

**Chatham County Board of Health  
Meeting Minutes  
Monday, May 22, 2023  
Dunlap Building – 80 East Street, Pittsboro, NC 27312**

The Chatham County Board of Health held a regular meeting on Monday, May 22, 2023, in the Board Room of the Dunlap Building in Pittsboro.

**Attendees**

**Board Members:** Karen Barbee, EdD, Chair; Alan Rimer, PE, PhD; William Roscoe, OD; Carol Reitz-Barlow, MSN, RN CCRN; Franklin Gomez Flores, Commissioner; Judith Malone, RN; Tammy Lloyd, MD

**Staff:** Michael Zelek, Danielle White, Julie Goodwin, Beverly Allen, Alicia Doran, Zachary Horner, Roxana Lopez, Beverly Kay, Terri Buchanan, Samantha Owusu, Casey Hilliard, Anne Lowry, Zach Deaton, Nellie Benitez, Lou Ann Riddle

**Guests:** Family of Samantha Owusu, George Greger-Holt, LeAnn McKoy, Jennie Kristiansen, Anna Stormzand, Karinda Roebuck, Eric Wolak, Jen Costello, Alisha Bailey

**Welcome, Call to Order and Introductions**

Dr. Barbee called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Michael Zelek, Public Health Director, introduced Bianca Sahota, the new Policy and Quality Improvement Officer. Anne Lowry, Environmental Health Director, reintroduced Roxana Lopez, who has returned from military service abroad. Ms. Lopez awarded Ms. Lowry with a plaque and flag recognizing her support during Ms. Lopez' deployment. Zach Deaton, Clinical & Community Health Services Director, introduced Lou Ann Riddle as the new Public Health Nursing Supervisor, an internal promotion from Communicable Disease Nurse. He also announced Samantha Owusu as the new Community Health and Social Work Services Supervisor.

**Conflict of Interest Disclosure**

None.

**Approval of Agenda**

*Mr. Gomez-Flores made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, and Dr. Rimer seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

**Consent Agenda**

*Mr. Gomez-Flores made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented, and Dr. Rimer seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

**Public Input Session**

There were no public comments.

### **Board of Health Awards Presentation**

Dr. Barbee announced the Chatham County Board of Health Employee of the Year as Samantha Owusu, Public Health Social Worker. Dr. Barbee read the nomination letter, which stated that Ms. Owusu is “a proven leader who thrives as a public health social worker,” and that she “is the embodiment of public health, public service, and selflessness.”

Dr. Barbee announced the Chatham County Board of Health Community Partner of the Year as EMBRACe. Dr. Barbee read the nomination letter, which referenced EMBRACe’s work in rallying the community to support the Maternity Care Center at Chatham Hospital and their focus on decreasing birth inequities in the county. The EMBRACe Coordinating Committee received the award.

### **Reports**

#### *Safe Kids Chatham Presentation*

Anna Stormzand, George Greger-Holt, Alicia Doran, and Samantha Owusu presented the program review for Safe Kids Chatham. Ms. Stormzand said she wanted to start giving yearly updates because of the relevance of public health to the work that Safe Kids does.

Ms. Stormzand said Safe Kids is an international organization that serves children ages 0-19 with more than 400 chapters in the United States with the goal of preventing injuries and fatalities in young people through intervention and education. She said that child unintentional injuries have decreased over the last decade, but unintentional injuries are still the leading cause of death in children and the majority of them are preventable. Gun-related deaths are the #1 cause within that, followed by categories like car accidents, suffocations, and others. Safe Kids collaborates with numerous organizations and agencies, including public health departments, law enforcement, and nonprofits.

Ms. Stormzand said one of the most significant focus areas is child passenger safety. Motor vehicle accidents are one of the top reasons for people to go to the hospital. At UNC Hospital last year, around one-third of children coming into the hospital related to car accidents were restrained improperly in the vehicle, while another third had no restraint. Ms. Stormzand stated that Safe Kids Chatham partners did hundreds of installations and inspections of car seats last year, with more than 200 done by CCPHD specifically. The agency also started a safe new drivers education program in Chatham and Chapel Hill-Carrboro schools, with around 225 students from those districts participating in a pilot program last year.

Ms. Stormzand said the second focus area is home safety, which includes falls, firearms, and substance use. Ms. Owusu said the idea was to focus on improving safety for children in the home. One effort was putting together home safety kits, which could include gun locks, cabinet locks, medication lock boxes, and other materials to decrease the number of injuries that

happen in the home. She said that many of these items can be expensive, which can create a barrier, so having those resources available for families that need them at no cost is important.

Mr. Greger-Holt discussed the connection between Chatham Drug Free and Safe Kids in relation to childhood poisonings due to medication. He talked about the medication drop boxes where people can safely dispose of unused medications. Some boxes are located in permanent locations while others are mobile and brought to community events.

Ms. Owusu discussed gun safety, mental health, and suicide prevention. She said that suicide is on the rise, and that suicide is the second leading cause of death for individuals ages 10-14 and 20s-40s. One particular concern is an increase in the sale of firearms, so the agency wanted to focus on safety, considering the emotional discussion around firearms. She said that the focus is that if you are going to have a firearm, make sure that all safety precautions are taken to prevent injury. Ms. Owusu added that mental health services are not utilized as much as they should be, but there is also a shortage of providers. Ms. Stormzand said that the agency is working to provide gun locks to multiple agencies to spread coverage.

Mr. Greger-Holt discussed water safety, collaborating with the Army Corps of Engineers at Jordan Lake to provide education and personal flotation devices so people at the lake have access to life jackets. He added that the group is working on providing or supporting swimming lessons. Additionally, Mr. Greger-Holt said the organization is supporting fire safety with annual education and outreach through the Fire Marshal and local fire departments. Other topics included hot car display and awareness and bicycle and pedestrian safety.

#### *Annual Community Child Protection & Fatality Prevention Team Report*

Mr. Zelek and Jennie Kristiansen, Chatham County Social Services Director, presented the annual Community Child Protection and Fatality Prevention Team report. The team reviews active child welfare cases, all child fatalities, and policies and procedures of state and local agencies to develop an understanding of complexities and challenges families in child welfare are facing, address gaps in service provision, and make recommendations for system change.

Ms. Kristiansen said that the majority of children referred to DSS were related to parental substance use or domestic violence. The cases selected for review are based on the complicated nature of the issues and social workers looking for feedback regarding improving outcomes. Reviewed cases found that children's health needs were a contributing reason for removal. In half of the 8 cases reviewed, children were placed with kin or other family, while lack of engagement in treatment, criminal justice involvement, and lack of services were complicating factors prohibiting referral for reunification. The team presented several recommendations on the local and state level to address gaps and needs seen through reviewed cases.

Mr. Zelek discussed child fatalities. The team reviewed six deaths in fiscal year 2023, with reviews taking place at least 12 months after the incident. One case was deemed to be unpreventable so far, with topics of concern including youth mental health, safe storage of

firearms, and traffic safety. He said the general themes included safe sleep, which has been seen in case reviews over the last several years; youth mental health continues to be a growing concern; and the importance of safe storage of firearms.

Ms. Kristiansen discussed successes in the past year, including the continued support of Family Treatment Court; a Vaya Health representative co-located at Chatham DSS, including weekly meetings; a project enhancing family time and visitation, recognizing that children who spend more time with family are more likely to be reunified with that family; and foster care recruitment and retention, particularly in licensing kinship families. Mr. Zelek added to the discussion of successes, including the focus on equity, like the EMBRACe project; CCPHD's car seat safety check program; the SIDS Awareness Month campaign in October with educational materials; release of the Chatham County Community Assessment and YRBS data, with mental health and substance use deemed priorities; and the county receiving opioid settlement funds to hire a coordinator and prioritize early intervention and education among youth.

Looking forward to 2023, Ms. Kristiansen discussed opportunities. She referenced potential Medicaid expansion, which could cover 3,000 more Chatham County residents; the Family First Prevention Services Act, which focuses on evidence-based services in communities to keep children out of foster care; a community-wide Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) workshop; expanded family time and visitation; continuing to work with the opioid settlement funds; and potential alignment with other coalitions around priority issues.

Mr. Zelek concluded the presentation by acknowledging Terri Buchanan of CCPHD who has been working with the team, along with other CCPHD staff.

Dr. Lloyd asked what the rate of reunification was with children in DSS. Ms. Kristiansen said that around 14 out of 40 children were reunified with their families when exiting the DSS system, less than 50%. Ms. Kristiansen said that there are funds generally available to support licensed families with the potential for more should legislation pass the General Assembly. She said that more families are becoming licensed to be foster homes in part due to virtual trainings, although there are never enough foster parents.

## **New Business**

### *Clinical & Community Health Services (CCHS) Update*

Mr. Deaton provided an update on CCHS. He referenced the division's shift from provision to assurance, divesting of various primary care services, and a focus on upstream, community-based, and core public health services, including systems and services alignment. He said the division and the department as a whole exist to meet community needs. The division has seen and will see personnel changes in the near future, including the hiring of a new Administrative Services Manager, the retirement of longtime Public Health Nursing Supervisor Bonnie Dukeman at the end of June, and the promotions of Lou Ann Riddle and Sam Owusu.

Regarding goals moving forward, Mr. Deaton said the division wants to focus on addressing span of control challenges, ensuring supervisors have no more than 5-7 direct reports; thoughtfully utilize vacancies to meet department and community needs and offer better support for staff and supervisors; and a restructure of the division to provide better clarity for areas of focus. Mr. Deaton then presented a new organizational chart for the division. He said this new team approach allows for cross-training, flexibility when short-staffed, community engagement and outreach for all program coordinators, and flexibility in work.

### **New Business**

#### *Annual BOH Meeting Schedule*

Dr. Barbee referred to the proposed meeting schedule for the next fiscal year. Adjustments were made to the proposed schedule to match the calendar and avoid a Memorial Day meeting, with the following dates edited:

- March 27, 2024 → March 25, 2024
- April 24, 2024 → April 22, 2024
- May 22, 2024 → May 20, 2024

*Dr. Lloyd made a motion to approve the annual Board of Health meeting schedule for FY 23-24 as amended, and Ms. Reitz-Barlow seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **Old Business**

#### *FY24 BOH Officer Slate Chair/Vice Chair*

Dr. Barbee said there was a committee to discuss the slate of officers for the next fiscal year Board of Health. Commissioner Gomez Flores said the committee asked the current Chair and Vice Chair to continue serving, and they agreed.

*Dr. Lloyd made a motion to approve the Board of Health officer slate for chair and vice chair for FY 23-24 as proposed, and Dr. Rimer seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

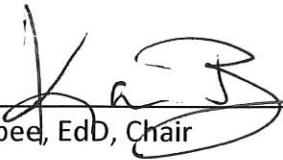
### **Health Director Report**


Mr. Zelek provided the health director report:

- He again referred to the new staff and promotions within the department, saying he was happy for them and happy for the department. Additionally, he said that Brandy Prieto, who was filling in for Ms. Lopez, is moving over to Admin to work on a digitization project on personnel and Board of Health records.
- Environmental Health is hosting a summer intern who is starting in June that will work on an extreme heat response toolkit.
- The department has a few vacancies, including an environmental health specialist and two clinic nurses.

### **Adjournment**

*Dr. Roscoe made a motion to approve the adjourn the meeting, and Ms. Reitz-Barlow seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

  
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Karen Barbee, EdD, Chair

  
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Secretary Ex-Officio  
Michael Zelek, MPH, Public Health Director