



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: January 6, 2020
RE: WORCESTER BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING MINUTES
START TIME: 6:30 PM
LOCATION: WORCESTER DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH
25 MEADE STREET, CONFERENCE ROOM 109
WORCESTER, MA 01610

Welcome & Introductions:

Meeting was called to order at 6:30pm.

Members present: Edith Claros, PhD, Chair, Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair, Chareese Allen, David Fort and Frances Anthes WDPH Staff: Karyn Clark, Director of DPH, Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH, Matilde Castiel, MD, Commissioner of HHS and Joshan Niroula, Public Health Prevention Specialist

Approval of the January 6, 2020 Agenda:

Motion to approve the WBOH meeting agenda of January 6, 2020 made by David Fort, Second – Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair - Approved

Approval of the November 4, 2019 Meeting:

Motion to approve the WBOH meeting minutes of November 4, 2019 made by David Fort, Second – Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair – Approved

Review and discuss new state tobacco legislation – *An Act Modernizing Tobacco Control*:

Joshan Niroula, Public Health Prevention Specialist: On September 24, 2019 Governor Charles D. Baker declared a public health emergency in the State of Massachusetts, where there was a temporary vaping ban in place. The vaping ban was lifted on December 11, 2019, this action follows the Legislature passing and the Governor signing into law *An Act Modernizing Tobacco Control*, which regulates access to tobacco and electronic nicotine delivery systems, including vapes. Public Health Council approved additional regulations, which were known as the minimum standards for retail sale of tobacco and vaping products that provided additional guidelines for enforcement, signage requirements (distributed) and other information for retailers to follow. All information has been communicated with our retailers. Distributed was information on where and what tobacco products can be sold in Massachusetts. The law has different restrictions for each type of retailer. The three types of retailers are; 1) non-age restricted retail establishments 2) adult-only tobacco retail store and 3) smoking bars. Beginning June 1, 2020, flavored cigarettes,



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cigars and other tobacco products may only be purchased in smoking bars for onsite consumption. Also, 75% excise tax on the wholesale price of nicotine vaping products, in addition to the state's 6.75% sales tax.

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH: Pediatric Pulmonologist from Boston Children's Hospital are seeing an enormous amount of vape related illness. Many of the early manifestations of the vape problem don't present with pulmonary symptoms, they present with GI symptoms. Many of the kids are coming in with GI complaints i.e.; nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, which is nicotine related overdosing.

Frances Anthes: Is it different for children verses adults?

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH: Many of the adults were smokers prior and now that they are vaping, vape lung is coming more from mixing the nicotine with the cannabis related substances. Whereas the young kids are doing flavored nicotine products which their lung injuries are less severe but the nicotine effects is getting to their "virgin lungs". Children's did a study on adolescents where they found that 300 puffs a day is the equivalent of 1 ½ packs of cigarette consumption.

David Fort: What about health education in schools? We have new regulations and laws taking effect in June 2020. Where are we at now and I would like to measure it six months to a year from now.

Joshan Niroula, Public Health Prevention Specialist: We have data from the Regional Survey from Worcester Public Schools. In terms of health education, Worcester Public Schools has a health curriculum in place (Michigan Model). Aside from middle school, health isn't mandated.

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH: On November 4, 2019, Dr. Castile, Commissioner of DPH, held a forum on Your Health Up in Smoke – The Truth about Vaping at City Hall, which featured a keynote speaker, Dr. Kathryn Waksmundzski-Silva, a UMass Pulmonary and Critical Care physician. Kelsey Hopkins is our coordinator for the Academic Health Collaborative, who is working with Holy Cross to develop messaging about vaping that we're hoping will be launched this coming semester.

Chareese Allen: Are there any plans in place to do a follow up in the near future to see how effective the messages are and how the children are responding?

Joshan Niroula, Public Health Prevention Specialist: In terms of educating, my work has been providing resources to Worcester Public Schools. Karyn Clark, Director of DPH, had written a letter on How to Talk to Your Kids about Vaping and How to Help Your Teen Quit which was given to the Superintendent of Worcester Schools to distribute to all children to bring home. We will collaborate with the Worcester Public Schools on the new 2019 Youth Risk Survey data.

Review and discuss updated overdose data:

Matilde Castiel, MD, Commissioner of HHS: Briefed the BOH on the October 2019 overdose report (distributed). The numbers are decreasing. We have a Recovery Coach and a Homeless Outreach worker that works with us and the Quality of Life to help get individuals the treatment they need. We are acquiring 2 additional Recovery Coaches. We have had trauma trainings to understand

what addiction is and how to prevent it. Working on more ways to provide assistance. Encourages individuals to carry Narcan. Briefed the BOH on different ways HHS have helped with trainings, programs and treatments.

Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair: Regarding the top locations for repeat OD activity, could we have a representative from each location come in and speak with us to understand what systems they have in place. How are they dealing with these incidents?

Matilde Castiel, MD, Commissioner of HHS: We have been working with SMOC to figure out what are some of the things we could implement and help through that process. We've looked at the nursing homes and help advocate to be able to get the appropriate funding and services delivered.

David Fort: With the nursing facilities, the big issue is to prevent drugs coming in. What is their plan?

Matilde Castiel, MD, Commissioner of HHS: I believe they are going to differentiate using different floors.

Frances Anthes: Often with someone coming out of jail, they needed to see their kids, get a job and apartment so they didn't always come in for the medically assisted treatment soon enough. The work that you're doing with the jail is a helpful transition.

Matilde Castiel, MD, Commissioner of HHS: Cooperation with the Sheriff has been positive. Looking to implement all the recommendations that was made by the Task Force in partnership with the jail.

Review and continued discussion on marijuana facilities relative to hours of operation for medical vs. recreational dispensaries:

Karyn Clark, Director of DPH: Recently the hours of operation has come to our attention between adult and medical marijuana dispensaries. Distributed were current hours of operation for adult and medical marijuana dispensaries, per facility, in Worcester. Also distributed was the BOH regulations, which our local medical marijuana regulation hours of operation are between 8am – 7pm. These hours were set by the BOH before adult use opened. Recreational adult use hours of operation are between 8am - 11pm, which is set by the State. (BOH does not have the authority to amend the hours of operation for adult use) The different hours of operation are creating confusion for individuals who seek medical marijuana. Fletcher Tilton, who represents Good Chemistry, is seeking uniform hours of operation for all operational purposes. The BOH can amend the hours of operation on the medical marijuana by holding a hearing and take a vote.

Board Members: BOH will hold a hearing on February 3, 2020 at 6:30pm and take a vote.

Review and discuss relative to gun buyback:

Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director of DPH: Our 18th annual gun buyback was on December 14, 2019, which was the 7th anniversary of the Sandy Hook tragedy. This was held at 2 locations; Worcester Police Department and City Welding & Fabrication 10 Ararat Street. Overall we collected 163 weapons. This year we started a partnership with a blacksmith group, based in Boston that wants to craft garden tools out of the guns. Assabet Vocational High School (medal working students) came to the event and made an incredible array of artwork and garden tools out of the

guns. Medical students from UMass who had just started a community garden project took the gardening tools and will be using them to do the harvesting and planting this coming spring. Worcester has the lowest fire arm and fatality rate in New England.

Motion to adjourn; Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Vice Chair, seconded by Chareese Allen
Adjourn: 8:05pm

Next Meeting -- February 3, 2020 at 6:30pm

Potential Future Meeting Topics:

Public Hearing - on marijuana facilities relative to hours of operation for medical vs. recreational dispensaries

CHIP

Review and act on discussion with Maureen Binienda, Superintendent of Worcester Public Schools, relative to supporting and partnership with vaping and consistent messaging on public health initiatives in schools.

Representative from the Hot Spots to discuss what systems and plans they have in place