



Board of Health
Sandra Larson, JD, BSN
Preeti Joseph, MD
Jess Smith, PharmD, MPH
Pat Lehmkuhl, MSN, BSN, RN, CIC
Mike Fidgeon
Lynn “Tut” Fuller, MD
Kathryn J. Dolter, RN, PhD,
Lieutenant Colonel, U. S. Army (Retired)

DUBUQUE COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

March 19, 2025, at 4:30pm

Dubuque County West Campus Conference Room.

1225 Seippel Rd. Dubuque, IA

MEETING MINUTES

Chairperson Larson called the March 19, 2025, Dubuque County Board of Health regularly scheduled meeting to order at 4:30 p.m., in person.

Members Present in Person: Sandra Larson, Dr. Kathryn Dolter, Mike Fidgeon, Pat Lehmkuhl

Members Present via Zoom: Jess Smith, Dr. Lynn “Tut” Fuller

Members Absent: Dr. Preeti Joseph

Staff Present in Person: Allie White, Bailey Avenarius, Carissa Brown

Staff Present via Zoom:

Others Present in Person: Diane Pape-Freiburger, Carla Kasal, Stacey Killian

Others Present via Zoom: Anne McDonough, Wayne Kenniker

1. Roll Call: A quorum was established

2. Public Comments: None

3. Chairperson Announcements & Updates:

Larson reported that she was very pleased with the work of the health department on the budget and noted Carissa went to the department of supervisors about funding for naloxone.

4. BOS/BOH Liaison Comments:

None, noted the presence of Kenniker

5. Approval of March 19, 2025 Agenda:

Dolter moved to approve the agenda, Fidgeon seconded, motion was carried unanimously.

6. Approval of February 19, 2025 Minutes:

Fidgeon moved to approve the minutes, Lehmkuhl seconded, motion was carried unanimously.

7. Presentations & Reports

- a. VNA Monthly Report – Killian reported satisfaction with the format, noting that it effectively highlights trends and needs in real time. For example, there was a noticeable increase in oral health services at large clinics, with numbers rising in February and doubling again in March. The Community Connector program also saw

a significant uptick in staff applications and Medicaid eligibility.

From a financial standpoint, 75% of the Public Health Services (PHS) budget has been allocated to public health services. A request for additional funding has been made. Larson asked for clarification on the types of services covered, including health education, health promotion, immunizations, and others. Killian also provided an update on home care aides, noting that the aide who had been on medical leave has returned and is attending a public health conference.

There have been numerous questions about measles, particularly regarding adult immunity. Killian shared that Medicare only covers the measles vaccine if it is administered through a pharmacy. Hartig Pharmacy has been instrumental in obtaining vaccines. The county is currently sitting at 87% vaccination rate. IRIS is sometimes inaccurate because not all vaccines are entered into the system, and while the state does not mandate reporting to IRIS, and the VNA cannot report for other entities.

Dolter expressed concern about the accuracy of vaccine reporting and asked how the process could be improved. The department is working with schools to ensure that all vaccine data is properly entered into IRIS. Dolter also inquired about the target vaccination rate. Dolter requested that the target and progress report be included in the monthly report. Larson suggested discussing this further at the first Friday meeting of each month.

McDonough pointed out that Dubuque County has been at the forefront of identifying inaccuracies in IRIS, having addressed this issue during the COVID-19 pandemic. Killian expressed concern about publicly sharing vaccine numbers due to the potential for misinformation and panic. Dolter recommended posting the numbers with a disclaimer about their inaccuracy and suggested using annual audit numbers as the target figure.

Larson asked if the data for Clayton County could be separated, to which Killian agreed, provided the reporting system allowed it. She clarified that the budget deficit in Dubuque County reflects the need for services across the agency, as certain months experience higher uninsured rates, and the deficit helps cover those additional costs.

Killian also shared a story about a veteran on hospice care, who was living in a hotel but unable to pack his belongings. The Visiting Nurses Association (VNA) assisted in facilitating the move for the veteran.

- b. Environmental Health Quarterly Report- Bailey Avenarius: Updates were provided on permits and water testing. A total of 80 septic tank permits and 30 well permits have been issued, with 105 individuals currently on the waiting list for water testing. A reallocation of \$50,000 has been approved for the program.

Avenarius responded to a previous Board of Health inquiry regarding the impact of droughts on water quality. She reported that the DNR highlighted shallow wells as a primary concern, as they are more susceptible to bacterial contamination. Additionally, water testing conducted during a drought may yield inaccurate results. Dubuque is currently experiencing a moderate drought, and efforts to educate the public on this issue will continue.

Larson inquired whether some of the funding is allocated for payment to the

State Hygienic Lab. Avenarius confirmed that the funds are used to cover testing for arsenic and manganese. Avenarius and White also provided updates on the allocation of administrative fees and the distribution of funds.

- c. DCPH Monthly Report- Allie White: White acknowledged that she had forgotten to include the respiratory virus report but noted that it indicated a decline in respiratory virus activity. She also highlighted that measles is now considered an emergent threat. A group will convene to either develop a new plan or update the existing community action plan in response. Dolter pointed out that adults vaccinated during a specific time period may not have received an attenuated vaccine and should be checked for immunity. White reported that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recently held a webinar addressing this issue. She also noted that there have been 301 confirmed measles cases across 15 states, primarily among unvaccinated individuals, with 50 hospitalizations. While outbreaks have occurred in Texas and New Mexico, no cases have been reported in Iowa as of yet. Lemkuhl mentioned that HAN alerts are being distributed with information for hospitals and providers.

White also provided updates on completed tasks, which include the presentation of budget requests for fiscal year 2026, the purchase of thermometers for naloxone distribution machines, meetings with the Epworth City Council to discuss the placement of distribution boxes in the city, and the approval to use opioid funds to replenish these distribution boxes. Additionally, AEDs were purchased with Emergency Preparedness funds, and the “Healthy Cooking on a Budget” event was successfully held. White also reported on the Time of Transfer presentation delivered to American Realty realtors in February.

Ongoing projects include preparations for the upcoming IPHA conference, additional outreach through an informational class for the East Central Iowa Association of Realtors, and participation by White and Brown on a panel that will showcase the work of various departments within local government. White noted the resignation of Nicole Bertges

- d. Strategic Plan Update- Allie White: Progress activities were presented, highlighting efforts to raise awareness through social media posts, billboards, two educational events, and the creation and updating of policies. Community engagement has been strengthened through collaborations with the Visiting Nurses Association (VNA), MercyOne, the Department of Veteran Affairs, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and local government officials. Efforts also include organizing vaccination events and educational opportunities within schools, such as the "Stop the Bleed" training.

Looking ahead, future plans will focus on identifying key indicators to guide further action. White noted that the goal of making data-driven decisions has proven more challenging than initially expected due to difficulties in accessing accurate data.

Larson inquired about the qualifications of the individual replacing Bertges and the new hire in the upcoming fiscal year.

8. **Consent Items:** Subrecipient Agreement with City of Dubuque Health Department

White provided context for the agreement with the City of Dubuque Health Department, explaining that the Public Health Emergency Response Plan needs updating. The agreement

with the city is intended to reimburse them for their time spent collaborating with the county on this plan. McDonough inquired about the total amount of the grant and if it would all be passed on to the city. McDonough emphasized the importance of understanding the budget, including where the funds are allocated and the costs associated with the work, to make more informed decisions.

9. **Action Item:** None

10. **New Business:** Dolter discussed the recent presentation by the Wellness Coalition on obesity education and proposed the development of a strategy, potentially forming a group to create lesson plans on obesity for schools. Larson inquired whether such classes already exist, to which Dolter acknowledged the need to gather more information about current efforts. Larson also asked whether the Wellness Coalition would be able to take on this task. White suggested discussing the issue with school leaders to explore potential collaboration. Larson proposed addressing the matter at their Friday meetings.

McDonough recommended partnering with the Food Policy Council and emphasized the importance of reviewing the types of food distributed at food drives. Larson expressed concern about whether the budget would allow for such a partnership with the Food Policy Council.

11. **Response to public questions:** Larson received input from a representative who expressed concerns about hunger. Meanwhile, Freiburger raised concerns regarding vaccination legislation, specifically the HPV vaccine, highlighting the increasing incidence of cancer in Iowa. She emphasized that the rising cancer rates and upcoming bills could have negative implications.

12. **Board Communication and Reports:** None

13. **Next Meeting** – April 16, 2025 @ 4:30 p.m.

14. **Public Comment** – Freiburger commented that many providers are unaware that Medicare covers booster shots, such as the MMR vaccine, leading to some providers rejecting them. She noted that there are groups available that offer Medicare-age boosters.

15. **Adjournment** –Lehmkuhl motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:38 pm

Minutes by: Nicole Bertges