

**Chatham County Board of Health
Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 27, 2023
Board Room, Dunlap Building – 80 East Street, Pittsboro, NC 27312**

The Chatham County Board of Health held a regular meeting on Monday, November 27, 2023, in the Board Room of the Dunlap Building in Pittsboro.

Attendees

Board Members: Karen Barbee, EdD, Chair; Stephanie Freese, DVM, Vice Chair; Franklin Gomez Flores, Commissioner; Carol Reitz-Barlow, MSN, RN, CCRN; Zachary Brian, DMD, MHA; Rya Williams; Delfino Benitez; Alan Rimer, PE, PhD; Tammy Lloyd, MD

Staff: Michael Zelek, Zach Deaton, Anne Lowry, Lou Ann Riddle, Beverly Allen, Bianca Sahota, Julie Goodwin, Morgan Culver, Kevin Overcash, Zachary Horner, Lisa Morgan, Dorothy Rawleigh, Alecia Marsh

Guests: Eric Wolak, Chatham Hospital

Welcome, Call to Order and Introductions

Dr. Barbee started the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Dorothy Rawleigh, Health Promotion & Policy Division Director, introduced Alecia Marsh, the new Child Care Health Consultant, who began today.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure

None.

Approval of Agenda

Stephanie Freese made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, and Franklin Gomez Flores seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Consent Agenda

Zachary Brian made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented, and Carol Reitz-Barlow seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Input Session

None.

New Business

None.

Reports

Tattoo Convention Report

Lisa Morgan, Food, Lodging, & Institutions (FLI) Program Supervisor, spoke about the first tattoo convention in Chatham County. Ms. Morgan explained that tattoos are body art in which ink is injected under the skin. North Carolina law requires that tattoo artists be permitted through the local health department. Ms. Morgan said the convention was held in October and included many artists who displayed their work and provided tattoos. There were other events and things that took place during the event.

Ms. Morgan said organizing the event began six months ago and included setting up a convention tattoo permit fee. Thirty-three artists participated and were permitted. FLI staff worked on application review and split up the artists among inspectors. The most important thing they did, Ms. Morgan said, was ensuring that all tattoo recipients signed consent forms and watched for infection control, hand-washing, and needle disposal. The team who inspected included Angela Hughes, Lisa Morgan, Shvaughn Ross, Kristin Allen, and Mike Dunbar.

Ms. Morgan then displayed various photos from the event. She said the artists were very friendly. She said there are no permitted places in Chatham County currently to get a tattoo.

Annual Communicable Disease Report

Lou Ann Riddle and Julie Goodwin, Public Health Nurse Supervisors, and Beverly Allen, Communicable Disease Nurse, presented the Annual Communicable Disease Report. Ms. Riddle stated that the numbers of reportable communicable diseases stayed fairly stable from 2021 to 2022. Ms. Riddle stated that the county has had confirmed cases of legionellosis over the last three years. She added that the county had 7,788 cases of COVID-19 reported in 2022, along with 18 deaths attributable to COVID, but the numbers may not be 100% accurate due to increased use of home tests. Chatham County is still a low-risk county for tuberculosis (TB), with just one active case and seven latent cases of TB in 2022. All individuals received and completed treatment.

Ms. Allen shared numbers related to rabies. There were 171 reports of animal to human bites reported from Animal Services, but Ms. Allen stated that Animal Services does not have to report every case. There were 10 reports of possible human exposure, and post-exposure prophylaxis was recommended for 30 people (24 received, 6 declined).

Ms. Goodwin discussed trends in STDs. She stated that chlamydia rates are still increasing, a trend that has been ongoing for several years. Gonorrhea went down a bit, while syphilis and HIV numbers stayed stable. However, she added, syphilis rates across the country, particularly congenital syphilis. Rya Williams asked why rates of syphilis are increasing. Ms. Goodwin and Ms. Riddle said that rates are increasing particularly in men who have sex with men but there are several factors that play into it across other groups. Ms. Riddle said that the age group generally with the highest rate is 20-25 years, with the next highest group up to age 35 years.

Mr. Wolak asked about condom use and other prophylactic use in Chatham County in preventative messaging. Mr. Zelek said the department has been communicating about

availability of free condoms, and Ms. Rawleigh added that the department has been working on a contract with a company to put ads for STI testing on ads on dating apps for the LGBTQ+ community. Ms. Goodwin explained, particularly related to syphilis, that one of the primary symptoms of syphilis is a painless lesion, and secondary symptoms are very minor.

The board discussed addressing disparities in STI testing between females and males, perhaps through advocacy to local healthcare providers. CDC recommendations for STI testing state that females should be tested much more frequently than males, in general. Ms. Riddle stated that anyone can come to the Siler City clinic and get tested for STIs for free. She said the department has been working to try to get that information out. She added that there can be many barriers to getting treatment, like money or transportation.

Mr. Zelek said that this presentation focuses on reportable diseases as required by the state. COVID-19 was removed as a reportable disease earlier this year, though COVID-19 deaths are still reportable.

Opioid Overdose Prevention Update

Morgan Culver, Opioid Overdose Prevention Coordinator, provided an update on opioid overdose prevention in Chatham County.

She began by explaining the history of the Sheriff's Prevention Partnership on Controlled Substances. The group is designed to prevent and reduce the harmful outcomes of drug use in Chatham County and includes people from various backgrounds, agencies, and organizations. Ms. Culver said the partnership did not have designated funding or a facilitator for a while, but both of those issues have been addressed. Chatham County will be receiving around \$5 million for the next 17 years, with an average of about \$290,000 a year that is front-loaded and rolls over each year. Counties have 12 evidence-based options of things to do to address these issues. Ms. Culver stated that she started with the department earlier this year and has a background in communicable disease and drug user health. She added that she has many loved ones who have used drugs or are battling addiction.

The Partnership has reconvened for quarterly meetings and recruited new members, particularly people with lived experience. Sub-committees were re-established to explore options for spending settlement funds: Early Intervention, Post-Overdose Response Team, Evidence-Based Addiction Treatment, Recovery Support Services, and Naloxone Distribution.

Since 2020, 92 people have died of opioid overdose in Chatham County, giving Chatham a higher rates of death than Durham and Wake counties, about the same as Alamance County, and lower rate than Lee and Randolph counties. Ms. Culver stated that 11 North Carolinians die of overdose every day, and overdose is the leading cause of death for Americans younger than 44 years. She added that Naloxone distribution is the most direct approach of harm reduction.

Naloxone is a safe medication that prevents injury and death by reversing overdoses. Ms. Culver said that she and three other CCPHD employees have been certified to teach overdose

prevention and provide Naloxone training. In 2023, the department has given out 331 Naloxone kits, an increase from 110 kits in 2022. Last week, the Chatham County Board of Commissioners approved Naloxone distribution as a strategy for opioid settlement funds. Expanding the program has three points: education, distribution, and technical assistance. The education will focus primarily on recognizing signs of overdose and Naloxone use, and this education has already begun with community partners. Distribution has a couple different approaches, including direct distribution to people at high risk of overdose and establishing no-barrier public access points. Technical assistance will include ongoing support for people who do training and those who do distribution work. This will also include workplace protocols for Naloxone and policy development.

Ms. Lloyd asked about having online training sessions or a video on a website for people who may not be able to go to an in-person training. Ms. Culver stated that there are plans to expand the virtual offerings. Ms. Lloyd asked if Naloxone is available in schools, and Mr. Zelek said it is currently offered through the school resource officers. Ms. Lloyd stated that this should change and that Naloxone should be available like Epi pens. Ms. Reitz-Barlow asked if anyone could go to a pharmacy and get Naloxone. Ms. Culver said that sometimes it is, but inconsistencies in that are one of the reasons that the department is pushing for more open-access options. Ms. Williams asked if church or faith-based groups are represented on the partnership. Ms. Culver said there were members, including individuals from Love Chatham, and other faith leaders have expressed interest in partnership. Mr. Zelek noted that Jiona Mills, Community Engagement Specialist, will be overseeing faith-based initiatives that can intersect with this work. Mr. Benitez asked if the group has partnered with restaurants or gas stations. Ms. Culver said that NCDHHS has kits that are good for that, but the department has been thinking about partnerships. She said that there are certain issues or barriers that may come with these partnerships.

Old Business

Electronic Health Records System

Kevin Overcash, Administrative Services Manager, provided an update on the Electronic Health Record (EHR) system.

As a recap, Zach Deaton, Clinical and Community Services Division Manager, said the conversation about changing EHRs began around 2017 to avoid duplication with other providers and meet community and client needs. Mr. Deaton said the department had visited another county that transitioned from Patagonia, which CCPHD uses now, to Epic, but then COVID hit. Mr. Overcash said the department picked the conversation back up in spring 2023 to find something that would allow for coordination between providers, good resources to leverage, and is cost-effective. Ultimately, he said, it would need to better serve the community. He said that the department looked at Epic through UNC, Athena, and CureMD.

Mr. Overcash said that UNC Epic provided best coordination of health, linkage to UNC, meets needs related to wraparound services like Newborn Postpartum care, establishes an

opportunity for direct referrals, and creates a patient portal with reminders and patient communication. He said that department staff has talked to other counties, like Alamance, Pitt, Durham, and Orange, that use UNC Epic. He added that Piedmont Health Services is exploring getting a different EHR system in the future.

Mr. Zelek said that the total upfront cost is estimated to be \$143,931, with annual fees of \$17,280. The current rate with Patagonia in annual fees is \$67,359. Mr. Zelek added that these costs are estimates on the higher end and may change. A switch to Epic would lead to a projected break-even point financially in April 2027. The department has some funds from regional ARPA and grants, state appropriations for local public health departments, communicable disease supplement state funds, and a line item in county funding for the CCHS division. Mr. Zelek added there are some additional contingency sources as well. Mr. Deaton added that around \$120,000 of the initial cost would come from state funds. Ms. Reitz-Barlow said a cost savings that is not captured in these numbers is the time saved with the strong connectivity between providers.

Mr. Overcash said the adjustment would take a team effort. He said that billing and administration would likely take the biggest burden initially, but committees will be formed to tackle the various challenges that will be presented. Those include making reports to the state, training both staff and patients, transferring existing data from Patagonia to Epic, potentially switching from Quest to LabCorp, and maintaining HIPAA compliance. Mr. Overcash stated that the projected date to go live is June 2024, with various steps along the way including getting a contract in place, working with Orange County and potentially Chatham Hospital on training, and conducting a preparation walk-through and checklist to be ready to go live.

Mr. Deaton added that the clinic has begun service alignment conversations with PHS and UNC Health Chatham. He said that last month's conversation focused on maternal health care, which included folks from PHS and the Maternity Care Center. Mr. Deaton said this Epic transition would aid county-wide synergy in care.

The question was raised as to whether or not a vote of the Board was required to move forward. Mr. Zelek said it is likely not required but would be helpful to have the Board's support for this transition given its significance and financial impact.

Tammy Lloyd made a motion to support the health department's proposed electronic medical records transition to Epic, and Carol Reitz-Barlow seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Health Director Report

Mr. Zelek stated:

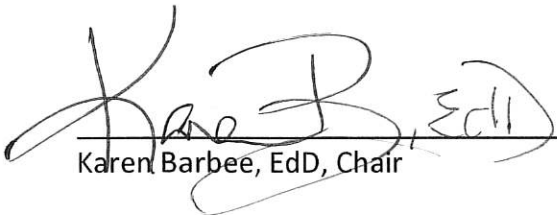
- As a token of gratitude, he will pass out small gifts to the Board along with the Holiday dinner.
- Danielle White, Administrative Assistant to the Health Director and Clerk to the Board of Health, has a new grandchild that was born this weekend.

- Phase 1 of clinic renovations have been completed, including new flooring and repurposing space. Further renovations are forthcoming.
- Staff lunch-and-learn events, led by clinic staff, have been a big hit.
- The department is beginning budget planning for the next fiscal year. Expansion requests are expected, particularly related to Environmental Health.
- Medicaid expansion will go into effect on December 1st. Individuals receiving Family Planning Medicaid will be transitioned first, and all CCPHD clients in that group, 38 individuals, have been sent a mailer to inform them of the transition. The total number of estimated folks in Chatham County who will be made eligible is around 4,000. The Department of Social Services is the main enrollment point of contact for Chatham residents.

Dr. Freese referenced a canine respiratory issue that is spreading. She said it is now in several states – not officially in North Carolina but she said it is likely. She said it is likely to get worse. There is no understanding yet as to what is causing it. Additionally, she reminded that antifreeze is toxic to dogs and urged caution.

Adjournment

Carol Reitz-Barlow made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Stephanie Freese seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.



Karen Barbee, EdD, Chair



Secretary Ex Officio
Michael Zelek, MPH, Public Health Director