

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

Thursday, October 14, 2021

The Philadelphia Board of Health held a public meeting on Thursday October 14, 2021. 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. Ismail Amid, Dr. Cheryl Bettigole, Dr. Tyra Bryant-Stephens, Dr. Ana Diez-Roux, Dr. Marla Gold, Dr. Jennifer Ibrahim, Dr. Scott McNeal, Dr. John Rich

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Acting Health Commissioner and Acting Board President Cheryl Bettigole, MD, MPH called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

Mr. Benjamin Hartung reviewed the public comment process.

MINUTES

The Board unanimously approved the minutes from August 12, 2021.

AMENDMENT TO THE REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE CONTROL OF COMMUNICABLE AND NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES AND CONDITIONS, RELATED TO SEROLOGY ON MATERNAL BLOOD FOR CONGENITAL SYPHILIS

Dr. Lenore Asbell of the Health Department presented on the amendment at hand. She described an increase in the number of congenital syphilis in Philadelphia and nationwide. Published literature describes a number of missed opportunities in the continuum of care that could prevent congenital syphilis.

In the past, syphilis cases in Philadelphia have been primarily in men who have sex with men. In 2021, there have been 10 reported cases of congenital syphilis, which is the highest rate in two decades.

Current regulations state that that there should be tested at the first trimester, the third trimester, and at delivery, when prevalence is above a certain threshold, which it has been in recent memory. The amendment before the Board is intended to bring the Philadelphia Regulation in line with CDC recommendations, changing the language from second and/or third trimester to during the period of 28 – 32 weeks of pregnancy, or as soon as possible afterward that timeframe.

One comment and one question were received from the audience. Dr. Asbell responded to the question saying that there is not enough data to conclusively speak on the racial and ethnic breakdown of congenital syphilis cases.

The Board found that this amendment is in line with recommendations from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Dr. Gold moved; Dr. Ibrahim seconded.

Motion for approval of the amendment approved unanimously.

The Board also voted on the ability for the Health Department to make an administrative change to change the reference from pregnant women to pregnant people in order to be the most inclusive.

Dr. Rich moved; Dr. Ibrahim seconded.

Motion for approval of the administrative change approved unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

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