



Serving the Towns of Alford, Great Barrington, Lee, Lenox,
Monterey, Mount Washington, New Marlborough, Otis,
Sandisfield, Sheffield, Stockbridge and Tyringham

"The mission of the Southern Berkshire Public Health Collaborative is to leverage partnerships in order to provide quality public health services that directly improve the health and well-being of the entire community."

**SBPHC Meeting Minutes
January 13, 2023 @ 9AM
Great Barrington Conference Room, 334 Main St., Great Barrington, MA
w/ Remote Option**

Present In Person: Pat Levine (SHF, Chair), Rebecca Jurczyk (GTB, Vice Chair), Dianne Romeo (LNX), Jim Wilusz (LEE), Ellie Lovejoy (MTW), Jordan Chretien and Scott McFarland (NMB), Jayne Smith (ALF), Jill Sweet (Public Health Nurse)

Present Remotely: Michael Hugo (MAHB)

1. Administrative Items

- a. Review and Approve November 18, 2022 Minutes. Ellie Lovejoy made a motion to accept the November 18, 2022 minutes. Jim Wilusz seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Public Health Nursing Update

- a. **Quarterly Report:** Jill Sweet reviewed quarterly report. Otis, Alford, and New Marlborough do not have a scheduled health clinic and so Jill has reached out to each of those towns to see if they would like to start having a monthly clinic. Some of the existing clinics have low attendance and Jill is working with the COAs in those towns to have at least 5 people sign up to ensure a proper use of resources. Jill is bringing wellness information to the health clinics and is working to figure out ways to stack programs to increase participation. Ellie Lovejoy suggested recognizing that there are more and more people using the home monitors and perhaps supporting people to use their home- blood pressure monitor correctly would be helpful.

SBPHC is down to one nurse and the job posting is on the SBPHC website. It is difficult to compete with nurse salaries.

- b. **Clinic Updates:** SBPHC still has private purchase vaccine available. There are appointments regularly available at the nurses' office in Lee. SBPHC has COVID vaccine for ages 5+. Currently we are referring under 5-year-olds to CHP. Through the Rural Health Network, we are now able to incentivize people to get their COVID vaccines/boosters by offering a \$75 gift card.

Awareness of the Car Seat Program is taking off by word of mouth. It is making a meaningful impact for many families. Next year Jill will only be applying for the State Grant that provides better quality seats than the Toyota grant. Long term as we build up staff capacity, we will be able to provide car seat clinics.

Rebecca Jurczyk asked if the ongoing homebound vaccine hours and \$75 gift card incentive is being advertised and whether there is a flyer. It was suggested to reach out to primary care providers, VIM, etc., to publicize the homebound vaccine program. Homebound vaccines take up a lot of resources, since it is best practice for two people to go for safety reasons. It was also suggested to work with Elder Services and go out with them when there is another service being provided to a resident. There is a homebound vaccine program in Pittsfield and a state program that covers non-SBPHC towns, although Jill does get requests occasionally and works with the local public health nurses to coordinate vaccination of residents from outside the Collaborative.

Jayne discussed that we are actively working with our community partners to figure out how to meaningfully meet the needs of people who are not native English speakers, particularly Spanish-speaking individuals. While there are organizations can help translate flyers and such, there is generally a lack of capacity in South County to ask existing community organizations (like Fairview or VIM) to give us a phone number that can be listed on translated flyers where there is someone who speaks Spanish on the other end. Our goal is to hire a translation service contract for next vaccine season. It was agreed that DPH needs to put resources aside to provide meaningful translation services for local boards of health.

3. Topics for Discussion

- a. **DPH Capacity Assessment Results- Next Steps:** Mike Hugo shared that we likely will not hear anything beyond what we already know until March. DPH will be meeting with each of the groups starting in mid-February to present to the findings and then there will be a process of back and forth to inform the final resources and work plan. Jayne added that there will be a requirement for each town to have a representative at the initial meeting, which will be held at either 10 and 2. Mike will be attending many of these meetings and may be able to provide some insight on what the experience will likely be ahead of time as long as SBPHC isn't first.
- b. **2023 Priorities and Goals:** Early on, SBPHC staff identified potential projects that the SBPHC might provide that would be helpful to the citizen/towns. There are core services that we must provide but there are other services that we are currently providing or ones the towns really need or want that are not core services. It would be good to identify those projects and strategize where we are going to place our energy as we grow and develop.

Pat L. suggested the Collaborative develop a mechanism, outside of our normal monthly meeting, to evaluate and respond to evolving risks or triggers, such as an increase of disease in the community or an emergency, to determine our united approach and support our communities accordingly.

Rebecca J. suggested that we provide a quick presentation at the next meeting on what has been done already and how we can support existing programming,

Jim offered to send out the work plan to everyone so we can see where we stand with what we said we were going to do this year.

- c. **Sustainability Subcommittee:** Jim explained the PHE has the existing funds plus the resources that may be made available as the result of the assessment. The vaccine reimbursement amounts this first year from MassHealth, as well as private insurance and Medicaid reimbursements are unknown because we are a new program with no track record. This is one of the reasons why we are relying on the town appropriations to ensure we can prepurchase vaccine for next year. Jayne confirmed that Ellie Lovejoy, Jordan Chretien, Rebecca Jurczyk, Jim Wilusz will meet as the newly formed Sustainability Subcommittee.

Ellie mentioned that the Collaborative will likely need administrative support for its operations. There is a lot of in-kind help that is provided by TTHD and the Town of Lee. There likely will be more administrative rolls later if towns decide they will need help with managing permits.

4. Opioid Updates

- a. **Overdose Settlement Next Steps:** MAHB has done a great job explaining the processes of how the settlement money must be spent and is working on a guidance document for towns. The SCOWG/Recovery Center will be handling the selectboard asks. The roll of the SBPHC will be to go back to your BOH and ask the BOH to make a recommendation to the town selectboards on how to spend that money.

Towns can choose to directly appropriate the funds for use or put a stabilization fund on the town warrant and then choose to appropriate the funds in keeping with the settlement's purpose. It would be helpful to get the information to the boards of health to make a recommendation.

- b. **Prescription Disposal Logistics:** SBPHC is working with the Berkshire County Sheriff's Department to duplicate regional program in Hampden County. In the meantime, SBPHC will be assisting Great Barrington and Sheffield with transportation costs to dispose of prescription drugs that have been dropped off at the police stations.
- c. **Public Overdose Emergency Kits:** SCOWG is receiving up to 10 emergency kits to be placed in South County. In addition, the Harm Reduction and the Recovery Center is trying to reach out to food establishments to get supplies of naloxone on site and may be reaching out to local boards of health for assistance with spreading the word on this program.
- d. **Sharps Containers:** The sharps kiosks are in place and Harm Reduction is giving us three sizes of sharps containers for distribution. Interns are working on educational materials. We want to make sure everything is ready and the locations are set before we do a hard launch. We are working with the public health nurse program to figure out if and how they can distribute approved containers and take back full approved containers during their wellness clinics. Officially, we are encouraging approved containers but will accept alternate containers such as a laundry detergent containers as long as they are sealed and labeled appropriately.

5. Community Partner Updates:

- SBPHC leadership continues to meet with the BPHA on a monthly basis and we are pushing to have a housing training brought to the Berkshires.
- Jim explained that we are working with an intern to focus on South County to ensure that boards of health have access to accurate information to assist people with housing.
- Scott asked if we had thought about a part-time nurse for the second nurse instead of a full-time nurse. Jim explained that we are looking at a couple of different models and it is hard to hire part time employees, which also gets complicated in terms of their availability and keeping them at a level below the threshold for benefits (19 hours a week).
- We are starting to get notifications on vaccine reimbursements and we will have a sense of what those reimbursement numbers will be for next year. The base goal is to cover the expenses this year and to get a sense of what the amount reimbursements will come in at. We will be fine tuning our process based on lessons learned each year. We do have some excess regular-dose flu because we weren't sure if we were getting any from the State. COVID vaccines were free this year but the state has indicated that we may need to purchase them in the future.
- Scott asked whether we are coordinating with the Harm Reduction Van with our sharps campaign. Jayne replied that we are closely working with the Harm Reduction Van, including a QR code on the sharps containers that will link to the van's schedule. Ellie needs a contact person at the Harm Reduction Van to finalize the process to get them approved for Mt. Washington, which Jayne said she would provide.

6. Parking Lot

- a. **Review Draft Articles of Organization:** Pat suggested that we distribute the Articles of Organization and solicit feedback prior to a future meeting so we can work on this.

7. Citizen Speak Time

8. Upcoming Events

9. Next Meeting Date: Feb 10, 2023: In-person with remote option

10. Adjourn Meeting: Ellie Lovejoy made a motion to adjourn. Dianne Romeo seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 10:17am.