



# **Kanawha-Charleston Board of Health**

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **March 28, 2018 – 3:00 p.m.**

#### **Members – Present**

Ms. Brenda Isaac, President  
Mr. Robert Reishman  
Mr. James Strawn  
Ms. Martha Yeager Walker  
Mr. Stephen Weber

#### **Presenters**

Dr. Dominic Gaziano, Interim  
Health Officer  
Ms. Janet Briscoe, Director of  
Epidemiology and Threat  
Preparedness

#### **Member(s) Excused**

Dr. Arthur Rubin

#### **1. Call to Order - President, Ms. Brenda Isaac**

President Isaac called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

#### **2. Report of the President – Ms. Brenda Isaac**

Ms. Isaac explained Kanawha-Charleston Health Department suspended the syringe exchange portion of its harm reduction program after receiving from the Charleston Police Department a Memorandum and Rules regarding KCHD's syringe exchange program. A copy of the Memorandum and Rules is attached to these minutes as an appendix. She said KCHD could not meet the April 2, 2018, deadline imposed for implementing the rules. After conferring with staff, President Isaac suspended the syringe exchange, pending action of the Board of Health.

She met on Tuesday, March 26, with Department of Health and Human Resources Secretary Bill J. Crouch, who she reported supports the needle exchange program and said it is essential because of West Virginia's high incidence of illicit intravenous drug use. State Health Officer/Commissioner of the Bureau for Public Health Dr. Rahul Gupta was also at the meeting with Secretary Crouch. Ms. Isaac stressed KCHD is the state's only nationally accredited health department and said the board and staff must ensure KCHD is following best practices and clinically accepted standards. Any lack of doing so could endanger the licenses of KCHD's licensed health care employees involved with the clinic.

#### **Discussion of the suspension of the syringe exchange program**

Interim Health Officer Dr. Dominic Gaziano noted his concerns with the rules as promulgated and explained some of the benefits of syringe exchange for IV drug users, particularly relating to decreasing the number of expensive-to-treat blood and heart valve infections and viral infections such as HIV and hepatitis. He specifically noted the benefits of supplying contraceptives to lower the number of babies born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome. Dr. Gaziano also pointed out patients accessing harm reduction programs are more likely to enter detoxification/rehabilitation programs.

Ms. Walker said KCHD has no option but to offer a harm reduction program. She expressed interest in West Virginia Health Right's harm reduction program and wants to visit with Executive Director Dr. Angie Settle and learn the details of that program.

President Isaac reported the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has serious concerns about using retractable syringes in a harm reduction program. The CDC has visited and approved KCHD's program as it is currently administered. The harm reduction program at KCHD was started because the local hospitals were concerned with the rising rates of hepatitis in the community, and it appears the disease prevention is working. Director of Epidemiology and Threat Preparedness Janet Briscoe, RN, presented on how retractable syringes are designed; and how they can be reused until the needle is retracted, which can cause damage to a patient. Ms. Briscoe stressed it is the material on the needles, particularly those that are shared, that cause infections—not the needles, alone.

Mr. Weber said that it may be a civil rights violation to require government-issued identification for the program. He said KCHD may face a liability problem if retractable needles are used for the program when medical evidence suggests to the contrary. He suggested an experienced health care attorney review the memorandum and rules.

Ms. Isaac noted that a Charleston City Council Task Force to study harm reduction and syringe exchanges is being formed and said it is inappropriate for the rules to be issued before that task force has had an opportunity to meet its 60-day deadline.

Mr. Strawn mentioned that KCHD is the only accredited state health department and that its harm reduction program has been nationally evaluated. He agreed changes may be needed but said they must be indicated to provide proper treatment.

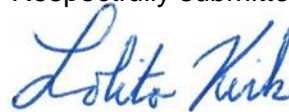
Upon motion by Mr. Weber, seconded by Mr. Reishman, the question was put, "Shall KCHD continue suspension of the needle exchange portion of its harm reduction program until the next meeting at the call of the president, consult with an attorney as to the memorandum and rules, and attempt to arrange a meeting with representatives of the mayor's office, the fire department, the police department and West Virginia Health Right?" Motion carried.

3. **Unfinished Business and Public Comment Period** – There were no comments from the public.

4. **Adjournment**

Mr. Reishman made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Weber. The motion passed, and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,



Lolita Kirk, Acting Executive Director

