



The Senate

STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

Tuesday August 25, 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate President Ronald D. Kouchi
FROM: Senate Special Committee on COVID-19
RE: Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 Report

Dear Senate President,

Please see the attached report prepared following the August 19, 2020, Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 meeting with the following:

- Department of Human Resources Development
- Hawaii Emergency Management Agency
- Department of Education
- Department of Health – Behavioral Health Services Administration

Sincerely,

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole
Senator Michelle N. Kidani

Senator Donna Mercado Kim
Senator Sharon Moriwaki
Senator Kurt Fevella

Attachment

Cc: All Senators

Department of Human Resources Development (DHRD)

Mr. Ryker Wada, DHRD Director, provided the Committee with the following report.

DHRD Telework and COVID Workplace Protocols, Policies, and Guidelines.

- In DHRD's transition from remote work 'new normal' guidance, DHRD recommends that departments working remotely should conduct an assessment to see if continued telework can be used to keep employees safer.
 - For jobs without a necessary physical presence in the workplace, telework is a viable and practical option.
- DHRD has discussed as part of its policies: health screening, exposure-response time communication plans to alert impacted staff, stay at home requirements, face masks in the workplace, detailing cleaning procedures, establishing physical distancing measures, employee hygiene, and plans for high-risk employees.
- The Departments of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR), DAGS, and DHRD are all creating and communicating and working together to ensure the safety and health of their employees and the community at large.
 - DLIR, DAGS, and DRHD will continue to modify protocols as the situation changes.
- DHRD has coordinated with DAGS to create a cleaning and disinfecting facility protocol and a protocol for hygiene in public spaces.
 - DAGS is also following CDC guidance on sanitation for health and safety.
- DHRD has been assisting the DOH disease outbreak control division with hiring, training, and deployment efforts.
 - DHRD is focused on hiring contact tracers.
 - DHRD has offered to assist the DOH in several areas of hiring contact tracers.
 - According to DHRD Director Ryker Wada, more assistance is needed with the hiring and onboarding of contact tracers.
 - DHRD can shift resources to assist with contact with tracer hiring and training.
 - DHRD has offered assistance from its training branch to the DOH with its online learning management system to assist with any training functions within the DOH for contact tracing.
 - The initial training for contact tracers is already online through a University of Hawaii contract, which is then followed up with on the job training.
- Per Director Wada, telework, and COVID, workplace protocols and procedures are not consistent between and within state departments.
- DHRD had an existing telework program from 2010 that was used as a template.
 - The program has guidelines for how the program is supposed to work and how guidelines should be implemented.
- Per Director Wada, DHRD has not been directing individual department heads to implement DHRD guidelines. Implementation is ultimately up to the individual departments.
 - The total amount of state department staff that is teleworking is about 25%.
- Per the DHRD Director, employees with telework guideline concerns, complaints, or who wish to file appeals, should bring these issues up with their respective unions.
 - If there is a state building-related complaint, it falls under DAGS's purview.

- Per the Committee's request, the DHRD Director will follow up with DAGS and DLIR to see how these departments want to handle complaints and provide findings with the Committee.
- Per Director Wada, all State employees are considered critical infrastructure workers and therefore are not subject to the Mayors' orders, but they are subject to anything the Governor might require.
- Per the Committee's request, the DHRD director will get a directive from the Governor encouraging or mandating State employees who do not need to be in the workplace to telework, and this information will be provided to the Committee.
- Per the Committee's request, the DHRD director will send the Committee the original DHRD telework policy as well as the updated interim guidelines.
- Per the Committee's request, the DHRD director will find out the status of which state workers are classified as category three employees, and what their teleworking needs are.

Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA)

Major General Kenneth Hara, HIEMA Incident Commander, provided the Committee with the following report.

HIEMA/Department of Defense Telework and COVID Workplace Protocols, Policies, and Guidelines.

- General Hara emphasized that his Department performed an assessment of which employees should be directed to telework.
 - The staff that is deemed emergency essential are mandated to work from the workplace and not telework.
 - Everyone not classified as emergency or essential was looked at on a case by case basis for potential teleworking.
- The DOD ordered and has been ordering protective equipment such as plexiglass and disinfecting equipment.
- DOD has been able to ensure that it is meeting all the physical distancing guidelines.
 - The Department dissuades people from congregating in breakrooms and has been enforcing restricted movement.
 - Within their second floor, the DOD has created bubbles with different offices to try and prevent staff from different offices from ever being in close contact.
- General Hara highly doubts that other state departments have enforced similar telework and workplace distancing protocols that the DOD has.
- The DOD found that one of its offices was not complying with its Department protocols and acted against the individuals who were failing to comply.
- Per the Committee's request, General Hara will work with Director Wada to see how he can be of assistance in adjusting and implementing guidance to state departments.

HIEMA/DOD Response Priorities

- Providing assistance to the DOH in order to improve their organization, disease investigation including contact tracing, and identifying what reports should be internal to the policy decision-makers and what information is beneficial and should be released to the public.
- Assisting hospitals in an effort to increase capacity, so intensive care unit space does not become full and increasing respirator availability.

- HIEMA is moving forward in looking for alternate care facilities if hospitals reach capacity.
- General Hara emphasized that DOH needs to increase the number of swabbing teams and testing capacity.
 - Increasing testing capacity includes working with key testing labs to ensure that they have additional testing machines that are high volume and diverse.
 - Diversity in testing machines and kits is critical in the event there is a supply shortage of a particular type of COVID-19 test.
- The DOD received \$10 million, on July 21, from initial Act 8 funding.
 - The remaining \$30 million of Act 8 funding was received on August 14, along with an additional \$61 million of Act 9 funding.
- HIEMA/DOD created a website <https://hawaii-medical-aliance.myshopify.com>
 - The website tracks PPE that has been procured with funds that fall under Act 9 and allows eligible users to acquire PPE from the site.
- HIEMA/DOD has allocated \$24 million to hospitals, \$8 million to allied medical providers, \$4 million for childcare, \$4 million for eldercare facilities, \$7 million for small businesses, \$4 million for non-profits, \$4 million for DOE, \$4 million for UH, and \$2 million for warehousing distribution.
- HIEMA's PPE distribution operation has four phases.
 - Phase 1: Pre-warehouse activities that have already been completed.
 - Phase 2: PPE Procurement, this phase is currently being executed.
 - Phase 3: Warehouse distribution.
 - Phase 4: Tallying everything up and making sure the proper reporting to the legislature, the Governor, and the federal government is being done.
- HIEMA is working on the client list for the HIEMA PPE phases in assistance with the Hawaii Chamber of Commerce.
- HIEMA is working diligently on its social media efforts and upcoming press releases.
- General Hara emphasized that when vaccinations are ready to be implemented, HIEMA and National Guard planners are going to help the DOH to ensure that there is a robust plan to execute vaccination distribution.
- General Hara emphasized future planning of the state's economy needs to reduce the state's reliance on tourism.
- Per the Committee's request, General Hara will follow up with his departments' partnerships with Community Partners to assist populations where English is a second language.
- Per General Hara, the reason that names of the bars that were being investigated were made public is that employees, management, and customers of the respective bars were not being forthright and providing information with investigators.
 - The rationale was to inform the public that if they visited one of the bars being investigated for an outbreak to contact the DOH disease outbreak investigation unit because these patrons might be at risk for infection.
- \$16 million has been spent initially, and an additional \$3 million has been appropriated.
 - Per General Hara, generally, HIEMA/DOD has about 60 days' worth of supplies in stock.
 - These supplies were focused on medical care and healthcare.

- Per the Committee's request, when the DOH sends out updated positive cases, General Hara will add additional paragraphs of information, showing the location of cases, to these reports on the DOH COVID website.
- An internal query was done of the National Guard was done and compiled a master list of National Guard staff that could assist the DOH with language outreach endeavors.
- Per the Committee's request, General Hara will provide a report of an exact number of how much of the \$40 million appropriated by the legislature can be spent on PPE.
- Per the Committee's request, General Hara will provide updated color-coded chart protocols and how that information will get communicated to the public.

Department of the Attorney General

Ms. Clare Connors, Attorney General, provided the Committee the following update

Attorney General Office's Telework and COVID Workplace Protocols, Policies, and Guidelines.

- Per the Attorney General, state workers are deemed critical infrastructure workers, so they are exempt from County orders.
 - Despite the exemptions, as emphasized by Director Wada, the same proper practices are being implemented, including physical distancing, wearing masks, and hygiene.
 - The issue with the order is that those are mandates for the public at large, and that involves a slightly different process.
- Per the Committee's request, the Attorney General will follow up with General Hara on implementing his Telework and COVID Workplace Protocols, Policies, and Guidelines across all departments.
- The Committee attempted to confirm whether General Hara had shared his departments' Telework and COVID Workplace Protocols, Policies, and Guidelines with other departments.
- Additionally, the Committee expressed its interest in seeing these policies centrally implemented and enforced.
 - Per the Attorney General, General Hara should get back to the Committee concerning what information, if any, was shared with other departments, not the Attorney General.
 - The Attorney General wants General Hara to get back to the Committee on the previously mentioned concerns because she does not wish to provide mixed messaging between their respective departments.

Department of Education (DOE)

Dr. Christine Kishimoto, State Superintendent, provided the Committee with the following report.

General Update

- Per Superintendent Kishimoto, the DOE has rolled out a shift to their reopening plan based on the increased number of cases.
 - This came after their meeting between Governor Ige, Mayor Caldwell, and the Department of Health leadership team.

- Superintendent Kishimoto informed the Committee this is the third day of the first phase in the school reopening process.
- This initial phase is to ensure students know how to get online, meet their teachers, as well as confirm that the student does have a way to access online education.
- Next Monday, August 24, students will begin distance learning and will continue for a minimum of four weeks and potentially last an entire quarter.
 - Per Superintendent Kishimoto, children with a mandated service that cannot learn via distance learning will have set schedules for entering the campus for their services.
 - The other exception is students who are unable to access an internet connection. These students will also have set times for coming to campus and meeting with the learning provider.
- Superintendent Kishimoto informed the members that the DOE provided all regular teachers and substitute teachers with a seven-module training course to provide training on distance learning.
 - The attendance rate was 96%
- Superintendent Kishimoto and the DOE will listen to teacher feedback to determine if distance learning should continue beyond the initial four weeks or cease in favor of returning to in person.

Questions for the Upcoming School Year

- Members of the Committee expressed concern over the lack of spending, from the DOE, to purchase Person Protective Equipment for their teachers.
- Members were made aware that the DOE only asked for \$670,000 worth of PPE out of the \$4 million set aside by HIEMA.
 - Superintendent Kishimoto explained the low number was due to a buy for only the start of the year, not an entire school semester.
 - Initial estimates placed the costs of an entire year at \$25 million, per DOE figures.
- Per the Committee's inquiry, Superintendent Kishimoto explained, the DOE and HIEMA are working together to plan three months at a time.
- Further, she explained that the DOE is tracking the number of supplies in each school in Excel spreadsheets and will adjust as needed.
 - Per department figures, the DOE has already ordered:
 - 1.3 million disposable masks
 - 79,000 cloth masks
 - 1,500 boxes of gloves
 - 38,000 face shields
 - 680 gallons of sanitizer
- Committee members expressed concerns that school faculty may be unaware of the number of supplies available to them.
- Many members shared constituent comments explaining that many teachers are paying out of pocket and/or crowdfunding money and supplies from the community for their own supplies.
 - Superintendent Kishimoto acknowledged this concern and promised the DOE would get better in live tracking needs as the year moved on.
 - Members reiterated their concern due to Gen. Hara's testimony explaining the soap and sanitizer was not yet part of the PPEs.

- Superintendent Kishimoto reminded the Committee the DOE relies on their own partnerships since they are unable to operate as a distribution center themselves.
 - Due to this partnership, distribution centers have been split up among 15 locations across Oahu rather than a central location.
- Per Superintendent Kishimoto, the DOE is meeting with Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) twice a week, in addition to holding Deputy Principal Roundtables to form a better channel of communication.
 - The previously mentioned Excel spreadsheet is also being shared with local principals to keep them abreast of the situation.
- Per the Committee's request, Superintendent Kishimoto explained that the DOE provided schools with a reopening PPE list that shows what kind of equipment different teachers can expect to get, depending on what kind of teacher they are and what grade level(s) they teach.
- Members expressed concern over the metrics used to determine a three-month supply of PPE.
- Members questioned if it was three months per classroom, school, or other division.
- Additionally, members expressed concerns about whether custodial staff was considered in that metrics of the three-month supply.
 - Superintendent Kishimoto explained this is an ongoing process, and much of their supply has been determined by feedback gathered from several meetings with the public and board officials.
 - The current three-month supply was determined as an appropriate set standard through conversation between Superintendent Kishimoto and General Hara.
 - Per the Committee's request, Superintendent Kishimoto agreed to provide the metrics for the three months supply, as well as a breakdown of what every school received, within 24 hours.
- Per the Committee's request, Superintendent Kishimoto explained the process of reporting a positive COVID case, while also noting there are no contact tracers for the DOE; instead there is a DOH contact for DOE schools.
 - Principals or their designee contact the CAS and provide all info on the suspected case, which is then sent to the DOH.
 - They are then asked to provide any documentation from the test to be sent to DOH as evidence.
 - The DOE response team will be notified and will then work with the Office of Facilities and the CAS to identify the areas in need of immediate sanitization and isolate the appropriate individuals.
 - The DOH will then conduct the investigation and then notify close contacts of mandatory, 14-day quarantine.
 - Karen Ing is listed as the DOH contact.
 - Jennifer Ryan is the DOE's health services contact.
 - Areas that came into direct contact with the confirmed case are immediately shut down.
 - Those in quarantine can work from home.
- Per the Committee's inquiry, Superintendent Kishimoto explained that teachers must go to their own doctor to get a COVID test.
- Per the Committee's request, it was made public that there are no triggers in place to shut down or reopen a school, but DOE is working with DOH and Governor Ige to create such triggers.

- Members questioned who was responsible for information release and how it is released. The Superintendent explained she is doing a weekly release of information, but schools are the first ones to know new information.
 - Weekly information publishing will be made every Friday.
 - Meetings are ongoing with all other state superintendents to determine the best information release and navigating HIPPA laws.
- Members expressed their concern to the Superintendent at the lack of communication and transparency between the DOE and the State Auditor, to which she agreed to get in contact immediately and explained she had been “unusually busy.”
- Members questioned why teachers were mandated to be in the classroom despite teaching virtually. The Superintendent informed the Committee on the DOE’s updated telework policy, which requires:
 - The proven ability to do the work from home
 - The work can be done at the same level as in-person learning.
 - The July 24 revision of the DOE telework schedule will be provided to the members for further review.
- The Superintendent also insists that being in school is beneficial to the teachers, as the schools act as a technology hub consisting of all the necessary supplies needed for distance learning.
 - Additionally, there are some students requiring physical touch and/or physical pieces to be taught; therefore, being in school is the best option.
- Members expressed their concern over the insistence on in-person learning for teachers who can teach from home but are not allowed under the current mandate.
 - A concern was raised about the possibility of having a substitute fill in for a regular teacher, but they may not be trained in the same way for distance learning.
 - Concerns were also raised that DOE is not meeting DOH guidelines and that distance learning would be safer, rather than denying access to work from home.
- Members questioned what accommodations were being made for students in low-income families, unable to afford internet connectivity.
 - Per the Superintendent, close to 3000 Wi-Fi hubs have been provided, and 11,000 hubs have been ordered based on parental feedback on distance learning.
 - There are also several vans across all islands to increase connectivity for a broader group of students.
 - Despite these numbers, the Superintendent is still wary of a shortfall in hubs being provided.
 - The availability of hubs was raised with the public in a school letter.

Department of Health - Behavioral Health Services Administration

Mr. Edward Mersereau, Deputy Director, provided the Committee with the following report.

Quarantine Efforts and Behavioral Health for the Homeless Population.

- Per the Committee’s request, Mr. Mersereau explained his jurisdiction within the state as the manager for all the state’s quarantine and isolation efforts with the exception travel-related self-quarantine.

- Funding for these efforts has been utilized through the Behavioral Health Administration Budget and the mental health and substance abuse special fund.
 - Per department figures, just over \$2 million has been spent from April to July.
 - August estimates put figures at two to three times that, stemming from the recent spike in cases.
- Per Mr. Mersereau's testimony, there are many initiatives in place for homeless care, including quarantine and isolation outreach, testing and screening, and work to provide testing and screening in conjunction with the shelters.
- Mr. Mersereau's explained his Department is working on being responsive to COVID in addition to preparing for the broader kind of issues that may arise within vulnerable populations.
 - Much of this work is done with support from the City and County of Honolulu.
- There is currently a homeless care shelter on Ka'ahi Street that has been under BHSA's administration since April.
- The Department is partnering with four hotel facilities to provide shelter and housing for the homeless, and future projections place available units at an additional 130, in addition to the staff and personnel available with them.
 - There are currently 114 units, 74 filled, and ten down for cleaning.
 - These areas are for allowing homeless individuals to isolate and quarantine.
- The location of isolation will be based on the severity of support and acuity. More severe cases will be sent to the Ka'ahi Street location.
- BHSA is working with public safety and the Attorney General's office to quickly identify low-risk individuals and find them shelter.
 - Many aspects from substance abuse, to mental health, to gang relations are being considered in finding shelter for newly released OCCC inmates.
- Modeling is being done to track and prevent the spread of COVID among the vulnerable population.
- Mr. Mersereau noted the differences between the quarantine centers and the hotels in that a medical clearance is needed to check out from the hotels. This comes from medical providers and an epidemiologist.
- Upon discharge from the shelter or isolation site, Mr. Mersereau reports that many of these individuals went into longer-term housing or long-term support shelters.
 - Per department figures, 2-3 people willingly went back into homelessness.
 - Mr. Mersereau noted that these individuals were still assisted in securing benefits and a personal ID.

-End of Report-