



**CITY OF WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS**  
 Department of Health & Human Services  
 Division of Public Health



**Public Health**  
 Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Matilde Castiel, MD  
 Health & Human Services  
 Commissioner

Karyn E. Clark  
 Public Health  
 Director

**DATE:** April 13, 2020  
**RE:** WORCESTER BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING  
**START TIME:** 6:30 PM  
**LOCATION:** WEB EX CONFERENCE CALL

**Welcome & Introductions:**

Meeting was called to order at 6:45pm.

Members on call: Edith Claros, PhD, Chair, Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair, Frances Anthes and David Fort WDPH Absent: Chareese Allen Staff: Karyn Clark, Director of DPH and Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH and Michele Williams, Principal Clerk

**Approval of the March 25, 2020 Meeting:**

Motion to approve the WBOH meeting minutes of March 25, 2020 made by David Fort, Second – Frances Anthes – with one change to add Community Health Centers, to testing sites – Approved

**Approval of the April 13, 2020 Agenda:**

Motion to approve the WBOH meeting agenda of April 13, 2020 made by Frances Anthes, Second – Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair – Approved

**Medical Marijuana Operating License Amendment – Change in Hours of Operation:**

Tabled for next meeting

**COVID19 Updates:**

Sarah McGee, MD, Clinical Chief, Division of Geriatric Medicine, UMass and Medical Director, Population Health Transition of Care, UMass: Initially facilities have struggled with getting patients tested and each facility contracts with their own lab. The testing results was taking over a week to get and the patients were in isolation for over a week until results came back. More recently in the last week, the National Guard has been coming into the facilities doing the testing with receiving results faster. Now that more and more facilities are using their services, because of volume, there is a waiting time for them to come into the facility. Each day the number of positive patients are increasing. The facilities are trying to cohort, put all the patients that are positive or are under investigation for having COVID19 in a certain wing in their facility. Facilities are struggling with a supply of PPE. A lot of the independent facilities are struggling with purchasing PPE's. Some staff have now tested positive for COVID19. Nursing facilities are now able to utilize telehealth for provider's to make visits as well as staff, however they are not equipped such as hardware and software to do this. They are struggling with what to do about accepting patients of their own that have been hospitalized back into the facilities. Facilities have received guidelines from DPH.

25 Meade Street, Worcester, MA 01610-2715 Phone: (508) 799-8531 Fax: (508) 799-8572

[health@worcesterma.gov](http://health@worcesterma.gov)



David Fort: When it comes to Nursing Homes, in terms of trying to get an accurate number of positive patients, there is a concern about under reporting.

Sarah McGee, MD: Part of the issue was the limited amount of testing that was available and long turnaround time. Initially, testing was only being done for individuals showing symptoms.

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH: Patients that we have seen around the community were unaware of how pervasive this was. We have had a lot of youth hanging out playing basketball, hanging out on stoops together and individuals not being compliant in distancing when going to stores. Parks Department has now added the placement of angle iron across the rims at all park sites. Individuals are now complying with social distancing. City Manager Augustus and the CEO's of Saint Vincent's and UMass along with the collaboration of Governor Baker, have opened the DCU Center, to accept and care for patients, with surge capabilities and to take the Beaumont Nursing Home facility and use as a place to keep some elderly with COVID19 that need a higher level of care. Long term care facilities are suffering from a combination of the virus causing problems for the patients and leaving them short staffed. Staff are working very hard with the patients in making sure they have what they need. The SMOC shelter, where most of the homeless population were housed, had 100 – 120 individuals per night. With the help of Network of Compassion and the city school system, we now have North High and Worcester Tech High School as a site for 25 homeless people. Worcester Tech High School was going to have COVID19 patients and North High was going to negative patients. In addition, we also have Ascension church and St. John's church to hold 25 (each) of COVID negative patients. Once an individual goes into one of these 4 shelters, you will be fed, have medical care and laundry services but you couldn't leave. But the SMOC shelter doesn't require them to stay inside. So those individuals were out from 8am – 4pm daily. In those 8 hours they are at risk of both acquiring and spreading the virus then bringing it back to the shelter. We have explored the possibility of a mandatory quarantine for them. 90 individuals have been tested and 15 volunteers. 34 tested positive. Homeless individuals that tested positive were moved to Worcester Tech High School and the volunteers were quarantined at home. Briefed the BOH on the antibody testing that will come out within the next couple of weeks that can conclusively show whether a person is immune to the virus.

Karyn Clark, Director of DPH: Briefed the BOH on how all City Departments along with DPH staff, Community Partners, Worcester Together Fund, business, agencies, volunteers and school nurses have been working together in helping us move through this pandemic.

Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair: Seeing in the news, Massachusetts COVID Community Tracing Collaborative in association with Partners in Health. Is this something that is going to be State initiative solely or will it be locally administered in any way?

Karyn Clark, Director of DPH: Have been on many calls with Partners in Health to learn more about this initiative. Their hope is to have 1,000 trained medical volunteers who can assist with contact tracing. Certainly something we're looking forward to getting assistance with.

David Fort: What is the length of hospital stay?

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH: On average, between 11 to 20 days.

Motion to adjourn; Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair seconded by Frances Anthes

**Adjourn:** 8:15pm

**Next Meeting -- May 4, 2020 at 6:30pm**

**Potential Future Meeting Topics:**

Coronavirus update

Food access for positive patients