



Washtenaw County Board of Health

Minutes

October 22, 2021, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM
555 Towner St., Room 2102B, Ypsilanti, MI 48198
Zoom Meeting

Present: Gina Dahlem, Justin Hodge, Carrie Rheingans, Katie Scott, Kathleen Stroud, Elisabeth Vanderpool, Morghan Williams Boydston

Absent: James Carty, Leon Golson, Neel Hajra

Staff: Jimena Loveluck, Kristen Schweighoefer, Ruth Kraut, Adam Paberzs, Hannah Lane, Susan Ringler-Cerniglia, Alize Asberry Payne, Russell O'Brien

Guests: Maria Militzer, Marta Larson, Amanda Harris, Jessica Flohr

1. Call to Order

Justin Hodge called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

Roll-call check-in.

2. Public Comment

Marta Larson, joining from Northfield Township, thanked the Washtenaw County Health Department (WCHD) for making it possible to have a dedicated data dashboard for Whitmore Lake and Northfield Township. The dashboard is not ready to be made public yet, but they are looking at data from 2016 and determining whether the efforts that are being made for health equity are effective or not, and where efforts can be improved.

Maria Militzer, joining from Pittsfield Township, seconded Marta's comments and expressed gratitude to the health department (HD) for making it possible for more Latinx residents to obtain COVID-19 vaccinations.

3. Board Member Response to Public Comment

Justin Hodge thanked both commenters for taking the time to share their positive comments about the HD and the work that is being done.

4. Approval of Agenda (Action)

Motion by M. Williams Boydston, seconded by G. Dahlem, to approve the agenda.

Jimena Loveluck added one item to New Business, an update from Kristen Schweighoefer on the lead level exceedance in Manchester.

Motion by C. Rheingans, seconded by K. Stroud, to approve the agenda with the addition to New Business.

Motion approved unanimously with a roll-call vote.

5. Approval of September 24, 2021 Meeting Minutes (Action)

Motion by K. Stroud, seconded by M. Williams Boydston, to approve the minutes of the September 24, 2021 meeting.

Motion approved unanimously with a roll-call vote.

6. Executive Committee Report from September 16, 2021

Board members received the Executive Committee minutes.



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No discussion about the report.

7. Menthol/Flavored Tobacco Advocacy Efforts

Amanda Ng presented to board members on policy level issues related to the sale of menthol and flavored tobacco products. She shared data, discussed why menthol and flavors are an issue, and talked about what the HD will be doing.

Washtenaw County has a lower smoking rate than the state and national average at 10.7%, but there is still work to be done in the 11.4% of deaths linked directly to tobacco use in 2019. Looking at different areas of the county, tobacco use rates change quite a bit. The Black/African American rate is 16.7% and tobacco use in Whitmore Lake and Ypsilanti is 19.6%. Amanda shared slides with tobacco use broken down by race/ethnicity, age, and geographic location. E-cigarette use among youth was discussed. The data shows E-cigarette use went down slightly between 2018 and 2020, and tobacco smoking went up a little bit.

Menthol is the only flavor allowed in cigarettes since the ruling in 2009 that eliminated all other flavors. It has become more and more popular and resulted in ongoing problems because they are more addictive and harder to quit. In 2018, menthol preference among Black/African American smokers was measured at 85%. As a result, Black/African Americans suffer the greatest burden of tobacco related death of any other racial or ethnic group.

Nearly 60% of high school students who use E-cigarettes, use mint or menthol flavored products. Young people quickly switch and adapt to whatever flavor product is on the market, making it even more important to remove all flavors, including menthol. A national tobacco survey found that 65% of young menthol smokers say they would quit if menthol cigarettes were banned.

Amanda provided some national, state, and local updates. The FDA announced a Menthol Ban on 4/29/21. They are also going through their pre-market authorization process for E-cigarettes which resulted in a huge portion of those products being denied. This is the beginning of the process, so they have not done anything about the flavored products yet and they are still available. Grand Rapids and Wayne County are both working to ban menthol and all flavored tobacco products with funding from the state. There is now a resolution to endorse a ban on the sale of menthol and all flavored products, including E-cigarettes in the state. There is a sign-on for organizations and individuals through Tobacco Free Michigan. Kick off events were held in both communities in September as well as a media campaign that Washtenaw County will be able to take part in. The HD's focus will be on community education and working on explaining the risks, the disparities, and how different communities are targeted. That work will be used to identify key stakeholders and advocates that can help deliver the message and identify concerns that can be addressed. This will help prepare advocates and draft a model policy.

Kathleen Stroud requested WCHD staff write a resolution that lists many of the whereas as the data presented today, for the Board of Health (BOH) to support and recommend. Jimena Loveluck responded that she appreciates Kathleen's support of a strong stance on this issue and resolutions can be useful. She also discussed action items that the BOH can take in support of moving forward with this issue. Kathleen responded that she sees the resolution as a starting point and expressing a political willingness to tackle this problem on record.

Morghen Williams Boydston commented that using tobacco is a stress and anxiety coping mechanism and asked if there is any type of campaign that speaks to the mental health issues and addressing the root causes like stress,



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anxiety, and trauma. Amanda replied that she didn't have specifics around mental health, but they are realizing that one treatment method doesn't work for everybody.

Carrie Rheingans said she would be happy to support a resolution when it comes back in draft form and offered to help staff with writing it. She would like to include using the Opportunity Index and populations that have lower opportunity because of historical exclusion as driving forces for why this needs to be addressed in our community.

Katie Scott agreed with Justin Hodge about a Public Health Task Force on Tobacco. She said the Board of Commissioners (BOC) is in budget season, so now would be a good time. Katie asked for a ballpark dollar amount that would be in the resolution and for Amanda's presentation so that she can work on writing the resolution.

8. Community Voices and Health for All Report

Marta Larson said she would take the previous conversation about banning menthol and flavored tobacco products back to Community Voices to see their take on it. She feels this would be a good chance to involve Community Voices because the areas affected are closely related to those represented by Community Voices.

Marta asked the HD to find a way to clear up the confusion between additional doses vs booster doses and the ability to mix different COVID-19 vaccines. She also encouraged the HD to streamline all the COVID-19 data so that people don't have to search multiple websites.

Maria Militzer continued the conversation around data. She said one of the missing components of COVID-19 data is the number of school aged children infected and school closings happening because of outbreaks. There is a need for data so that factors and social determinants of health in communities of color can be addressed.

Maria discussed the increased disparities between ethnic groups in Washtenaw County. She mentioned public comment at previous BOH meetings about the need to do something about violence in African American and low-income neighborhoods. If this will be addressed as a multi-level issue, we need to look at the sources of crime and neighborhood violence.

Flu vaccine was discussed. The HD's supply is currently limited, but they are offering flu shots and will not turn anyone away that doesn't have insurance. The HD working with Michigan Medicine and St Joes to promote their community flu vaccinations. Dr Juan Marquez recently participated in a live Facebook question and answer session in Spanish and an English session will take place this weekend. There was additional funding from the state provided to local health departments last year to promote and provide flu vaccine. More flu vaccine could be purchased but that money is not available this year.

9. COVID-19 Vaccine and Testing Updates

Dr Juan Marquez gave a brief update on COVID-19 vaccines and testing. Testing continues to be a source for delays. The 3 different types of tests were discussed as well as the reasons for each type of test. WC is currently doing about 2500 tests per day, but that doesn't include at home antigen testing. Other counties that received direct CARES funding were able to set up their own drive-thru testing sites, but WC didn't receive the funding directly. A drive-thru testing site was set up for anyone that wants to get tested regardless of insurance status using a private local lab. WC has also submitted several requests to the state for vendors to do testing events especially in school settings. Some of the requests have been fulfilled and others are still pending. The HD is also offering rapid antigen



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testing at some events and will continue to do so. The BOC approved funding for at home antigen test kits but they are difficult to acquire because there is a short supply.

Individuals that are immunocompromised can now receive a third dose of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. Booster doses are for those who had an adequate response but because of variants and waning response over time, they need a boost. Pfizer, Moderna, and Janssen all have boosters approved. Mixed series are now allowed by the CDC. It is anticipated that Pfizer doses for 5 -11 year-olds will be approved the first week of November. The HD is planning efforts around boosters and vaccines for children.

10. BOC Liaison Report

Katie Scott shared that the BOC is in the middle of budget discussions and the budget hearing will be at the first meeting in November. Consider attending the meeting and providing comments.

A position at the prosecutor's office for a conviction integrity unit was recently approved.

11. Old Business

- **Board of Health By-Laws**

Justin Hodge reported that the Executive Committee meeting in November will be used to discuss the by-laws and be able to bring the full board a proposal at the December meeting.

- **Washtenaw Rescue Plan**

Justin Hodge shared that the BOC continues to do work on the second package. There will continue to be community engagement as well as conversations with county departments. Public health focused investments are a big part of the second package.

12. New Business

- **Racial Equity Audit**

The Racial Equity Office is starting a county wide racial equity audit process. The HD will be participating in 2 ways, an individual staff survey to be completed by November 15 and a department assessment.

- **Climate Action Plan**

Approved by the BOC in early October. There will be an internal focus and a committee of staff will be set up to help guide the process and work with the vendor and county administration.

- **PH Wins Survey**

This a national public health workforce survey that is done annually. If there is an 80% response rate from staff, WCHD is able to access the data specifically for WC staff.

- **Lead in Manchester**

Kristen Schweighoefer shared that the Village of Manchester put out an Action Level Exceeded on Wednesday. This is a result of how the state changed how they are doing lead testing for municipalities. 7 of 19 samples exceeded the new action level. The HD worked with state partners to do a lot of the health response. MDHHS has a program that will distribute free water filters to those that qualify. The HD medical RV is at an elementary school in Manchester today providing lead testing to anyone that wants it. Manchester will be increasing the frequency at which they replace lead pipes.



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13. Adjournment

Motion by C. Rheingans, seconded by K. Scott, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion approved unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 11:03 AM.

Minutes taken by Russell O'Brien

