

The Cleveland County Public Health Board met on Tuesday, August 10, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Board members present: Marty Hamrick, Robert Miller, Tom Spurling, Kale Meade, Patti Alexander, Sara Karner, Mark Heiner, Randy Sweeting (remote).

Health Department staff present: Tiffany Hansen, DeShay Oliver, Anne Short, Nathan McNeilly, Chris Breese

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME:

Chair Spurling called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm and welcomed everyone.

Mr. Miller gave the invocation.

CITIZEN RECOGNITION:

No citizens requested to appear before the Board.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA FOR AUGUST 10, 2021, PUBLIC HEALTH BOARD MEETING:

Chair Spurling presented the proposed agenda for the August 10, 2021 Public Health Board meeting for consideration of adoption.

Motion: A motion was made by Kale Meade with a second by Mark Heiner to adopt the agenda for the August 10, 2021 Public Health Board meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF JUNE 8, 2021 PUBLIC HEALTH BOARD MEETING MINUTES:

Chair Spurling presented the June 8, 2021 Public Health Board meeting minutes for consideration of approval.

Motion: Patti Alexander moved that the minutes of the June 8, 2021 Public Health Board Meeting be approved as presented. Sara Karner seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

PHARMACY PRESENTATION :

Chris Breese, Pharmacy Supervisor, provided a presentation on the services provided by the Health Department Pharmacy. He stated that the pharmacy is located around the reception area. The pharmacy does have a drive thru for patients and staff. The pharmacy operation hours are Monday-Friday 8am-5pm. The form of payments the pharmacy can accept are HSA cards, debit, credit,

cash, and checks. The pharmacy staff consists of 2 pharmacists and 3 certified pharmacy technicians.

The pharmacy fills medications that are prescribed in the Health Department Clinics. The clinic, treatment, patient's financial status and insurance status determines if we are able to fill the prescription for the patient or if it would have to be sent out to a retail pharmacy. Another population that we serve is the CLECO Primary Care Network patients. We have a basic formulary for these patients with many of the medications/prescriptions being \$5.00. Most of these patients are uninsured or underinsured. These patients are screened based on their household income and fall between 100% - 400% of the Federal Poverty Level. A lot of these medications are maintenance medications or are for chronic conditions. Most of these patients would not be able to afford these prescriptions in a retail pharmacy setting, yet many of these medications are lifesaving prescriptions and help keep patients out of the hospital and from being readmitted to the hospital. We also have a Medication Assistance Program (MAP). Many CLECO patients are able to access their medications for free through this program.

We have a 5-tier formulary system for county employees and their insured family members. We ask employees to take this formulary to their doctors so that an affordable option is selected when prescribing their medication. We have a free over the counter medication program through North Carolina Med Assist in Charlotte. We make sure we screen requests for over-the-counter medications to make sure that there will not be any interactions with current medications. We also fill tobacco cessations and worker's compensation prescriptions for employees at no cost.

There are a couple medication disposal boxes out in the reception area. These are to keep unwanted or expired medication out of homes and off the streets. We also have Narcan available for those that may be at risk for Opioid overdose. We also have a student preceptor program. We train pharmacy students from three different pharmacy schools in the state.

Chris provided further detailed information on the Cleveland County Employee Wellness Program. He explained that no prescription on the formulary will cost more than \$40.00. Our Pharmacy is able to provide cost savings for the County Health Plan by avoiding retail pharmacy markup and participating in a group purchasing organization so we can purchase generic medication on average 65% below AWP and brands 23% below AWP. The pharmacy tries to obtain sample products and, looking at the average wholesale price of what we dispensed since December, there was an estimated \$600,000 in samples to employees and the community members. Another way that we reduce cost is with therapeutic interchange. Another big way we are involved in the health plan is working with PPCN through the Health Map Rx program. If a county employee is eligible, they can get their diabetes, hypertension, and cholesterol medicines for free through our pharmacy.

Chris stated that he wanted to transition to the Medication Assistance Program for uninsured, low income residents who cannot afford their medications. The MAP Coordinator will meet with patients and review financial documentation to make sure they are not insured and send the prescriptions off with the application to get them enrolled. The program or manufacturer will fill the prescription and ship the medication to us for the patient to pick up. One of our partners, North

Carolina Med Assist, has a huge formulary, so we enroll most patients into this program. Chris stated that the AWP and the value of the medication that was received for these patients totaled over \$2,000,000.00. 273 county residents were served, and 6,500 prescriptions were provided.

Mr. Miller stated that he was very impressed and didn't realize the pharmacy serves all county employees. Chris stated that the pharmacy is for Cleveland County Government employees and is unable to fill prescriptions for Cleveland County School staff or Shelby City Employees because they have their own insurance health plan. Mr. Spurling asked who conducts Biometric screenings. Chris stated that it is a collaboration between Mark3, Prime Therapeutics, and Blue Cross. Everyone makes appointments to go and have a blood draw. Ms. Oliver added that the County partners with Atrium Health to perform the Biometric screenings. Mr. Spurling asked if the pharmacy provides supplements as well. Chris stated that we do have some supplements, but it does vary. Ms. Alexander asked Chris if he feels as though most providers take advantage of the Medication Assistance Program. Chris stated yes, because we work with the providers and ask them to send prescriptions to us so we can filter through them to see what programs are available and if the patient qualifies. Dr. Karner asked if the pharmacy coordinates flu clinics. Chris stated that he is the vaccine coordinator, but it is more of the inventory management side. The health department's nursing team is responsible for coordinating these clinics and administering the vaccine.

COVID-19 UPDATE:

Mrs. Hansen provided a COVID-19 update to the Public Health Board. As of today, we have a total of 12,740 cases, 432 active cases over the last 7-day period, 232 deaths and 26 residents currently hospitalized. The Percent Positivity as of this morning was at 14% for North Carolina and the County was at 16.4%. Mrs. Hansen stated that she went back and looked at some of the data and this is about where we were during December of last year. Mrs. Hansen showed a screenshot of the CDC's community transmission map that shows almost all counties in North Carolina are in high community transmission levels. This is measured using two metrics, the number of new cases per 100,000 people and percent positivity over the 7-day average. Mrs. Hansen displayed a graph from the CDC showing variant proportion tables. NC falls into region 4 on this table. Over the last few weeks we have seen the Delta variant dominate all COVID sequencing across the region. The Delta variant accounts for 85%-95% of all sequenced cases in our region. Mrs. Hansen shared information on COVID vaccination rates for the county. This is broken down by age as a percentage of total population. NCDHHS has added the ability to separate vaccination data on their dashboard by ages 12+, 18+, and 65+. In Cleveland County, about 43% of our 12+ population are fully vaccinated, and about 45% of our 18+ population are fully vaccinated. Mrs. Hansen presented data on breakthrough cases for region 7 which includes Cleveland, Mecklenburg, Union, Cabarrus and several other counties. In this region, cases in fully vaccinated individuals only account for approximately 0.6% of all cases. Statewide, we are seeing about 94% of hospitalizations in unvaccinated individuals and 99% of the deaths in unvaccinated individuals. CDC and NCDHHS has updated quarantine guidance for fully vaccinated individuals and now recommends that direct contacts be tested 3-5 days following their exposure and wearing a mask until a negative test result is received. We have shifted our COVID testing back to a drive-thru format in the back of our building. People can call our main number at 980-484-5100 to

schedule an appointment. We are also encouraging people to take advantage of the many other testing options available in the county. Mrs. Hansen shared some upcoming community vaccine clinics. This weekend we will be at Washington Missionary Baptist Church and at the end of the month we will be at Palmer Grove Baptist Church in Kingstown. We will be able to provide \$100 gift cards to patients to who receive a first dose and \$25 to transporters. We continue to schedule appointments for first doses at the Health Department on Mondays and Wednesdays and second doses on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We are also distributing gift cards during our first dose appointments at the health department. We have also been doing first and second dose clinics at all three YMCA branches throughout the months of July and August.

Mr. Miller asked if a person is exposed to COVID-19, how many days they have to quarantine. Mrs. Hansen stated that it depends on whether the person is vaccinated. If a person is fully vaccinated, the recommendation is to get tested after 3-5 days. The person should wear a mask until they receive a negative result. If the person is not vaccinated, they should wait at least 5 days from date of last exposure to be tested. If they receive a negative result and have no symptoms, they can be released from quarantine after 7 days. If they are not tested and remain asymptomatic, they can be released from quarantine after 10 days.

Dr. Heiner stated that he has been fairly surprised as a physician about the number of healthcare providers who have a science background who exhibit anti-science or vaccine hesitancy, but we have a real crisis in our community with that among healthcare workers. Dr. Heiner stated that he works as an OB/GYN hospitalist and travels from hospital to hospital. He is very surprised at the number of RN's who exhibit vaccine hesitancy for various reasons. There is a lot of misinformation about the vaccine. Dr. Heiner stated that he does his best to educate people. He often hears from people who have had COVID and are not vaccinated, that now they feel like they have natural immunity and don't need to be vaccinated. However, we don't know a lot about natural immunity with COVID, how strong it is, and how long it lasts. As you know, Atrium Health has made a mandate for people to get vaccinated. Dr. Heiner stated that he is concerned that they are going to lose a lot of employees as a result of this. He completely disagrees with the employees' reasoning for quitting their job. He thinks it is sad and the best way to serve your fellow man is to continue the job. There is a significant number of employees that may lose their job in the next coming months as a result of the vaccine mandate. Dr. Heiner stated that he keeps thinking about how we as a Health Department and as a community can keep encouraging and educating people. Tiffany Hansen asked Dr. Heiner if he has ideas on things he thinks would be beneficial for us to message. Dr. Heiner stated that many vaccine hesitant people, especially in the healthcare field, are highly educated people that are sincere in their beliefs and the one thing Dr. Heiner has found is to listen to these people and try to understand what they are saying. Sadly, sometimes those conversations invite hostility and tension. Dr. Heiner stated that he has seen several individuals over the past few months change their minds and get vaccinated because they don't want to lose their jobs and for many because someone took the time to listen to them and gently tried to share information that was more accurate. People have certain viewpoints, and they develop confirmation bias, and it is very hard to change their minds.

Tom Spurling stated that just because you have had COVID before does not mean you have a certain amount of resistance or antibodies. Tom stated that he gave blood about 60 days after

having COVID back in July 2020 and the Red Cross at that time was checking your antibodies. Tom stated that his antibodies were gone after 60 days. Sara Karner asked if we could do something to help debunk common myths. DeShay shared they have plans to make a video of common questions with answers to share through our website and social media. This is something we could consider continuing to do on a regular basis based on the questions, concerns and misinformation currently circulating.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS:

DeShay Oliver presented the budget amendments.

ITEM NUMBER ONE

Cleveland County Health Department has received \$50,000 from the Catawba Nation Gaming Authority to provide services for treatment of compulsive behavior including problem gambling and alcoholism. We have requested to have these funds budgeted in the Behavioral Health Department (549).

ITEM NUMBER TWO

Cleveland County Health Department received \$1,800 in FY 2021 from Gardner-Webb University for nursing students that completed a rotation in our Maternity Health Clinic. We have requested to budget these funds in donations to be used for FY 22 departmental needs in (538).

ITEM NUMBER THREE

Cleveland County Health Department has received \$35,848.54 from the Alliance for Health in Cleveland County because of agreement termination. These funds were restricted for a Maternal and Child Health Planning grant that was held by Alliance for Health to be used for training purposes. We have requested that these funds be budgeted in the Maternal Health Department (538).

ITEM NUMBER FOUR

Cleveland County Health Department has received \$2,500 in stipend funds in FY 2021 from High Point University for pharmacy students that complete a 4-week rotation in our Pharmacy. We have requested these funds be budgeted in our General Administration Department (530) to use toward express scripts provider fees, Pioneer fees, and various needs of the Pharmacy Department.

A motion to recommend the budget amendments to the Board of Commissioners was made by Robert Miller with a second by Patti Alexander. The motion carried unanimously.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS:

No miscellaneous business

ADJOURN: 7:11pm

There being no further business, Chair Spurling called for a motion to adjourn.

Motion: Robert Miller moved, with a second by Kale Meade that the Cleveland County Public Health Board meeting be adjourned. The motion carried unanimously.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Tiffany Hansen, Secretary
Cleveland County Public Health Board
/jl