

**CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH**

Tuesday, October 28, 2014

A meeting of the Philadelphia Board of Health was held on Tuesday, October 28, 2014, in the Municipal Services Building, 1401 J.F.K. Boulevard, 14th Floor, Room 1450

Board Members Present: Jose A. Benitez, MSW; James W. Buehler, MD; Marla J. Gold, MD; Shannon P. Marquez, MEng, PhD; Scott McNeal, DO; Susan Schewel, NP, PhD; Robert G. Sharrar, MD, MSc; Yolanda A. Slaughter, DDS, MPH.

Attendees: Jane Baker; Nan Feyler, JD; Caroline Johnson, MD; Giridhar Mallya, MD; Jeff Moran; Don Sapatkin

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Health Commissioner and Board President James W. Buehler, MD, called the meeting to order at 5:35 PM. He welcomed the Board and asked the members to review the minutes of the meeting of June 26, 2014. It was moved that the minutes be approved as submitted. Motion seconded.

Motion passed.

HEALTHY HOMES PROGRAM

Deputy Health Commissioner Nan Feyler, JD, MPH, delivered a slide presentation (Attachment A) to the Board on the impact of poor housing quality upon the health of children particularly as these conditions affect asthma, lead poisoning, and safety/injury. The department's Healthy Homes Program addresses these problems through detection, intervention, treatment, and home remediation.

Dr. Gold asked what is being done in Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) properties. Feyler said that older PHA housing does not generally have a problem with lead. The department meets regularly with PHA to address Section 8 housing, and Dr. Mallya is also working with the Authority to create smoke free public housing.

In response to a question from Dr. Marquez, Feyler said that the Healthy Homes Program coordinates its work with agencies providing home weatherization. Feyler also discussed funding issues involved in renovation, and the role of Lead Court in promoting greater accountability among owners of unsafe properties. 80% of children who are lead poisoned are tenants in rented properties.

Dr. Sharrar asked what other cities are doing to combat these problems. Feyler said that some are conducting pre-rental inspections, with many targeting their highest risk-neighborhoods. Milwaukee offers free windows as an incentive to property owners who agree to fix other deficiencies. Philadelphia will be exploring new ways to spur property improvements with a ‘carrot’ and ‘stick’ strategy.

Dr. Buehler asked Board members to share any ideas they may have about how the department might involve other agencies in the Healthy Homes Program.

CIGARETTE TAX UPDATE

Dr. Giridhar Mallya, Philadelphia Department of Public Health Director of Policy and Planning, updated the Board on the implementation of a cigarette tax in Philadelphia. The tax went into effect on October 1, 2014, raising the price of cigarettes in Philadelphia by two dollars per pack. The tax is being administered and enforced by the PA Department of Revenue with input from the Philadelphia Department of Revenue. The Philadelphia Department of Public Health is working to ensure that smokers know about resources to help them quit, including the PA Free Quitline, which provides free phone-based cessation counseling and one month of free nicotine replacement therapy mailed to callers’ homes; and Medicaid benefits that provide coverage for effective cessation medications for \$0 to \$3 per month. The department is promoting these resources through a television-based media campaign, its website (www.smokefreephilly.com), social media, community-based organizations, and physical and mental healthcare providers.

Dr. Gold proposed that the Board of Health send a letter or some form of recognition and congratulation to stores that have stopped selling tobacco products. Dr. Mallya said that the department has begun to collect video testimonials from such businesses to be featured as a part of the “Great American Smokeout” event this fall. He said that a letter or certificate from the Board of Health would make a good addition to this event.

Dr. McNeal noted the needed for work among behavioral health professionals and within the behavioral health services system to change a culture that accommodates smoking. Dr. Mallya said that behavioral health populations, while historically neglected by public health, have been targeted by the tobacco industry. There are high rates of smoking among those utilizing behavioral health services and cultural issues within the service delivery system that the department is actively trying to address with the assistance of the Department of Behavioral Health.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Buehler announced the retirement of Deputy Health Commissioner Kevin Vaughan and the appointment of Jane Baker, former Director of the City’s AIDS Activities Coordinating Office, as Deputy Health Commissioner.

Dr. Buehler introduced Dr. Caroline Johnson, Director of the Department of Public Health’s Division of Disease Control to provide the Board with a summary of department activities related to Ebola.

Johnson explained that current activity takes place based upon a foundation of all hazards planning that has evolved over the past decade. Those plans have been adapted to contend with the possible threat of Ebola, and will undergo further changes as needed when the situation changes or new information becomes available, Johnson said.

The department initiated Ebola preparedness efforts by reaching out to local healthcare providers to provide them with information and gauge and strengthen their ability to implement screening to detect the illness and respond to cases of infection.

When the first cases of transmission of Ebola to healthcare workers in the United States occurred, significant concern and discussion emerged about the adequacy and supply of Personal Protective Equipment, as well as proper training for its use. As information developed nationally, the department worked with healthcare and emergency service providers and hospitals to strengthen and standardize the kinds of protections that are needed.

While efforts are underway to identify centers around the country where Ebola can be treated by specialized experts, any provider might be the first to encounter a case, so all must be able to identify, isolate, and care for individuals who are infected.

Like city and state jurisdictions across the country, Philadelphia is now tracking the health of recent travelers from the West African nations affected by Ebola. Pennsylvania is the final destination for the second largest number of travelers to the United States from this region of Africa.

The Division of Disease Control is currently following approximately 50 such individuals, and this number might grow to as many as 200 at a given time. Dr. Johnson told the Board that the department has a very good success rate in contacting those on the airline arrival manifests provided to us, and that people that have been very cooperative with the process, which involves answering question about their health and monitoring daily temperatures. Dr. Johnson answered questions from the Board about the mechanics of the tracking process, and the department's ability to quarantine. In Pennsylvania, an individual can be quarantined through a court order.

Deputy Health Commissioner Nan Feyler said that the department is working with the Commission on Human Relations and with community organizations to safeguard against issues of stigmatization or discrimination that may emerge.

Dr. Buehler said that we need to continue to reinforce public messages about how Ebola is transmitted.

Dr. Buehler adjourned the meeting at 7:10 PM.