

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

Wednesday, October 28, 2020

The Philadelphia Board of Health held a special public meeting on Wednesday, October 28, 2020. The meeting was held virtually using the GoToWebinar platform in light of restrictions related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, allowing access to the public via computer or other device and via a toll-free phone number.

Board Members Present

Dr. Tyra Bryant-Stephens, Dr. Ana Diez-Roux, Dr. Thomas Farley, Dr. Marla Gold, Dr. Jennifer Ibrahim, Dr. Amid Ismail, Dr. Scott McNeal, Dr. John Rich

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Health Commissioner and Board President Thomas Farley, MD, MPH called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

MINUTES

The Board unanimously approved the minutes from October 8, 2020.

JOINT EMERGENCY REGULATIONS CONCERNING RULES AND GUIDELINES FOR COVID-19 SAFETY AT POLLING SITES ON ELECTION DAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2020

Jo Rosenberger-Altman noted that these regulations were passed by Commissioners on the Board of Elections earlier in the day. Board Chair Dr. Thomas Farley and Ms. Rosenberger-Altman presented emergency regulations to put in place safety measures to allow voting that are effective at reducing spread of COVID, practical at Philadelphia polling sites, and are consistent with the laws governing elections. The regulations require everyone to wear masks, stay six feet apart, encourage voters to stay outside as much as possible, provide gloves to voters, and encourage voters to spend as little time as possible in the polling place. The regulations deal specifically with elected election officials, poll watchers, and voters, with individual procedures for different situations, including refusal to wear a mask, inability to wear a mask, and people who are COVID-positive or symptomatic.

Dr. Gold moved; Dr. Ismail seconded.

Motion for approval of regulation approved unanimously.

SIXTEENTH SUPPLEMENTAL EMERGENCY REGULATION GOVERNING THE CONTROL AND PREVENTION OF COVID-19 (GATHERING SIZES)

The second regulation is intended to offer support for a previously signed Order reducing gathering sizes.

This Order defined the difference between indoor and outdoor, where anything with three or more walls, including tents, would be considered indoors. It then uses maximum occupancy numbers as a reference point, as opposed to the Pennsylvania Order that uses the fire code number. The Order says that gatherings are permitted under new calculations so long as everyone is masked, everyone from different households remains seated at least six feet apart, and performance venues do not allow food, drink, or smoking.

Outdoor spaces that have a maximum occupancy limit will have different limits on what percentage of that occupancy can be utilized: under 2,000 is 20%, between 2,000 and 50,000 is 15%, and over 50,000, a maximum of 7,500 people. For spaces which don't have a maximum occupancy limit, the maximum occupancy shall be 67 people per 1,000 square feet.

Indoor spaces with a maximum occupancy limit, the lesser of 10% of that limit or 250 people is allowed. For indoor spaces with no maximum occupancy limit, like tents with closed flaps, no more than 10 persons per 1,000 square feet or 250 is allowed, whichever is lesser.

The Order includes enforcement requirements, placing the burden of complying with the Order on organizer of the gathering or event. This can be done by limiting access, controlling entry, and refusing entry. All other public health measures, like masking and social distancing must continue to be enforced.

The fourth section of the Order clarifies the relationship of this Order with that of indoor dining, as it has slightly different occupancy limits. In the case of indoor dining, the previous regulation limits should be lower than those in this Order and so would remain in force. Discrete events at indoor dining locations would be governed by this Order.

Dr. Ibrahim moved; Dr. McNeal seconded.

Motion for approval of regulation approved unanimously.

SEVENTEENTH SUPPLEMENTAL EMERGENCY REGULATION GOVERNING THE CONTROL AND PREVENTION OF COVID-19 (LONG-TERM CARE ISOLATION SAFETY AND TRANSFER)

This regulation is intended to help support long-term care facilities that could have difficulty cohorting COVID-positive residents, by allowing them the ability to transfer said residents to a COVID Relief Unit.

Joshua Roper from the Health Department provided an overview of the regulation. Mr. Roper expressed that Attachment A of the regulation contains Infection Prevention and Control Requirements and Recommendations. The Order refers to the Minimum Requirements listed there. The Health Department recommends that LTCFs meet the listed Recommendations, but they are not required.

Section 2 of the regulation stipulates that COVID-positive patients in LTCFs shall be transferred to a Dedicated COVID-19 Unit for the duration of their isolation. If the facility does not have such a Unit, the patient shall be transferred to a COVID Relief Unit. In that case, the LTCF shall not receive or accept any new residents who are COVID-positive, or in an isolation period as defined by the regulation. The resident may be transferred out of the Dedicated COVID-19 Unit or COVID Relief Unit upon the end of the isolation period.

Section 3 of the regulation bars the transfer of any COVID-positive patient during their isolation period to an LTCF unless the patient is transferred directly into a Dedicated COVID-19 Unit.

Section 4 stipulates that any transfer that is required by this regulation be done immediately. Due to the emergency nature of the need for transfer, notification pursuant to existing State code is not applicable. If the LTCF cannot accomplish this immediate transfer, they shall contact the Health Department immediately.

Mr. Roper reviewed Attachment A: Philadelphia Department of Public Health Infection Prevention and Control Requirements and Recommendations for Long-Term Care Facilities to Manage Residents Who Test Positive for COVID-19. This attachment sets out the minimum requirements for LTCFs to be able to manage COVID-positive patients.

Dr. Farley described the Health Department's COVID Relief Unit as a separate site in an existing LTCF that has been rented by the City to serve this function.

Ms. Rosenberger-Altman, recommended that the regulation be amended to allow for the Department to make administrative changes.

Dr. Ismail moved; Dr. Ibrahim seconded.

Motion for approval of regulation approved unanimously, with the above amendment included.

ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Farley adjourned the meeting at 6:51 PM.