



Norwalk Board of Health
June 26, 2018
8:30 AM
Library
Monthly Meeting
Minutes

Call to order at 8:36 AM Present:

Board of Health – Matthew Brovender, Esq., Janet Karpiak, MD, Kenneth Lalime, RPH (phone)

Staff – Al Kao, Laboratory Director, Theresa Argondezzi, Health Educator, Deanna D’Amore, Director of Health, Dr. David Reed, Medical Director

Approval of the May 22, 2018 meeting minutes – Mr. Brovender moved and Dr. Karpiak seconded a motion to approve the minutes. The minutes passed unanimously.

Health Department Laboratory

Ms. D’Amore announced that Al Kao, Laboratory Director, will be retiring within the next year. Mr. Kao holds the highly complex clinical laboratory license for the Health Department. Mr. Kao presented an overview of the tests that the lab conducts under its license from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). With Mr. Kao leaving, there won’t be staffing with the qualifications necessary to hold the high complexity license for the Health Department. Mr. Kao reviewed two options for moving forward:

1. Go under the State lab license and move from high to a moderate complexity lab
2. Give up the current license and do waived testing only with a waived license.

Ms. D’Amore said staff would like the Board’s input on the options. She said the staff would prefer to go under the State license and want to hire a part-time phlebotomist/lab staff. Mr. Kao explained that the only tests we could no longer do include the RPR for syphilis and the throat culture for strep. The RPR would be conducted by the state lab, and results would take 7-10 days. The Health Department can do a waived method internally. The throat culture for strep is not needed because the rapid test is 95% accurate. Board members asked about the standard for other health departments, and Ms. D’Amore explained that most are under the State’s license. Board members all agreed that this is the best approach and that they would like to sign a letter showing their support. They thanked Mr. Kao for all of his work over the years.

EpiCenter Early Adopter Pilot Project

Ms. D'Amore reported that Norwalk is one of ten local health departments/districts in Connecticut selected to participate in a pilot project of the state's syndromic surveillance system. EpiCenter is the Commissioner's new approved format for the reporting of emergency illnesses and conditions. She explained how the system will include data on important public health issues such as flu, drug overdoses, and weather-related hazards. Mr. Lalime asked about the source of the data, and Ms. D'Amore explained that it comes from the hospitals and some urgent care centers. Dr. Karpiak said it will be helpful to have the data on flu in real-time.

Health Enhancement Communities Grant Update

Ms. Argondezzi presented an update on the Health Enhancement Communities (HEC) Grant the Health Department received from the State. Norwalk was selected as a reference community and is working with the State for a 6-month period to provide recommendations and community specific solutions to advance the development of an actionable HEC strategy. The HEC initiative aims to foster community-wide multi-sector collaboration and accountability to promote community health improvement and equity. She reviewed the timeline, the other reference communities, the key local partners, and next steps. She also explained the potential sources for financing in the future.

Food Access: Farmers Markets

Ms. Argondezzi presented findings from a Yale Public Health student project on farmers markets. The goal of the study was to determine facilitators and barriers for farmers market success in order to help create a cohesive and accessible market system in Norwalk and to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Twenty-two interviews were completed. Board members discussed the key factors to success and compared them with the current markets in Norwalk.

Interns and Volunteers

Ms. Argondezzi reported that there are several student interns and volunteers at the Health Department this summer gaining experience in health education and preventable diseases.

Other Business

- Ms. D'Amore shared that she will be participating in a public information meeting hosted by the South Norwalk Citizens for Justice on the Ryan Park Remediation Project this Thursday evening at Calvary Baptist Church. She invited Board members to attend.

Adjourn at 9:50 AM