

**CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING
NOVEMBER 18, 2010**

MINUTES

A meeting of the Philadelphia Board of Health was held on Thursday, November 18, 2010, in the Municipal Services Building, 1401 J.F.K. Boulevard, Room 1450.

Board Members Present: Jose A. Benitez, MSW; Susan Schewel, CRNP, PhD; Donald F. Schwarz, MD, MPH; Robert G. Sharrar, MD, MSc; Yolanda A. Slaughter, DDS, MPH

Attendees: David Acosta; Jane Baker; Kathleen Brady, MD; Nan Feyler; Sam Gulino, MD; Caroline Johnson, MD; Giridhar Mallya, MD, MSHP; Jeff Moran; Don Sapatkin; Elaine Strunk; Coleman Terrell; Kevin Vaughan

Welcome and Introductions:

Board President Donald F. Schwarz, Health Commissioner, called the meeting to order at 5:40 PM. He welcomed the members of the Board and those attending the meeting. Dr. Schwarz asked for amendments or corrections to the minutes of the meeting of September 14, 2010. Dr. Sharrar noted that printed copies of Attachments A & B had not been included in distributed copies of the minutes. Dr. Schwarz postponed a vote to approve the minutes of the Board meeting of September 14th until the January meeting of the Board when the missing documents can be provided.

Risk Behaviors of Teens:

Dr. Schwarz said the evening's discussion would address risk behaviors of teens for the purposes of providing information and brainstorming about potential courses of action. It is anticipated that in the coming months a number of items related to risk behaviors will come before the Board.

Recently, the 2009 High School Year Youth Risk Behavior Survey results were made available to the general public. Dr. Schwarz presented the Board with an overview of these results (Attachment A). The survey is conducted in selected representative high schools across the country in every state and most cities. Since the first survey in 1991, data has been every other year, although the variables collected may vary from survey to survey.

Dr. Schwarz noted that Philadelphia has the highest reported rates of sexual intercourse and early sexual debut. Philadelphia youth are starting sex early, currently engaging in sex, have more than four lifetime partners, and use condoms with less frequency than the national average. Philadelphia girls report the highest rates of dating violence and forced sex of any city. Dating violence is defined in the survey by specific physical actions rather than verbal or emotional threats.

Philadelphia students report high levels of physical inactivity and asthma, and more than one third report feeling sad or hopeless within the last thirty days.

Dr. Sharrar asked if the survey provides a comparison of urban and rural areas. Dr. Schwarz said that the survey reports data only by city and by state.

Teens and HIV/AIDS:

Dr. Schwarz introduced Jane Baker, Director of the AIDS Activities Coordinating Office (AACO) to opened discussion about HIV/AIDS among teens in Philadelphia. Baker said that ACCO has recently presented and City Council with an update on the HIV/AIDS public health emergency and introduced ACCO Epidemiologist Kathleen Brady, MD, to share that information with the Board. Dr. Brady reviewed for the Board data collected and prepared by AACO's Surveillance Unit (Attachment B). She noted that a growing proportion of newly diagnosed cases are among youth who now comprise nearly 25% of newly diagnosed HIV cases.

Dr. Schwarz observed that 50% of all newly diagnosed cases among youth are men who have sex with men (MSM).

Dr. Sharrar asked if those incarcerated the prisons are automatically screened for HIV. Dr. Brady said that the screening program is voluntary, with 50-65% of males and 85% of females opting for testing. Some inmates choose not to test because they already know their status. Data indicates that those choosing not to test have much higher rates HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Brady reported that department's Division of Disease Controls educates approximately 30,000 high school students each year about sexually transmitted disease, including HIV/AIDS. The Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) education and testing program is currently operating in all public high schools.

Dr. Schwarz estimated that 12% of youth who are MSM are infected with HIV/AIDS. Dr. Brady said that this is a good estimate and that among the overall MSM population in Philadelphia it is estimated that more than 20% are living with HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Schewel asked for a breakdown of the cases between older and younger youth. Dr. Brady reported that, among the 215 newly diagnosed cases in 2009, 49 cases were in youth 13 - 19. The vast majority of cases are between the ages of 20 and 24; however, many of these individuals may have been infected at an earlier age.

Teens and Other Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Dr. Schwarz introduced Dr. Caroline Johnson, Director of the Department of Public Health's Division of Disease Control, to discuss recent surveillance data pertaining to other STDs (Attachment C).

Dr. Johnson reported dramatic increases in Gonorrhea rates in 15-19 year-olds, with 40% increase in the number of cases in 2010. Dr. Schwarz observed that the current rates exceed those seen in the '90's.

The Division of Disease Control has begun to collect more risk information through the high school screening program. She reported that this data is consistent with the findings of the national Youth Risk Behavior Survey. The data also suggests that STD prevention messages are reaching young people too late. The information might be more effective if it were presented in junior high school.

Dr. Schewel asked about the number and effectiveness of the Health Resource Centers in the Schools. Dr. Johnson said that it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of the Centers, because the greater availability of resources to test in the schools with Centers results in more cases being detected.

Dr. Sharrar asked if the department traces contacts in syphilis cases or other STD's in this age group. Dr. Johnson said that Syphilis contacts are traced. Contact tracing for Chlamydia and gonorrhea takes place if requested. Aggressive efforts are made to ensure verification of treatment.

Dr. Schwarz asked about the disproportionate number of syphilis cases in males vs. females. Dr. Johnson said that 70-80% of syphilis cases are in MSM.

Teen Smoking

Dr. Schwarz introduced Dr. Giridhar Mallya to discuss the departments report on youth smoking in Philadelphia (Attachment D).

According to the 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), the regular smoking rate among Philadelphia youth was 3.6%, representing the highest rate among select large cities in the U.S. This represents the percentage of youth who smoked 20 out of the past 30 days. Smoking rates among high school students increased dramatically from 1991 to 1997. The rates peaked in 1997, and have steadily dropped each year through 2007 when the rate appears to flatten.

White high school students in Philadelphia reported a significantly higher smoking rate than Hispanic or black students, reflecting a common pattern in cities across the nation, but a pattern that is particularly pronounced in Philadelphia.

While smoking among high school students has decreased since 1997, the smoking rate among 9th graders and 11th graders has trended upward over the past two years.

Data nationally and internationally show a strong correlation between higher cost of cigarettes and lower smoking rates. In this country, the price varies from city to city from \$5.00 a pack in Baltimore to \$10.00 in New York. The greatest factor in creating price differences is taxes. Cigarettes are most expensive in cities like New York and Chicago, which have their own local tax in addition to state and federal taxes. In comparison to other states, Pennsylvania has an average tax of \$1.60 per pack. Philadelphia has no local tax.

Price is one measure of tobacco access; another measure is the number of tobacco retailers per capita. In Philadelphia there are 27 tobacco retailers for every 1,000 people, a rate exceeded only by Washington D.C. A larger number of tobacco retailers exposes the public to more frequent tobacco advertising.

Philadelphia has approximately 4,400 tobacco retailers, which are clustered with greater density in the poorer sections of the city. 40% of tobacco retailers in Philadelphia are located within a block of a school and nearly 80% are located within two blocks of a school.

Through the Health Promotion Council of Philadelphia (HPC), thousands of youth sales investigations are conducted each year using trained youth who attempt to buy cigarettes from tobacco retailers. One in five of these investigations leads to a sale.

The department recently asked City Council to raise the fines for these illegal sales from \$100 to \$250. The department is also spearheading efforts to educate merchants about how to comply with existing youth sales laws and to enhance enforcement activities, and is issuing citations in person rather than by mail.

A graduated fine or penalty system in Pittsburgh, where illegal sales have been eliminated, can result in penalties as high as \$1,000. However, implementation of such a system requires involvement of the courts and would place an extreme burden on the resources of the Municipal Court.

Dr. Schwarz said that the department has been a leader among jurisdictions across the nation in the work that it has done to prevent STD's and HIV, yet the city is still behind the curve in terms of sexual behaviors leading to infection. He asked the Board to begin thinking about what we might do reduce the threat to young people.

It was suggested that the department consider whether access to condoms is an issue, that schools and prisons be invited to discuss the topic with the Board, and learn more about what may be going on in communities.

Jane Baker announced that ACCO is working with the Mayor's Office of Faith Based Initiatives and prominent black ministers in a number of ways to promote testing and in particular through a billboard advertising campaign.

Dr. Schwarz said that the ongoing public health emergency that was declared by the Board of Health might offer some advantages in addressing the current worrisome trend in STD infection rates among young people. He said that the department would be examining the matter intensively over the next few months and will likely return to the Board with proposals for further action.

The Commissioner adjourned the meeting at 6:50 PM.