

CUYAHOGA COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

SPECIAL MEETING

MINUTES – August 10, 2020

Meeting called to order by Dr. Gregory L. Hall, President of the Board at 4:06 p.m. via web conference, on August 10, 2020.

Roll Call: The following members were present: Dr. Gregory L. Hall, Ms. Debbie Moss, Mr. James T. Gatt, Mr. Douglas Wang, Dr. Sherrie Williams.

New Business:

Discussion regarding the Board's declaration that racism is a public health crisis.

Dr. Hall led a discussion on CCBH activities to date related to the declaration of racism as a public health crisis. All Board members engaged in the discussion. This discussion was related to the impact of adopting such a resolution, what additional opportunities to remedy inequities might be provided, and how the Board might more directly promote community awareness of and engagement with opportunities.

Terry Allan, Health Commissioner and Co-Director of Prevention and Wellness, Martha Halko, provided an overview of the history and current activities:

- CCBH established a Diversity Committee of the Board in 2013 and continues to work on our staffing, purchasing practices and policy goals to increase diversity and opportunity for all;
- CCBH's pivotal role in the Health Improvement Partnership - Cuyahoga (HIP Cuyahoga www.hipcuyahoga.org) that led to the creation of our county's first health improvement plan in 2015-2020;
- Health equity focus as a central theme in our 2015 Strategic Plan;
- Multiple trainings have been held for staff and the Board that provide the historical context for the inequities and disparities among people of color in our community;
- The establishment of an internal Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) committee and the addition of EDI to our strategic plan;
- The Board's continued role with HIP-Cuyahoga and hospital systems to create community health assessments in 2018 and 2019;
- The current work underway to develop an EDI curriculum for all staff to better serve the public;
- And most recently, our active support for the Cuyahoga County Council resolution that declared racism a public health crisis;
- Currently, CCBH has partnered with MetroHealth to provide community testing for COVID-19 in under resourced communities of color where testing is not available;

- CCBH has highlighted the disproportionate burden of COVID-19 on the African American community, including the higher rates of hospitalization and ICU admissions;

Discussion regarding the Board's recommendations for re-opening of schools. Dr. Hall moved to the second topic on CCBH recommendations related to school reopening this fall in the context of COVID-19.

A Board member shared concerns that CCBH should lead the discussions with schools on how to reopen safely. Mr. Allan and Rick Novickis, Director of Environmental Health, related that they had conducted weekly briefings with superintendents of local school districts, in conjunction with the Educational Services Center, and that the CCBH website provides guidance to the schools on safe practices (<https://www.ccbh.net/covid-19-school-guidance/>). The districts requested that CCBH provide guidance for the schools as they prepared for the fall reopening. Most recently, at the request of the school districts, CCBH provided some additional guidance, in the form of recommendations, that schools begin education remotely and cease extracurricular activities, including sports, until the remote period ends. The most recent guidance from CCBH, which can be found at <https://www.ccbh.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/CCBH-HC-letter-re-school-recs-8.6.20.pdf>, recommends the start of school virtually and reinforced that these are recommendations, designed to provide evidence-based guidance, not a Board of Health order.

Mr. Jeremiah Sawyer, of North Royalton, a member of the public in attendance virtually, attempted to provide public comment on school reopening, but was deferred to a later portion of the agenda.

Staff members emphasized that school districts may exercise their discretion in determining what is most appropriate for their district in the fall. While a significant number of school districts have opted to start remotely, a number of districts have decided to provide some form of in-person education and several have opted for in-person extracurricular activities and sports. Several other large communities in the state, including Franklin County and Columbus, Montgomery County and Dayton and Summit County and Akron have made similar recommendations.

Mr. Novickis advised that outbreaks of COVID-19 related to childcares and return-to-play sports have already been documented by CCBH.

Mr. Allan advised that whatever school districts decide, CCBH is committed to work with all of our local schools as they implement their final plans. As we move forward and consider any future modifications to these recommendations, the factors that the Board would consider under review include, but are not limited to:

- Positivity Rates –A sustained decline in COVID-19 testing positivity rates below 5%.
- New Case Reports –A sustained decline in new cases over a one-month period.
- State Public Health Advisory System –A risk rating of Orange/2 or below over multiple weeks, which must clearly indicate sustained improvement in the metrics as they relate specifically to our health jurisdiction.

- COVID-19 testing capacity for children –There is currently little to no testing available for those under the age of 18, which dramatically complicates our outbreak response in the school setting. The lack of testing limits our response to a symptom-based investigation response.

The Board discussed these updates and felt that it was the responsibility of a health department to provide recommendations and also emphasized that these were not requirements. CCBH provided recommendations on a range of topics, including flu vaccinations, which are best practices for prevention and not mandates. The Board will continue discussions going forward to track the status of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Public Comments –

Jeremiah Sawyer, a resident of North Royalton, addressed the Board regarding the recommendations for re-opening schools. Mr. Sawyer shared his disagreement with the Board recommendations and concern about isolation, mental health issues, single parent challenges with remote learning and other factors that create challenges for remote learning.

Dr. Hall thanked Mr. Sawyer for his comments. Dr. Hall stated that the Board shared similar concerns during what is a very difficult period for everyone; that the Board reiterated that the final decisions on actions for reopening were the responsibility of the school districts and that CCBH would continue to monitor the situation going forward.

Miscellaneous Business – N/A

With the agenda being complete, Dr. Hall called for a motion to adjourn. Thereupon, it was moved by Mr. Gatt, seconded by Dr. Hall, that the following Motion be adopted:

BE IT RESOLVED that the meeting be adjourned at 5:19 p.m.

The Secretary called the roll:

Ayes: Dr. Hall, Ms. Moss, Mr. Gatt, Mr. Wang, Dr. Williams.

Meeting adjourned at 5:19 PM.

CUYAHOGA COUNTY DISTRICT BOARD OF HEALTH

Terry Allan, Secretary

Dr. Gregory L. Hall, President