

Hamilton County General Health District
REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF HEALTH
April 14, 2025 – 4 p.m.
Minutes

1. Call to Order

At 4 p.m., Dan Meloy, President, called to order the regular session of the Board of Health of Hamilton County General Health District followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call of Members

Members Present: Dan Meloy, President
Elizabeth A. Kelly, M.D., Vice-President
Eric Knapp
Max Miller

District Staff Present: Greg Kesterman, Health Commissioner
Craig Davidson, Assistant Health Commissioner
Jackie Lindner, Assistant Health Commissioner
Steve Feagins, M.D., Medical Director
Nee Fong Chin, Chief Assistant Prosecuting Attorney
Greg Varner, Finance Officer
Allison Babka, Public Information Officer
Anne Arble, Director of the Division of Epidemiology
Devin Knutson, Senior Epidemiologist
Kaitlyn King, Epidemiologist
Rachel Harding, Director of the Division of Harm Reduction
Deztani Randle, Community Outreach Coordinator

Guests Present: None

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Clean Kitchen Awards

Assistant Health Commissioner Craig Davidson read the list of three Clean Kitchen Award recipients and congratulated them for their efforts to maintain a high level of sanitation and staff education.

5. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Miller moved to approve the minutes of the March 10, 2025, Board of Health meeting.

Mr. Knapp seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

6. Public Comment: None.

7. Presentation

Commissioner Kesterman introduced the Harm Reduction and Epidemiology teams that were present. Kaitlyn King, Epidemiologist, presented on overdose trends and outreach. Ms. King provided statistics on overdose mortality rate trends. Over a five-year period, there was a 50 percent decline in the overall overdose mortality rate in Hamilton County. The African American overdose mortality rate is higher compared to white and other races. Ms. King also provided statistics showing that men have a higher overdose mortality rate in Hamilton County than women. Ms. King then described the overdose mortality rate in age groups and noted that the highest is in the 35-44 age group.

Ms. King showed a map of 2024 overdose trends by zip code with 45211 in the Cheviot area as the leading area. For African Americans, the highest number of overdoses also is in the 45211 zip code. Fatal overdoses primarily happen in the home. Zip codes overdose statistics are based on the victim's home residence.

Ms. King presented graphs showing top substances that contribute to death. Fentanyl is the top substance. Dr. Feagins noted that a combination of substances frequently occurs in these death cases.

Deztani Randle, Community Outreach Coordinator from the Harm Reduction division, began her work with HCPH in 2022 and noted that they have partnered with the African American Engagement Workgroup (AAEW) since 2023. The Harm Reduction Team distributes Narcan and fentanyl test strips, among other resources and supplies. Ms. Randle outlined the different outreach programs and efforts she and partners are making throughout the community.

Mr. Meloy asked about opportunities for outreach at the Hamilton County jail. Ms. Randle stated her team does not currently have any programs there and outlined the different outreaches close to the jail. Ms. Randle provided Board members with an outreach schedule for the Carthage, Roselawn, and Walnut Hills communities. Epidemiology supervisor Devin Knutson, who was also in attendance, shared that HCPH contracts with the Addiction Services Council to provide a navigator at the justice center who engages with individuals upon discharge.

Ms. Randle explained the different outreach challenges with harm reduction including overcoming stigma, gaining the community's trust, lack of education, lack of resources and a lack of trust within the police force, particularly in the African American populations with whom she engages.

With these efforts and outreach, they have seen the overdose deaths within the African American community decrease in Hamilton County. Ms. Randle stated that the team has had success in making its education opportunities about the opioid crisis widely available

Mr. Meloy asked about the African American community rates for overdose and noted that trust must be built in the community. Ms. Randle noted that many of the community members trust the church leaders, and her efforts are leading to a better level of trust. Mr. Meloy commended the Harm Reduction team and thanked them for their service.

Mr. Knapp asked a question about community outreach and how they are collaborating with other counties. Ms. Randle noted that they are continuing to reach out to others and

encourage collaboration. Mr. Knapp noted the trusted brand of Caracole is recognized by the community as a trusted resource. Mr. Knapp thanked everyone for their work.

Mr. Meloy asked if clients are asking to meet up with Ms. Randle personally. Ms. Randle stated that they have materials and resources available, and residents can call HCPH if she is not present. Commissioner Kesterman noted that there are harm reduction materials that are distributed near bars for those who recreationally use. Commissioner Kesterman also noted the different endeavors to give health resources to those in need of assistance in communities like Lincoln Heights and Forest Park.

This presentation shall be counted as 40 minutes of continuing education.

8. Health Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Greg Kesterman began his report with a summary of various federal impacts and funding updates. He explained details of the REACH Grant and noted that the continuation application is now available. He noted that the Ohio Department of Children and Youth will be responsible for the Ohio Equity Institute Grant and they have indicated that there will be changes in how the grant is administered, including that the Ohio Department of Health will be managing the FIMR work related to the grant. Additional details are not yet available.

He noted that the largest impact to HCPH to date was the cancellation of the Emergency Operations 23 grant that ended on March 24 without notice. HCPH had approximately \$875,000 in unspent funds. The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) has made several major adjustments to their accreditation requirements. These changes are intended to ensure that local health departments around the country are still able to seek accreditation status without jeopardizing local priorities.

Media reports from April 1 show that the federal government cut several divisions at the CDC and the FDA as part of a broad reduction in force. Over 10,000 positions across public health agencies were cut. Media reported that at the CDC, units focused on HIV prevention, environmental health, asthma and air quality, lead poisoning prevention, reproductive health, and tobacco control have been dismantled, among other areas. It is still too early to know how this may impact HCPH's programming or funding.

Commissioner Kesterman provided an update on the Ohio Budget process. He noted that the house budget has been released and now includes a provision that would no longer require a soil scientist to evaluate soils when a new sewage treatment system is being installed. He noted that he may be asked to testify by the AOHCA. He further noted that there were significant cuts to lead hazard reduction program funding that would have an impact on funds received by HCPH and have significant impacts to programming at the state level. Advocacy work will now begin with the Ohio Senate.

Commissioner Kesterman congratulated Mr. Meloy on his re-election to the Board of Health from the District Advisory Committee.

Staff Reports

(a) Medical Director's Report

Medical Director Dr. Steve Feagins began his report by noting that the Board of County Commissioners made a declaration of emergency on April 8 due to the flooding that recently hit Hamilton County. He explained the different health risks of flood disasters. One of those health risks includes exposure to sewage contaminated water, and exposure can lead to skin and soft-tissue infections, gastrointestinal diseases and respiratory diseases.

In discussing measles, Dr. Feagins shared that most samples are sent to the ODH state lab for testing. He noted that transmission of the virus is likely to continue with large unvaccinated families in certain areas. Healthcare providers continue to be alert for measles when patients come in for medical assistance. Vaccination within 72 hours of exposure may provide some protection for people who were previously unvaccinated. There is no antiviral treatment of measles. Dr. Feagins stated that if someone is unvaccinated there is an IV immune globulin which can be given to select high-risk individuals who have been exposed.

Dr. Feagins provided a graph showing COVID-19, influenza and RSV emergency department visits in Ohio. He then showed the different positive tests from Covid-19, influenza and RSV noting there was a peak of influenza hospitalization in the southwest Ohio region.

Dr. Feagins traveled to Miami and visited FIFA World Cup officials. FC Cincinnati has been preparing to host FIFA matches in 2025. One requirement for the club is to have multiple medical systems available for qualifying matches. Among FIFA physicians, public health was the biggest concern from a survey conducted.

Mr. Knapp asked if there are any measles infections locally. Dr. Feagins stated that Hamilton County does not have any cases currently. Commissioner Kesterman noted that his leadership team receives an alert if there are any potential measles cases.

The monthly Communicable Diseases Epi report was provided in the Board packet.

(b) Department of Community Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner Jackie Lindner began her report noting there was a health alert from ODH regarding measles infections that was distributed in the past couple of weeks. HCPH paired this health alert with a HCPH-specific memo outlining the approach in Hamilton County on measles prevention and response and sent the packet to local physicians and healthcare providers. This included a reminder of the Infectious Disease Reporting Line phone number if any physician or provider can call if they suspect a measles case. Staff at DPIC will gather basic information and notify the appropriate jurisdiction, which will then investigate the case.

Ms. Lindner noted that the Board had previously adopted, through regulation, the Local Public Health Services Collaborative (LPHSC) clinic fee schedule. HCPH was notified that the LPHSC's fee schedule was changed. HCPH's clinic fees will be adjusted to stay in alignment with the LPHSC's fees. The changed fees were entered into EPIC and will be reflected on future bills.

Ms. Lindner noted the annual report from the WeTHRIVE! program was in the Board packet and referenced multiple endeavors in the community.

(c) Department of Environmental Health Services

Assistant Health Commissioner Craig Davidson stated the rollout of HCPH's Roll-Off Dumpster Rental Assistance Program will begin. Under the terms of the program, HCPH will directly pay for the rental fees associated with the roll off dumpsters, which the property owner can then use in support of cleanup efforts. The budgeted costs associated with this program will be covered by utilizing Evan's Landscaping consent agreement penalties allocated under the current construction and demolition debris budget.

Mr. Miller asked a question regarding partnering with waste providers. Mr. Davidson stated that they have not called waste providers for partnerships this time but plan to solicit up to three (3) bids for each property. The lowest and best bid will be chosen for each project property.

Mr. Davidson noted that they are talking with Adams County regarding a plumbing inspection services partnership. He noted that they are interested, and a draft agreement has been provided for their review and consideration.

Dr. Kelly asked a question regarding who performs the enforcement inspections on the Environmental Health staff. Mr. Davidson stated that all registered environmental health specialists perform these inspections and follow up for enforcement when needed.

Environmental Health enforcement updates are included in the Board packet. Mr. Knapp inquired about the possibility of observing field staff perform nuisance housing investigations. Mr. Davidson recommended he follow up with Commissioner Kesterman to further discuss and how to proceed with making arrangements.

9. Finances

The March 2025 disbursement reports are included in the Board packet.

Dr. Kelly moved to approve the monthly disbursements.

Mr. Knapp seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Finance Officer Greg Varner presented the first quarter financial review. Mr. Varner discussed details of revenue, expenditures, budget, fund balances and grant activity. HCPH receives a big share of the revenue in the first quarter of every fiscal year. They received 100 percent of the indigent care levy funds for the TB clinic, Harm Reduction, and Oral Care Coalition. The Children with Medical Handicaps program is \$41,000 ahead of budget. Mr. Varner noted that the grants that were renewed in the first quarter were STI Prevention and the Integrated Harm Reduction 2025 grant. The grants that ended in the first quarter 2025 are STI Prevention, Integrated Harm Reduction, and the EO 23 grant was cancelled.

Mr. Varner provided details on how HCPH is covering the EO 23 grant cancellation. This will create a loss of personnel cost budgeted for the rest of 2025. He noted that other grant funds currently will cover four pay periods through May 7. After May 7, Mr. Varner provided a plan including the nursing supervisor moving to be funded by the TB grant. The potential impact on General Fund for 2025 is currently \$48,000 lost. He noted that his team will continue to look for grant opportunities among uncertainty with federal grants. Mr. Varner answered a question from Mr. Miller regarding looking for high-risk grant opportunities.

Commissioner Kesterman noted that there is an open position that will need to be held until further clarity from grants are given.

Dr. Kelly asked if any employees had to change roles due to loss of grant funding. Commissioner Kesterman noted that to date, this has not been needed. However, there have been discussions regarding one position's need to transition due to funding loss.

10. New Business

Board of Health Reorganization:

Dr. Kelly moved to nominate Dan Meloy as President of the Board of Health.

Mr. Knapp seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Mr. Knapp moved to nominate Dr. Elizabeth Kelly as Vice-President of the Board of Health.

Mr. Miller seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Board of Health Meeting time and Location:

Mr. Meloy moved to continue the monthly Board of Health meeting at the Board of Health conference room, 250 William Howard Taft Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45219 at 4 p.m. on the second Monday of the month.

Mr. Knapp seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

11. Executive Session

Dr. Kelly moved to go to Executive Session to discuss personnel matters at 5:20 p.m.

Mr. Miller seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

The Board of Health came out of Executive Session at 5:59 p.m. where no decisions were made.

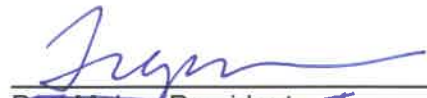
12. Adjournment

Mr. Meloy moved to adjourn the meeting at 6 p.m.

Mr. Knapp seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote – All Aye

Next Board of Health meeting: May 12, at 4 p.m.



Dan Meloy, President



Greg Kesterman, Secretary
Health Commissioner

Tracey Puthoff, Board Member and acting President