



Update from the Department of Public Health on 2021 ACDHRS Activities

Last week, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) met with the Community Advisory Group (CAG) to provide an update on the process for developing the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Aliso Canyon Disaster Health Study (Study) and related community engagement activities for 2021. During that meeting, CAG and community members asked questions and provided comments about the upcoming Study. The purpose of this update is to ensure that answers to commonly asked questions are communicated more broadly.

As background, a large-scale Health Research Study is being planned to evaluate the public health impacts of the 2015-16 Aliso Canyon natural gas blowout on residents residing near the facility. Community members requested an explanation for the length of time that has passed from the blowout to the current phase of the Study planning. The funds for the Study were allocated to Public Health in the Spring of 2019 as part of the Fall 2018 settlement from the lawsuit filed against the Southern California Gas Company. As outlined in the settlement agreement, Public Health is tasked with supporting the process to develop the Study with guidance from an independent Scientific Oversight Committee (SOC). The Study itself will be conducted by independent third-party researchers recruited through a competitive bid process following the release of a Request for Proposals (RFP) later this year.

In response to questions and comments from the community about the Study, Public Health would like to underscore that the SOC is still in the process of developing the goals and framework for the Study (the scope of work) that will be incorporated into the RFP. Once the RFP is released, researchers from around the country can submit their best ideas and proposals for consideration. Community members have raised concerns about the type of study that will be done. It is important that the community is aware that all options are still being considered by the SOC. It is anticipated that different types of study proposals will be submitted by independent researchers once the RFP is released.

Public Health has engaged extensively with the impacted communities over the past two years and has collected a wealth of community and CAG input, which has been used to shape and inform the first phase of the Study development process, identifying health concerns and research goals. Public Health has held 15 CAG meetings, conducted a virtual community Town Hall meeting, provided Study updates at Neighborhood Council meetings, and commissioned a public opinion survey to ensure that both Public Health and the SOC have a broad understanding of the various issues and concerns of the impacted communities. The Study development process has now entered the next crucial phase, as Public Health and the SOC coordinate to develop the RFP to recruit independent researchers who will submit proposals for and conduct the Study.

During this phase, Public Health is increasing its focus on supporting the technical process of developing and releasing the RFP for the Study and is broadening the scope of community outreach. Our goal is to ensure that interested members of the public, neighborhood councils, and other stakeholder groups that may not have been as actively engaged in the past, can



become aware of the forthcoming Study and have their perspectives included, which will help inform Public Health and the SOC about the priority health concerns and potential study questions for the impacted communities. Community input collected during open houses hosted by Public Health, CAG meetings, a virtual Town Hall, and a CAG presentation to the SOC has been used to develop draft Goals & Priorities for the Study. The draft Goals & Priorities will be released for public review and input in the coming weeks. Community feedback on the draft Goals & Priorities will help the SOC as they determine the key areas of focus for the Study, conducted by independent researchers, over the next few years.

To accommodate the demands of this next phase and meet community outreach needs, Public Health will continue to meet with the CAG on a quarterly basis and will also participate in Neighborhood Council meetings on a bi-monthly or on an as-requested basis. In addition, based on community feedback, meetings with other community groups may take place.

Public Health appreciates the CAG's and the broader community's participation in this process and has incorporated ideas and input from both. We understand the community is eager for the Study to begin and to produce answers to key questions, and we share that desire. The RFP process itself is not as quick as anyone wants. And while COVID 19 has placed significant demands on staff supporting the process of developing the RFP for the Study, with guidance and advice from the Scientific Oversight Committee (SOC), Public Health remains committed to this responsibility and to the impacted community. For more information about the components and process for the Aliso Canyon Disaster Health Research Study, background materials on the Blowout, Disaster and Response, and ways to provide feedback, please visit our website <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/healthresearch/>.