



Board Agenda Item 47

DATE: March 28, 2023

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBMITTED BY: David Luchini, RN, PHN, Director, Department of Public Health

SUBJECT: Retroactive Waiver of Extra-Help Maximum Hour Limitation

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

Retroactively authorize a waiver of the 28 hours per week and 960 hours per calendar year maximum hours limitation for the Extra Help positions listed on Attachment A in the Department of Public Health, Org 5620, pursuant to the provisions set forth in Salary Resolution, section 1100 and Personnel Rules 2040 and 4240.

There is no additional Net County Cost associated with the recommended action. Approval of the recommended action will waive the 28 hours per week and 960 hours per calendar year maximum hours limitation for six extra-help positions to ensure the Department's Community Health and Epidemiology Surveillance and Data Management Divisions have adequate staffing to continue to complete COVID related tasks and data clean up. This item is countywide.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

There is no viable alternative action due to the need for COVID related tasks and data clean up.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no increase in Net County Cost associated with the recommended action. Sufficient appropriations exist within the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity grant, the Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) grant and the Immunization Local Assistance Grant Funds included in the Department's Org 5620 FY 2022-23 Adopted Budget.

DISCUSSION:

On January 13, 2015 and June 7, 2016, your Board reiterated County policy that the use of Extra Help employees should:

- be of limited duration;
- not be used as a first response to staffing requirements;
- not supplant work regularly performed by permanent employees; and
- only be used to meet the critical, seasonal, or temporary work needs of departments on a limited basis.

In July 2020, the County Administrative Officer (CAO) approved the hiring request to fill thirty (30) Extra-Help Communicable Disease Specialist (CDS) and Disaster Service Worker (DSW) positions to assist with the County's COVID-19 response for contact tracing as well as medical investigator. A waiver for these extra-help staff to work over the 28 hour per week and 960 hour per year limit was also granted by the CAO

at that time. As the COVID-19 response evolved, staff were reassigned to the Immunization Program to assist with COVID-19 vaccine distribution and Epidemiology to assist with data cleanup. The Department was notified on January 20, 2023, that a waiver to extend staff was required. The Department gathered information on prior approvals that applied to several extra-help staff, however, six had already exceeded the weekly hour limitation and were not covered under previous waivers.

Currently, one extra-help CDS in the Community Health Division remains, assisting 15-25 hours per week in the Perinatal Hep B Prevention Program. Due to resources being routed to COVID response-related activities, this program has been severely impacted since early 2020. Supplemental staff are needed to bring this program up to current needs. The extra-help CDS is also providing 15-20 hours per week to COVID Vaccine Distribution. COVID Vaccine Distribution continues to be a project that requires additional support to release COVID vaccines, manage vaccine transportation equipment, and ensure ancillary supplies are prepared correctly. This assignment is expected to last at least through December 2023. The Immunization Local Assistance Grant Funds, which are funding this position, are available through June 2024. Extra Help is being requested in lieu of a permanent position as the funding is currently temporary and the workload may decrease over the next 18-months.

The COVID-19 work (COVID information line, outbreak management, and planning and distribution teams) is spread across numerous duties, including data entry, data clean up, data analysis, attending State and County meetings on a regular basis, and catching up on backlogged case data from 2022. Most of the work takes place in CalREDIE and CalCONNECT in the merging and deletion of duplicate records, the development and maintenance of reports on COVID-19 variant tracking, duplicate identification, reinfection identification, documentation of COVID-19 case record closures, and the monitoring of survey responses sent to COVID-19 cases via SMS messages through CalCONNECT. The four remaining Extra-help Program Technicians (PT)s undertake specifically tailored projects to fulfill the data needs of epidemiologists, and often interact with public health departments of other California counties when it involves COVID case requests. These Extra-Help PTs also assist in identifying which cases belong in Fresno's jurisdiction, and which should result in Fresno acquiring shared access to case information with those other counties. There is sufficient funding through the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity grant through December 2023.

The County of Fresno Public Health Laboratory (Lab) has been testing for COVID at various degrees of productivity throughout the pandemic. The Lab is currently transitioning to perform other tests and establishing protocols for all platforms. During this time, the extra-help Laboratory Intern began attending a state-sponsored certification on February 6, 2023 and will continue through the end of August 2023. As a partner with the California Association of Public Health Laboratory Directors, the Department is contractually obligated to provide 40 hours of training hours for the six-month program.

Should your Board approve this item, the Department will continue to respond appropriately to the pandemic as well as bring online other tests that have been identified as important to responding to the needs of the community.

REFERENCE MATERIAL:

BAI #72 - June 21, 2022
BAI #46 - November 16, 2021
BAI #37 - June 7, 2016
BAI #19 - January 13, 2015

ATTACHMENTS INCLUDED AND/OR ON FILE:

On file with Clerk - Attachment A

CAO ANALYST:

Ron Alexander