



CATTARAUGUS COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH



Public Health
Protect. Promote. Prevent.
Cattaraugus County
Health Department
Established 1923

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Mayor David L. Smith, President

Legislator Kelly Andreano, Vice-President

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Zahid Chohan, MD
Thomas Spigel, MD
Kathryn Cooney Thrush, NP, MSN
Shane Pancio
Theresa Raftis
Legislator Ginger D. Schroder*

MINUTES
November 6, 2024

The 927th meeting of the Cattaraugus County Board of Health (BOH) was held at the Old Library Restaurant on November 6, 2024.

The following members were present:

Joseph Bohan, MD

Mayor David Smith

Theresa Raftis

Thomas Spigel, MD

Legislator Ginger Schroder

Also present were:

Kevin D. Watkins, MD, MPH, Public Health Director

Ashley Smith, County Attorney

Legislator Richard Helmich

Ray Jordan, Senior Public Health Sanitarian (Virtual)

Debra Lacher, Secretary to the Public Health Director

James Lawrence, Emergency Preparedness Director

Rick Miller, Catt Co News & Photos/Olean Star

Lynne Moore, Director of Nursing

Gene Palmer, Resident with Public Comment

Dave Porter, Hearing Officer

Robert Ring, Environmental Health Director

Matt Tyssee, Health Educator

Gilbert Witte, MD, Medical Director

Mayor Smith welcomed everyone to the Board of Health (BOH) meeting, the roll was called, and a quorum was noted. He congratulated Dr. Bohan on his reappointment to the BOH for another six-year term.

Mayor Smith called for the approval of the October 2, 2024 meeting minutes. A motion was made by Ms. Raftis to approve the meeting minutes as presented, the motion was seconded by Dr. Spigel, and unanimously approved.

Public Comment Period: Mr. Gene Palmer, of South Dayton, requested permission to address the Board. Mayor Smith reminded Mr. Palmer that the rules of order for public comment are that the public is given (3) minutes to speak to the Board.



Mr. Palmer shared that he has experienced controversies with local providers and a hospital that provided him less than appropriate medical care, and he has filed multiple complaints to no avail. Legislator Schroeder asked Mr. Palmer which hospital did he experience the incident that he expounded on to the Board and Mr. Palmer responded that the care was given at the Westfield Memorial Hospital in Chautauqua County. Mr. Palmer did provide several documents to County Attorney Smith for her review. County Attorney Smith stated that all documentation provided were from facilities outside of Cattaraugus County. Mayor Smith suggested that he reach out to the Board of Health in Chautauqua County where the care in question was provided, to have his issues addressed by their Board. Mr. Palmer replied that he has reached out to them but they have not responded to his request.

DIRECTORS REPORT: Dr. Watkins provided an update regarding fentanyl mortality in Cattaraugus County. He stated that fentanyl and other synthetic opioids are still the most common drugs involved in overdose deaths. Dr. Watkins showed a bar graph of the number of Opioid mortalities in the last five years in Cattaraugus County, he stated that there has been a significant drop off in the mortality rate in 2024, (9) compared to the last two years which was (27) and (25) respectively. Of the (9) opioid mortality cases in 2024, (7) were due to fentanyl and (2) were due to methadone which is a treatment used for opioid disorders. He also showed a bar graph of the monthly mortality rates for 2024 which revealed that there has not been more than (2) opioid mortalities per month. Most of these deaths occurred within a residence home, and (5) occurred in Olean. Dr. Watkins stated he speculates that the mortality rate is trending downward due to the harm reduction measures that have been put in place, including distribution of naloxone nasal spray, and fentanyl and xylazine test strips.

Another harm reduction resource that is offered to residents is deterra bags which are activated carbons. Any leftover medication can be deposited into the deterra bag and it deactivates the medication after adding water, the bag is then tossed in the garbage. The final resource provided to residents is medication assisted treatment for anyone who wants assistance for opioid addiction. FDA has approved several different medications to treat opioid use disorders (OUD). The three most common medications used to treat OUD are Buprenorphine (one of which suboxone, falls under this category and is commonly used by providers in the area), methadone, and naltrexone. Basically, these medications help to relieve physiological cravings, and have been shown to be quite beneficial.

Dr. Watkins also reported that the Cattaraugus County Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) call log for overdoses, between January 1st and October 22nd, indicates that (72) calls to provide assistance for possible overdoses occurred during that time period and (68) lives were saved. Legislator Schroeder stated that the statistics on EMT calls which included (72) people are probably multiple calls for repeat cases and there were not (72) different cases. She also stated that the County is required by New York State to provide Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) to all those in the jail suffering from addictions, and also required to provide the same treatment to those who come in without addiction. Due to the regulation, the County is experiencing people that have come into the jail without a drug addiction, but leaving with addiction to suboxone or methadone. This MAT in the jail is costing taxpayers half a million dollars a year. Dr. Witte asked how long has this been going on. Legislator Schroeder and County Attorney Smith, stated that this has been going on for some time and it is an unfunded mandate from New York State. Legislator Helmich asked if the two methadone deaths for 2024 were legally gained methadone or illegally gained methadone. Dr. Watkins responded legally obtained. Dr. Witte also commented that the number of EMT cases does not account for all the overdoses that are treated with Narcan.

Dr. Bohan commented that there seems to be many obituaries of young people who die at home and he wonders if the county coroners investigate all those cases. Dr. Watkins said yes and they do toxicology reports on all cases that are suspicious.

Dr. Watkins told the Board that in the month of October, the Health Department administered (1,925) vaccines, (1,387) were for influenza and (538) were for COVID-19. On October 23, 2024 the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) met, and recommended that a second dose of the 2024—2025 COVID 19 vaccine be administered for those ages (65 years and older), and for those ages (6 months-64 years old) who are moderately or severely immunocompromised, six months after their first dose.

On October 23, 2024, ACIP also updated its recommendations for lowering the age for pneumococcal vaccination from age (65) to (50) years of age.

Dr. Watkins stated that one requirement for re-accreditation is to bring the Board up to date on the Strategic Plan progress. He went on to say that there are (5) goals within the department's strategic plan:

Goal One: To Improve Public Health: Objective 1.1: Develop Quarterly Reports for Acute and Chronic Illnesses; Progress to Date: As of Q3 2024, the department has successfully implemented a system for developing quarterly reports on acute and chronic illnesses. These reports encompass a range of health issues including diabetes, heart disease, respiratory infections such as influenza and COVID-19. These reports are being published regularly on the CCHD website.

Objective 1.1(#2): Investigate Mental Health Training Opportunities and Provide Mental Health Education and Training for Staff; Progress to Date: Several mental health training opportunities have been investigated, with a key partnership established with Cattaraugus County Community Services and the New York State Office of Mental Health. As a result, multiple mental health education sessions have been provided to staff members since 2023. Topics covered include stress management, trauma-informed care, and suicide prevention.

Objective 1.2: Strengthen epidemiological capacity by developing a team within the department, evaluating epidemiological data, and investigating diagnoses to identify potential public health hazards. Progress to Date: Collaborated with local health providers, Regional Health Information Organization (RHIO), and the New York State Department of Health to gather disease prevalence data and identify risk factors prevalent in Cattaraugus County.

Goal Two: Champion Health Equity: The objective of this goal is to ensure promotion materials produced by the department is compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and it is accessible in various formats. Progress to Date: A list of priority documents were generated and nearly (10) essential documents have been updated, with both digital and print versions made available to the public.

Goal Three: Optimizing the Departments Infrastructure: Objective 3.1: Investigate and Expand Training and Education Within All Divisions. Progress to Date: A training needs assessment was conducted across all divisions to identify areas for skill enhancement and professional development.

Objective 3.1 (#2): Ensure Program Managers Have a Succession Plan in Place: Progress to Date: Each program manager has a comprehensive job description outlining roles, responsibilities, and key processes for their positions. These descriptions have been completed and are now accessible to relevant staff. Succession planning workshops are being planned that will guide managers in identifying potential successors and developing tailored professional development plans for them.

Objective 3.2: Review Current Policies and Procedures: Focus on evaluating existing policies and procedures to ensure their appropriateness and effectiveness: Progress to Date: A comprehensive review of existing policies and procedures was initiated to assess their relevance and effectiveness in current operational contexts.

Objective 3.3: Maintain Department Hallmarks: To focuses on sustaining key department hallmarks, specifically the Home Health Agency and national accreditation: Progress to Date: The department is currently completing the re-accreditation process for national standards.

Goal Four: Prepare for Emerging Threats: Aim is to enhance community and partnership readiness for public health emergencies by ensuring the Public Health Emergency Response Plan (PHERP) is regularly updated and effectively communicated; Progress to Date: Collaboration with community partners have been strengthened to ensure the PHERP reflects current needs and emerging threats.

Goal Five: Improve Internal and External Communication: To develop and Implement a Comprehensive Communication Plan: Progress to Date: Brand guidelines have been finalized and disseminated to all divisions. These guidelines outline logos, color schemes, and tone of messaging. Procedures for developing communication materials based on these guidelines are now in place and being utilized.

Dr. Watkins shared a picture of the department staff and the department of Aging staff. He stated that the two departments have collected items for those in need from the hurricane devastation. Items included a generator, cleaning supplies, food, and paper supplies. The two departments are working in conjunction with Bona Responds to get these items shipped down South.

Legislator Helmich asked if the department solicited donations from the community. Mr. Tyssee replied that nothing was solicited from businesses, most everything donated were from employees.

Dr. Watkins shared the BOH calendar for 2025, which will include 10 meetings, he stated that meetings are usually held on the first Wednesday of the month, however, for 2025 there will be three exceptions. The first meeting of the year will be held on the first Friday of the month, in June the meeting will be the 4th Wednesday of the month, and in December the meeting will be the 3rd Wednesday of the month. There will be no meetings held in January or July.

Mayor Smith thanked all the members of the department who worked arduously on the Strategic Plan, as Strategic Plans are difficult but they are necessary, and will open up various funding opportunities because they are completed. Mayor Smith also expressed his appreciation for the humanity efforts made for the hurricane victims.

NURSING DIVISION REPORT: Mrs. Moore shared that the homecare census was currently (226). There were (103) admissions in October, of which (53) were readmissions, and (89) discharges were completed.

On October 23rd NY State Department of Health (NYSDOH) showed up at the department for a follow-up survey, from their original visit in November of 2023. There were (15) citations from November that they reviewed and closed as they found the department to be in compliance with the submitted plans of correction. However, four citations remained open after they left, another plan of correction will have to be completed and submitted to NYSDOH. The (4) areas that were flagged consisted of inconsistent documentation and issues with contracted staff personnel files.

Lead program update: In the month of October, the highest elevated blood lead level (BLL) was a child with a BLL of (20.8ug/dl) [normal is < 5ug/dl], this level is down from (36.8ug/dl) in July; (1) child had a BLL result of (17ug/dl) venous draw, (1) child had a BLL of (10.8ug/dl), previously (19.7ug/dl) in July, (4) children had BLL's between (5.2 and 7.8 ug/dl), and (124) children had BLL's (<5ug/dl). The total lead caseload is currently (73) children. Legislator Helmich asked how is it determined who is tested. Mrs. Moore replied that New York State Public Health Law and Regulations require health care providers to collect a blood lead test for all children at age 1 year and again at age 2 years old at every well child visit.

Mrs. Moore stated that the second annual lead poisoning education conference was held at the Seneca Allegany Casino on October 24th. This turned out to be a great event with wonderful speakers and a nice turnout by stakeholders.

HIV testing; In October, there was (28) tests conducted in Olean; (22) in Salamanca and (3) in Machias, all results were negative.

In October, there were (3) rabies pre-exposure vaccine series given and no post exposures. It is the time of year when bats are hibernating and people are spending more time indoors.

Mrs. Moore shared statistics for COVID vaccination numbers for the month of October comparing 2023 to 2024. There were (407) COVID vaccinations administered in 2023 and (538) in 2024.

Communicable diseases: In October, there was (9) cases of Chlamydia; (1) case of Gonorrhea; (2) cases of Syphilis. (1) case of Anaplasmosis and (1) case of Erlichiosis which are both tick transmission; (1) case of Haemophilus Influenza; (1) case of Hepatitis B; (1) case of Legionellosis, (1) case of Salmonellosis; (1) case of influenza A; (9) cases of RSV; and (54) cases of COVID-19.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH REPORT: Mr. Ring shared that staff has investigated (201) animal bites so far this year with the vast majority being dog bites, and the busiest month was August with (30) bites. Environmental Health is only responsible for the rabies investigation part and many times the division works with the dog control officers of the community where the bite takes place.

The lead capacity building grant update: the program is focusing on contractors and getting them qualified to do work in homes, as they must be Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) certified. A supervisor requires (3) days of training, and a worker requires (2) full days of training.

Currently, the program is seeking out contractors in the area that may be interested, the program pays for their training, and they must pay a small fee for their certification. During the winter months when contractors work is slow, it is the intent of the program to have more trainings available, although project work will not begin for another year. Legislator Helmich asked what kind of work would be completed, and Mr. Ring replied that lead abatement work inside homes is what the grant would cover.

The lead service line inventory deadline was October 16th, by November 15th the Public has to be notified in the event that they have a lead line or a galvanized or an unknown service line. About (40%) of the residents on public water did have their service line identified as being lead, galvanized, or unknown. About (50%) of the residents in the county are on public water, therefore, approximately (15,000-20,000) people will be getting letters in the next two to three weeks about lead and their service line. Mr. Ring informed the Board that there are (3) people in the division that make up the water team including himself. Every three years they check the municipality water infrastructure, checking that their equipment is working properly, ensuring that they are doing things properly and making suggestions as needed. Mayor Smith stated that having been a former municipal leader the communication from the Health Department regarding public water systems is impeccable regarding deadline reminders, sample updates, and the level of communication has always been first class.

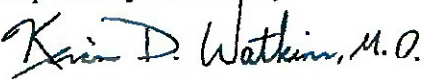
Old/New Business: Mayor Smith stated that the Board of Health was looking at the possibility of meeting at different venues for future meetings. One additional place looked at in October was Woodside Tavern. After an exhaustive review, due to parking, lack of appropriate technology, seating arrangements within the venues, locations, cost, coupled with the time that the Board needed to book next year's meetings, we have suspended that project at this time. We will continue to look at other options next year but are moving forward with the BOH meetings at the Old Library for 2025.

The BOH next meeting will be held at noon, on Wednesday, December 18th.

Dr. Spigel asked if the state knows that it costs Cattaraugus County (\$500,000.00) to fund the jail for MAT. Dr. Watkins replied that it is an unfunded mandate, and County Attorney Smith stated that they are fully aware of the costs that they are passing onto the Counties.

A motion was made by Dr. Spigel to adjourn the meeting, the motion was seconded by Dr. Bohan and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,


Kevin D. Watkins, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary to the Board of Health