

Quality and Productivity Commission
34th Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program
"Leading with Excellence"

2021 APPLICATION

Title of Project (Limited to 50 characters, including spaces, using Arial 12-point font):

NAME OF PROJECT: LACDPH COVID-19 SCHOOLS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TEAM

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION: SEPTEMBER 24, 2020

(Must have been fully implemented for a minimum of at least one year - on or before July 1, 2020)

CHECK HERE IF THIS PROJECT IS BEING SUBMITTED FOR THE COVID-19 IMPACT AWARD ONLY. (Projects must be implemented on or before December 31, 2020. **Note:** Projects implemented less than one year ago will not be eligible for any other PQA awards. In addition, once a project is submitted, you cannot submit the same project for awards consideration in subsequent years).

PROJECT STATUS: Ongoing One-time only

HAS YOUR DEPARTMENT PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED THIS PROJECT? Yes No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Describe the project in 15 lines or less using Arial 12 point font. State clearly and concisely what difference the project has made.



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The COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted daily life, including closing K-12 schools in Los Angeles County and across the nation. The mission of the School Technical Assistance Team (STAT) is to help schools bring back students and staff safely and to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in schools. The STAT conducted in-person school visits to assess school safety and compliance, and answered questions submitted by schools via email and phone. In addition, the STAT collaborated with other LA County COVID-19 response teams to support their work. Between September 2020 and June 2021, the STAT assisted 2,475 schools in re-opening safely, returning 96,732 school staff and 489,214 students for in person instruction and services. STAT's work with schools contributed to the low rate of outbreaks of COVID-19 in the K-12 School sector.

BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY

(1) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST AVOIDANCE	(2) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST SAVINGS	(3) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL REVENUE	(1) + (2) + (3) = TOTAL ANNUAL ACTUAL/ESTIMATED BENEFIT	SERVICE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT
\$	\$	\$	\$	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

ANNUAL = 12 MONTHS ONLY

SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS DEPT. OF PUBLIC HEALTH, 313 N. FIGUEROA ST., 8TH FLOOR, LA, CA 90012		TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-288-8117
PROGRAM MANAGER'S NAME Dr. Robert Gilchick, MD, MPH EMAIL rgilchick@ph.lacounty.gov		TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-639-6400
PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE (PLEASE CALL (213) 893-0322 YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME) Catherine Mak, MBA 		TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-288-7240 EMAIL cmak@ph.lacounty.gov
DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE Dr. Barbara Ferrer, MPH, MED, PhD 		TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-288-7240

****ELECTRONIC, WET, OR SCANNED SIGNATURES ARE ACCEPTABLE****

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1st FACT SHEET – LIMITED UP TO 3 PAGES ONLY: Describe the **challenge(s), solution(s), and benefit(s)** of the project to the County. What quality and/or productivity-related outcome(s) has the project achieved? Provide measures of success and specify assessment time frame. Use Arial 12 point font.

Challenges:

LA County has over 1.5 million children between ages 5-17, and over 3,200 public, charter, and private schools spread over 80 unique school districts. The COVID-19 pandemic caused all schools in the County to cease their in person operations for a period of time leaving all students receiving virtual instruction only, resulting in academic regression and significant socioemotional consequences for many. As the County prepared for reopening of schools for the first time in many months, the overarching challenge was to design a project that could address the needs of the diverse school communities in LA County. The needs were identified as:

- Maximizing safety of students and school staff
- Preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the K-12 School setting
- Educating schools on ever-changing local, state and national requirements and best practices for preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the school setting
- Ensuring that schools implemented the LACDPH K-12 School Reopening Protocols with a high degree of fidelity.

Within the overarching challenge was the challenge of assembling a team large enough to serve all schools in LA County. In addition, training the team and implementing the project would need to be done virtually, as all County programs were directed to maximize telework options.

Another challenge was coordinating with other teams serving the K-12 School sector. The approach for the school sector was to prevent COVID-19 outbreaks at schools and then provide intensive management if outbreaks did occur. Essentially, three distinct teams worked with the K-12 School sector: one for prevention, one to track cases and manage exposure, and one to manage outbreaks.

The final challenge was ensuring a strong evaluation component, including a data-collection and analysis system, to assess the effectiveness of the project and to inform changes and improvements throughout the duration of the project.

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Solutions: In September 2020, Federal grant funding was used to create the Schools Technical Assistance Team (STAT), comprised of 52 Health Educators and 12 Senior Health Educators, managed and supported by administrative, and analytic staff. STAT functions as a complementary arm of the larger LACDPH ICS Liaison Section branch, which serves to enable community stakeholders and government partners with information and communication regarding COVID-19 safety. The primary purpose of STAT is to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in schools by establishing partnerships with schools and providing technical assistance so that schools 1) understand state and local COVID-19 guidance, and 2) are able to implement the LACDPH K-12 School Protocols with a high degree of fidelity. The initial intent in developing the project was that access to knowledgeable, confident public health educators would result in knowledgeable, confident school administrators, teachers, and parents, and ensure the safe return of as many students and staff to campus as case rates permitted.

The STAT accomplished the vision of accessible, public health expertise and assistance through multiple innovative strategies: 1) Providing an in-person site visit and technical assistance at each K-12 school within Los Angeles County within 14 days of notification of re-opening; 2) Providing prompt technical assistance with K-12 School re-opening documentation requirements and general requests for assistance; 3) Collaborating with other LAC COVID response teams to support consistent health education messaging and guidance throughout the response

While STAT primarily focuses on COVID-19 prevention and technical assistance in K-12 schools, the team collaborates closely with other LACDPH COVID response teams, including the ICS Liaison Branch Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), who provide support and assistance to all other community sectors. The purpose of the collaboration is to ensure consistent language, messaging and communication practices by the various teams. The team also works closely with both the Acute Communicable Disease Control and the Outbreak Management Branch teams, as these teams track and investigate COVID-19 cases, exposures, and outbreaks in schools. The result of the collaboration has been the identification of common gaps in knowledge of safety practices at schools that potentially result in outbreaks, and also to ensure STAT staff safety while conducting school visits. Environmental Health was critical in enforcing documented and repeated Health Officer Order violations on K-12 campuses. In order to collect data on schools, site visits, and calls, the team primarily relied on existing Microsoft Office software for data collection, including the use of Microsoft Forms for field data collection and Excel for data storage, and Teams for collaboration and communication. Complex analyses and evaluations were conducted in SAS, while call center documentation was managed through Microsoft Dynamics.

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Benefits: The benefits of the STAT project can be seen in the number of schools that were able to safely bring back students and staff in the 2020-2021 academic year. By June 22, 2021, of 3,041 total schools in the county (excluding 167 schools in Long Beach and Pasadena, which have their own health departments), 2,094 had notified LACDPH that they had fully re-opened, representing 439,345 students and 84,094 staff. This number includes 1,435 public schools representing 69 of the 80 districts in the county. Another 371 schools brought back high needs students for limited services and support, representing 22,560 students and 8,388 staff back on campus. In total, 2,475 schools brought back students and staff for in-person learning from September 2020 – June 2021, including 1,648 public schools, 386 charter schools, and 441 private, independent, and faith-based schools - representing a total of 489,214 students and 96,732 staff.

These school re-openings reflect the tremendous volume of work the STAT Health Educators accomplished. As of June 22, 2021, 2,362 detailed, on-campus site visits were conducted, representing thousands of hours of dedicated in-person technical assistance at schools across the county. Moreover, between September 2020 and June 2021, over 3,522 technical assistance calls were completed by the team, including 2,411 initial calls to schools newly re-opening, and 1,111 individual requests for information or assistance through the Liaison Section Call Center line. During the on-campus site visits, the STAT used an assessment checklist, which aligned with the LACDPH K-12 School Re-opening Protocols and was weighted and scored on a scale of 0%-100% to reflect the degree of compliance with required COVID-19 mitigation strategies. The vast majority of schools scored well after an initial visit with more than half of schools (1,202) scoring 100% and over 98% scoring above a 79%. Only 63 schools scored below a 79%. Nearly 70 schools were re-visited after particularly low scores (88% and below), and for those re-visited, the average score increased by 17%, and the median score increased by 16%.

The benefits of the STAT project are also reflected in very low COVID-19 outbreak rates at TK-12 Schools in LA County. LA County had only 98 outbreaks in all of the K-12 Schools between October 14, 2020 and June 21, 2021 – the vast majority occurring during the terrible surge in cases from November 2020 through January 2021. Remarkably, these outbreaks (defined as 3 or more epidemiologically linked cases within a 14-day period) resulted in only 465 total staff cases (0.48%), and 135 student cases (0.03%) on K-12 campuses. This is an extraordinarily low rate of transmission, particularly compared to the rate of transmission occurring in other sectors and in surrounding communities.

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Linkage to the County Strategic Plan – 1 page only. Which County Strategic Plan goal(s) does this project address? Explain how. Use Arial 12-point font.

GOAL I. Make Investments That Transform and GOAL II- Foster Vibrant and Resilient Communities

STAT, in partnership with the Liaison Section, developed a seamless, multi-faceted system for receiving and answering questions from individual schools and school districts. The team completed in-person school visits, with remote, field-based data collection to every school bringing students back on campus. Each school received tailored, specific recommendations for improving the school’s safety measures. The team answered thousands of detailed questions from schools that came in via phone and email. The team also supported resilient, healthy communities by conducting trainings for school nurses as they set up their COVID-19 isolation areas and developed Exposure Management Plans. Moreover, the team assisted the Los Angeles Unified School District as they developed a district-wide COVID-19 training module for their staff. In addition, the STAT helped develop a Vaccination FAQ document targeted towards parents and the school sector.

The immense volume of calls and available inquiry data made clear the education sector’s urgent need for STAT’s technical assistance in interpreting and implementing the K-12 School Re-opening Protocols. Low outbreak data in the K-12 setting, a direct consequence of STAT’s technical assistance in partnership with other LACDPH efforts, is evidence of supporting healthy and safe community spaces for the County’s school-aged population.

GOAL III. Realize Tomorrow’s Government Today: Finally, the STAT project was a stellar investment in County workforce and implemented innovative, flexible and effective use of technology. The STAT project provided professional development and growth opportunities to the entire STAT team. We utilized the Microsoft Office Suite to conduct virtual team meetings and training and virtual community meetings and trainings. We used Microsoft Forms to collect school data and auto-populate it to various excel spreadsheets. We developed shared excel data platforms with other DPH teams to ensure that all had access on the schools re-opening, potential areas of concern for each school, site visit, case and outbreak data. The STAT Data team publicly reported on the schools open under the CA Safe Schools for All program, as well as those schools bringing students back for specialized services and support. In addition, overall epidemiologic data was frequently referenced in press conferences conducted by the Public Health Director and Health Officer.

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COST AVOIDANCE, COST SAVINGS, AND REVENUE GENERATED (ESTIMATED BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY): If you are claiming cost benefits, include a calculation on this page. Please indicate whether these benefits apply in total or on a per unit basis, e.g., per capita, per transaction, per case, etc. You must include an explanation of the County cost savings, cost avoidance or new revenue that matches the numbers in the box. Remember to keep your supporting documentation. Use Arial 12-point font

Cost Avoidance: Costs that are eliminated or not incurred as a result of program outcomes. Please indicate whether these are costs to the County or to other entities.

Cost Savings: A reduction or lessening of expenditures as a result of program outcomes. Please indicate whether these were expenditures by the County or by other entities.

Revenue: Increases in existing revenue streams or new revenue sources to the County as a result of program outcomes.

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