

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Frequently Asked Questions About Public Health Councils

### 1. What are Public Health Councils and why are they needed?

- Public Health Councils (PHCs) are comprised of workers who help educate their co-workers about the importance of implementing COVID-19 safety protocols in the workplace and help to ensure Health Office Orders (HOOs) are being followed appropriately. Workers who may participate in PHCs include non-supervisory, non-managerial employees; contracted staff; and volunteers.
- The County's PHC program will expand the Department of Public Health's (Public Health) capacity to increase compliance with HOOs and public health protocols.
- Lack of compliance with Los Angeles County's (County) Health Officer Orders (HOOs) has contributed to COVID-19 outbreaks, illness and deaths, disproportionately impacting low income communities and communities of color.
- Implementation of PHCs is occurring in the following prioritized sectors: (1) apparel manufacturing, (2) food manufacturing, (3) warehousing and storage, (4) restaurants and (5) grocery stores

### 2. Will all businesses be required to allow their employees to form Public Health Councils?

- The County is prioritizing a small number of business sectors experiencing significant numbers of COVID-19 outbreaks, complaints, and violations for the pilot PHC program. Prioritized sectors include: (1) apparel manufacturing, (2) food manufacturing, (3) warehousing and storage, (4) restaurants and (5) grocery stores. Workers in prioritized sectors may opt to receive education and assistance about HOOs and the PHC Program from County-contracted community-based organizations (CBOs) that have been trained and certified by Public Health and professional training organizations.
- PHCs are voluntary and may be started by workers of any business in a prioritized sector.
- The priority is supporting PHCs in businesses within those sectors to maximize the potential for reducing spread of transmission. Employers in prioritized sectors are encouraged to collaborate with PHCs on implementation of HOOs and public health protocols.

### 3. What is the role of third-party organizations in the PHC Program?

- Using a fiscal agent, the County contracted with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to conduct outreach, education, and technical assistance to workers in prioritized sectors.
- CBOs inform workers about the opportunity to form a public health council, increase awareness among workers and employers about the importance of implementing HOOs, and increase awareness about the importance of vaccination.
- Contracted, trained, and certified CBOs are helping reduce the spread of COVID 19 in our community by ensuring workplaces have all the information and tools they need to fully implement HOOs.



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- 4. Will third party organizations conduct inspections at my business? Will they conduct searches of employer records or employee information?**
- No. Contracted CBOs will not conduct workplace inspections for Public Health. CBOs conduct outreach, education, and technical assistance to workers in prioritized sectors.
  - Inspections are conducted only by trained and certified Environmental Health staff employed by Public Health.
  - CBOs will not conduct searches of employer records or employee information nor will they conduct infectious disease case investigations.
- 5. Will third party organizations report perceived violations to the Department of Public Health without giving businesses a chance to implement changes before a penalty is issued?**
- The efforts of PHCs and contracted CBOs to increase education and awareness about the need to implement HOOs may resolve compliance issues at the worksite without the involvement of Public Health.
  - If HOO violations remain a problem at the worksite, individual workers, PHCs or contracted CBOs may contact Public Health for support to ensure employers are in compliance with public health orders.
  - Reports of a violation in a business may lead to the deployment of Public Health inspectors who would conduct an inspection at the work site.
- 6. How will third-party organizations be chosen and trained, and what are their qualifications?**
- Contracted CBOs are formally trained and certified by Public Health and professional training and academic organizations.
  - CBOs meet specific criteria set by Public Health including experience, expertise, and cultural/linguistic capability. CBOs receive rigorous training, including but not limited to:
    - i. detailed instruction about County HOOs and Public Health protocols specific to the prioritized sectors in which CBOs are working;
    - ii. administrative and legal regulations and requirements relevant to the PHCs initiative;
    - iii. clarifying the role of CWOs and PHCs as limited to compliance with the HOO and Public Health's protocols;
    - iv. instructions for how to prioritize businesses within their sector for the PHC Program; for example, criteria may include businesses in geographic areas with a high number of cases, and businesses with a history of outbreaks, complaints and violations.
- 7. Should employers allow PHCs to conduct activities on company time?**
- HOOs are mandated and legally enforceable local directives that businesses are required to implement to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in their workplaces. Employers must work with



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Public Health to ensure that the HOOs are implemented at the workplace. Allowing PHCs to conduct activities on company time can assist companies in ensuring compliance. Employers are encouraged, but not required, to allow workers to hold formal one-hour, weekly PHC meetings during regular business hours to support HOO implementation.

### 8. Is Public Health instituting any safeguards that protect businesses against false claims?

- Public Health follows standard procedures when we receive complaints that businesses are not following health directives. These procedures may include;
  - i. Public Health staff calling the business owner or manager to discuss the complaint and providing education and guidance about Public Health 's directives and
  - ii. procedures may also include sending an Environmental Health inspector to conduct an inspection at the business to assess whether violations of HOOs and protocols are occurring.
- Violations are determined based on inspector findings during their physical inspection at the worksite which protects against false claims.

### 9. Is this a back door for labor to come into our businesses and organize our workforce?

- Contracted, trained, and certified CBOs conduct outreach, education, and technical assistance regarding HOO implementation to workers in prioritized sectors and provide information and resources to management as well, if desired. The role of CBOs in the PHC program is limited to addressing compliance with COVID-19 HOOs and Title 11 of the Los Angeles County Code.

### 10. What is the role of a PHC at a workplace that already has an established collective bargaining agreement?

- At worksites with an established collective bargaining agreement, the exclusive representative that is a party to the collective bargaining agreement may choose to function as the PHC.
- As at any worksite, individual workers may also reach out to Public Health directly to report HOO violations.

### 11. What is the purpose of the County's new ordinance entitled "Preventing Retaliation for Reporting Public Health Violations"?

- The ordinance prohibits retaliation against workers who belong to or form a PHC, or who discuss or report their employer's or another worker's perceived noncompliance with a HOO or Title 11 of the Los Angeles County Code.
- By encouraging workers to report public health violations without fear of retaliation, this ordinance promotes public health and increases the effectiveness of public health requirements.

