—stepped in staffed up and took a ton of calls and is continuing to work with people really quickly in providing customer service. We could not have done it without them.

Small Business Team--Monica Romero

- Gap fund for businesses: will be able to fund between 150 businesses in areas already distressed
- 123 businesses have been notified and have been informed to contact the closing organization that will be putting money.
- Businesses that have not gotten the funds have been notified but we are not finished. Any follow up questions, let Monica know: monica.romero@minneapolismn.gov
- As of last week we have been notifying businesses that did not get funding and have list of resources
- Reopening:
 - As of today businesses —any business that has a COVID-19 preparedness plan can do so, if they allow no more than 50% of occupancy capacity. Businesses need to know what is maximum amount of people can come to their store.
 - If 50% capacity is too crowded for people to maintain 6 feet distance, then 6 feet.
 - What is a preparedness plan:
 - Inspection prevention measures
 - Prompt identification of workers who are sick
 - Control for social distancing
 - Cleaning and sanitation plan
 - Training for management and workers to implement plan
 - Protection and control for pick up/delivery
 - In store shopping
 - Shopping malls
 - Instruction to customers
 - Small business team has heard from business owner inside of city cultural shopping malls, some confusion—decided to work with mall managers and deliver a kit to each mall ready to reopen. Suggest that mall have its own reopen plan and individual businesses have their own plan too
 - Preliminary meeting this Friday-meeting with mall managers this afternoon at 2PM to brainstorm on what is needed/planned and how can support.
 - What will kit have:
 - Printed materials
 - Simple but effective plan
 - Trying to be creative in a short term
 - Using images
- If you know of a mall manager please let Monica know—businesses are very eager to Reopen. Need to make communication clear so that everyone protects themselves.
- Consul Guerrero (Mx. Consulate): meeting with some business owners in Mercado Central. Difficult task—our community is not taking this seriously. Some customers do not take

precautions 20% of infected people are from Hispanic community. Not following protocol. People are not using face masks—we really need to do something with our community so that they can take it seriously. A: (Monica) Commissioner of Health department has heard intention of mayor to make mask wearing mandatory through an ordinance—this was asked by some business owners to the governor—Business owners want to avoid having difficulties with their clients—situation is already vulnerable)

- Licensing office is actively engaged with stakeholders and with businesses that have to remain closed (spas, fitness centers). Expecting some direction from governor on May 20.
- If your constituencies are business owners—let city department of health know if masks are needed—PPE equipment and cloth—may be some way to distribute to clients and workers.
- Council Member Cano: grocery stores—people not wearing masks, some of those spaces are very small. If you are a low wage worker (human rights issue)—someone should be providing masks for you—business owner, city or health department. Figure out how to provide masks to people who may want them. In California some cities are making it a requirement to wear masks when you are outside.
- Leda Schuster (Health Dept): incident management team has been created in response to COVID-19. Works collaboratively with the rest of the city enterprise to identify needs and challenges in community+ identify solution to address needs. Regarding masks—we know Mayor will soon declare that masks are mandatory—think that we are trying to work on is not only informing community about this rule but also ensuring that we address mask shortage. If we are going to require people to use it, make sure that masks are available in community—where do you find these masks.
- Communicating information in language and in culture important—will be providing updates.

Mayor's Office

Heidi Richie

- Health department to request PPE and other supplies—some from own inventory, also put together a donation hub a few weeks ago for things we are unable to provide. PPE request link: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/b76b57bc7ab64663adc5c2f4dce7c93d>
- Working with Fire Chief emergency management, for a mask drive over Memorial Day weekend—will let people know.
- Email for requests relating to COVID-19: COVID19@minneapolismn.gov

Questions/Comments:

- Small Business team: we are working on FAQ and one pagers for businesses. As people are able in Health department can help route questions and provide answers
- Masks—as we prepare to open back up to public the ability to obtain more masks is imperative. Not able to find them in the market. Appreciate the city bringing some to CLUES but obviously there is a need for many more. The Governor's office is on the call—request help—we understand the need to open back up but PPE is an issue.
- Leda (health dept) : send email to COVID-19. If organizations are in need of masks, this could be the right venue to get to the city. We will identify what organizations are in need—can add to the list. COVID19@minneapolismn.gov

- There needs to be education about how to use the mask. A lot of people think they are disposable. You can reuse them if you are the only one using them. Important to make it very public—and to be an example, that we wear them.
- Health department is working on in language materials on how to use the map. Think there is a flyer that will be released today. Will share with CM Cano.

Additional issues?

- The Star Tribune wrote an article regarding works that CLUES has done. Sadly they used the word illegal in the headline. Ruby is sending a letter of complaint to the newspaper—inability to make institutional change that addresses lack of humanity. Ruby had spoken with the writer directly and had given 3 or 4 different options of language to use instead of illegal to describe status of person. Strib was put in touch with one of the families—CLUES staff translated for newspaper—and undocumented status was revealed—this was not something we wanted to put out there. CLUES invites others to send a note to complain. Ask newspaper to share protocol. Would not trust the institution until there is some conversation moving forward. Regarding use of illegal or illegal alien—sad to see that here we are 2020 and under the circumstances this is an issue.
- Comment on this: we have to organize ourselves. We need to have deep discussions (including MDE). Can't just be one offs, have to be organized in a way that shows a community wide perspective. It is time to go to the editorial board and others to have a conversation about why they are using the language they are.
- State department and other agencies—our issues have to be their homework, their agenda. It has to be on their workplan. How we take these conversations and move them further along—this is unacceptable.
- CM Cano: Request meeting with the editors which determines what the headlines should read. If Latino Lead or others could help us request meeting with the editors of Strib—it is concerning that that is putting people in physical danger and having negative consequences—some of the people in the story lost their job because they were outed.

Please send suggestions on follow up meetings.

Additional notes from the chat:

Grant opportunities

- Minneapolis Foundation-Safe Communities
- Ciresi Foundation-Education Innovation
- United Way-COVID 19