

# Maternal Child Adolescent Health Advisory Board Minutes

September 4, 2025

| Members              |                             |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Present              | Absent                      |
| Catherine Barrisford | Erin Reed*                  |
| Dr. Jeff Miller      | Taylor Anderson-Stevenson** |
| Gina Cuclis          | Stephanie Montez*           |
| Allison Murphy       | Dr. Michael Perry*          |
| Kathy Reynolds       | Alexandra Rios**            |
| Flora Henningsen     | Dr. Elizabeth Vermilyea*    |
| Dr. Milana PeBenito  |                             |
| Melissa Apuya        |                             |

\*Excused absence

\*\*Pending Approval by Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

**Staff Present** Laura Turner Senior Public Health Nurse/MCAH Coordinator, Janette Allee, Administrative Aide

**Call to Order** Catherine Barrisford called the meeting to order at 12:34 p.m. and introductions were made.

**Approval of Minutes** Gina Cuclis motioned to approve the August minutes Dr. Miller and Dr. Reynolds seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved.

**Wait Until 8th** Next Catherine Barrisford presented a new movement many schools are joining to raise awareness across California and the country. This was started by a group of parents in 2017 in Texas to wait to give children a smart phone until 8<sup>th</sup> grade. This was during the time when research was showing the risks of children using smart phones. The program uses parents who go on to the Wait Till 8<sup>th</sup> website and complete a simple pledge to wait till 8<sup>th</sup> grade to get a smart phone. They submit their name and grade level, and school information. It does not become active until ten parents from the same school become active, then Wait Till 8<sup>th</sup> connects them. As more become active it creates this community. It creates a sub community. It removes the peer pressure component. In many areas, it becomes so popular the Wait Till 8<sup>th</sup> becomes the culture of the school. It has become really successful. There is no cost associated. This is a way we can contribute to a solution. Their website has a wealth of information in both English and Spanish. She added that smart phones are known to be a distraction, they interfere with sleep, they have been known to contribute to oppositional defiance disorder, they are associated with an increased risk of anxiety and depression, cyber bullying, eating disorders, exposing children to sexual content and there are lots of unknowns with AI, privacy issues, there is so much to think about. I think waiting until 8<sup>th</sup> grade would be helpful, but in this area, the peer pressure outweighs the awareness. New York, new Jersey and Massachusetts have a huge prevalence of schools that are participating and locally here in California San Ramon, San Francisco, Marin County, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and in our county Sebastopol Charter School.

Melissa Apuya added that her child's school has signed on for this program and they have only been attending for two years but she has heard the school has been participating for a longtime and in addition to the cell phone ban they have also banned the smartwatches as well. They keep the devices in their backpacks.

## Answers to Questions About Teleconference Requirements from County Counsel

A handout was circulated from county counsel regarding Assembly Bill 2449 requirements for attending virtually, this allows for two virtual attendances per year. Janette Allee also added that the location does not need to be posted, but they do need to participate with both audio and video on, and they do need to disclose whether any children are present at their location. Beginning in January 2026, we will no longer have flexibility to offer members the opportunity to attend virtually. We will return to meeting in person. If someone is attending virtually without just cause, they may only listen and cannot participate as a voting member. Melissa stated that there are two bills making their way through the legislature now one for elected bodies and one for boards similar to this non-elected membership. Discussion included the distance to travel from Petaluma to the Aviation location and the possibility of rotating locations. Melissa will monitor and update us on those bills.

**State Legislation** Melissa Apuya reported that they are on their last two weeks of session, and they have two weeks to get their bills to the governor's desk. Any bill that doesn't make the 9/13 deadline can be brought back in January when the legislature reconvenes. She will have a better idea of what of what has made it through by the October meeting. Most of the Medi-Cal funding has been restored including undocumented people who are on Medi-Cal through 2026. In the Fall there may or may not be a special session in California on whether or not there will be further cuts and how to address them, because they are changing day to day, and the true impacts of Trump's bill has many unknowns.

**Public Comment** Dr. Milana Pe Benito invited Dr. Strange to share some information with the membership regarding the possibility of Providence closing their pediatric care unit. She started by sharing that when she came to this county and was looking for a place to do family medicine and chose Petaluma Valley Hospital for that reason, they had committed to keeping the birth center open for five years but three years later they closed. After offering the obstetricians more than three times the call pay to come to Memorial Hospital and refusing to pay market rate for the anesthesiologists and were forced to bring all of our market share of the OB population to Memorial Hospital which was the only viable option to help our patients give birth. Since coming to Memorial Hospital, the births have more than doubled at that hospital and they are apparently still behind closed doors talking about closing the pediatric unit which we know will have huge impacts on our community's access to inpatient pediatric care. Children with chronic illnesses will have to travel all the way down to the city or Oakland to get any level of evaluation, we can't expect our ER physicians to have the competency to take care of all of the different types of illnesses that kids are faced with locally and this is the place where people are driving to from Lake County and from further north even. She added that she is looking to find what this board can do as far as advocacy to stop this decision from happening. Memorial takes in peds from five counties and outside of Kaiser they are the only one who does. They have the highest level of acuity of any surrounding area that's not a tertiary care facility, and their goal is always to take care of families and patients in the community so there is less hardship on them. The outlook for inpatient pediatrics is changing across the country. We have a decreasing need for inpatient admissions. The biggest factor in this decrease is the RSV vaccination and the RSV antibodies for kids. The reimbursement rate for Medi-Cal is also a big piece of this puzzle in that we are reimbursed very little. 85% of those we care for are Medi-Cal. There are no official recommendations out yet, but there is a likely possibility of not having pediatrics. This isn't an isolated issue it is happening across the country. Although this is a challenging issue, it is important to provide that care. We will add this topic to the October agenda.

**Correspondence** Janette Allee reported that she sent the letters to the Board of Supervisors titled: Alarming High Pediatric Dental Decay Rates in Sonoma County and received one response from Chris Coursey saying, "Thank you".

**Staff Report** Kathy Reynolds asked about vaccination rates for kindergartners and Laura Turner said she will get that data for her.

**Announcements** Melissa Apuya requested to invite Supervisor Hermosillo to an upcoming meeting. Flora Henningsen announced that Bridges is moving to 2447 Summerfield Rd.

**Meeting Adjourned** The meeting adjourned at 2:02 p.m.

| Passed Motions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |          |               |                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| The August minutes were approved.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |          |               |                                  |
| Handouts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |          |               |                                  |
| Staff Report, AB 2449-Teleconferencing Requirements, Wait Till 8 <sup>th</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |          |               |                                  |
| Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |          |               |                                  |
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| 2025 Meeting Dates                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |          |               |                                  |
| October 2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Thursday | 12:30-2:00 pm | 463 Aviation Blvd, Live Oak Room |
| November 6                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Thursday | 12:30-2:00 pm | 463 Aviation Blvd, Live Oak Room |
| December 4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Thursday | 12:30-2:00 pm | 463 Aviation Blvd, Live Oak Room |
| MCAH AB Website                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |          |               |                                  |
| <a href="https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/health-and-human-services/health-services/divisions/public-health/maternal-child-and-adolescent-health/maternal-child-and-adolescent-health-advisory-board">https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/health-and-human-services/health-services/divisions/public-health/maternal-child-and-adolescent-health/maternal-child-and-adolescent-health-advisory-board</a> |          |               |                                  |