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Professional Title, Organization: Branch Chief, COVID Control, California Department of Public Health

CHIP Title: COVID-19 data-to-action: from bean-counting to beanstalk-climbing

Project Description: The COVID-19 pandemic illuminated longstanding vulnerabilities in public health disease response, lab reporting, technology, and our workforce capacity to address a surge in a novel respiratory virus. Prior to COVID, I had gained extensive experience leading data-driven HIV and STD programs in San Francisco and collaborating across siloes improve population health outcomes. Stepping up to lead San Francisco's COVID-19 contact tracing program, I witnessed the ability of public health to rapidly improvise new structures, remove red-tape, cultivate a new workforce and transform data systems.

San Francisco implemented one of the nation's most intensive, comprehensive, and multipronged COVID-19 pandemic responses. As COVID-19 response priorities shifted during the past two years, I utilized the CHIP to understand public health lessons learned during the pandemic, identify opportunities to improve and ensure limited resources are used to build systems that drive meaningful public health action.

Key findings and lessons learned:

- Collaborated with COVID-19 leadership at San Francisco Department of Public Health and UCSF to memorialize lessons learned from San Francisco's city-wide COVID-19 response in [Public Health Reports](#).
- Summarized lessons learned from SF's COVID-19, HIV, and syphilis disease intervention in [Sexually Transmitted Diseases](#) to highlight the value of investing in a robust disease intervention workforce to respond to a range of emerging infectious disease outbreaks.
- Started a new position as Chief of Disease Intervention in the STD Branch at California Department of Public Health in summer 2022 and led public health investigation for yet another previously unknown infectious disease outbreak, mpox. After the outbreak was controlled, I led hotwash meetings to capture opportunities to improve the state's mpox response.
- Led the development of a plan to utilize a new \$15 million investment by the CDC to modernize disease intervention in California by inspiring the workforce, improving quality and embracing innovation. Despite this enormous opportunity, the CDC funding was rescinded due to COVID-related budget recissions in July 2023, a telltale sign of public health's ongoing "boom-and-bust" cycles.

Next steps:

- Accepted a new role of Chief of the newly formed COVID Control Branch at CDPH in March 2023
- Harnessing lessons learned, lead the development of an integrated, adaptive and sustainable respiratory virus surveillance system to prevent infectious disease outbreaks in California.
- Moral of the story: take the magic beans, nurture them, and then go wherever the beanstalk takes you.