

Environmental Health Continuous Improvement Board Notes

Date: March 17, 2025

Time: 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Attendance

Kim Carlton	Diana Ditsch	Blake Nordin
Sodik Adelani	Bill Groskreutz	Denise Schumacher
David Boberg	Jesse Harmon	Kent Severson
Lisa Brodsky	Tom Higgins	Wendy Spanier
Amanda Buell	Tom Hogan	Dan Symonik
Kim Carlton	Linda Kopecky	Rick Toms
Sagar Chowdhury	Jason Newby	Angie Wheeler

Setting the Table

10:30 a.m. Welcome | Amanda Buell

Meeting Purpose: To understand how a local program is assessing EH trends and updates from workgroups.

10:40 a.m. Review and approve meeting notes from December

Approved.

10:45 a.m. Regular updates

Mobile Food Unit workgroup

Discussed how to encourage food trucks to have their most recent inspection on site. Looking at licensing requirements and fees. Looking at the scope of what is out there for different licenses. Discussed definition of universal licensing. At the next meeting, will work on coming to an agreement on universal licensing definition.

Charter refresh workgroup

Final revisions have been incorporated into the Charter. SCHSAC is voting on final approval.

FPLS program evaluation workgroup

Program Evaluation Update

- Evaluation Process: The evaluation for Standards 5 and 7 began in February.
 - Standard 5 focuses on Illness and Investigation Response.
 - Standard 7 covers Industry and Community Relations.

- Self-Assessment Workshop: A workshop was held on February 19, 2025, where participants reviewed instructions, tools, and examples related to the evaluation process.
- Self-Assessment Period: The self-assessment period is from February 19 to March 21. Open-office hours were made available for delegated program staff to ask questions and share resources. Notes from these sessions are shared with staff who were unable to attend. The sessions were well-attended, with great discussions and questions raised.
- Reminder: A reminder email will be sent to ensure the self-assessment and supporting documentation are uploaded by March 21.
- Verification and Draft Reports: After March 21, MDH evaluators will work with delegated programs to verify the self-assessments, with draft reports expected to be available by July 1.

Delegated Program Annual Check-ins

- Purpose: The annual delegation program meetings are designed to provide a dedicated time for each FPLS delegated program to meet with MDH staff individually. These meetings serve as an opportunity to:
 - Share program updates, successes, and challenges.
 - Ask questions and discuss future needs.
 - Strengthen the partnership between delegated programs and MDH through improved communication.
- Status: Meetings with delegated program staff started in late February and are scheduled to conclude by March 21. The MDH team appreciates the time and effort delegated programs have taken to share updates, ensuring continued partnership and support.

Delegation Agreement Workgroup

- Discussed the EH delegation agreement structure and process within Minnesota. Had discussions of what's working well, Benefits of a local delegated programs, areas of improvement, and challenges.
- The workgroups next meeting is April 2.

Digging Deep

11:10 a.m. Legislative Update

Micro kitchen proposal with a companion bill. But in the Department of Ag language that attempts to create this type of business. Doesn't have a lot of public health protections included. MDH has an Incident Command System (ICS) to support MDH's response to possible federal funding changes – both those we know about, like COVID-related grants, and changes that may come from the state and federal governments. The preliminary objectives are to monitor information coming into MDH, evaluate for impacts, and respond as needed.

11:25 a.m. Lessons learned from COVID Response. Applications to current events.

Board members used Padlet to share [EH CIB: Lessons learned from COVID](#). The discussion covered lessons learned about staffing, communication, risks and feelings about the current climate, and then what they were taking forward from all these lessons.

Lessons about staffing for resilience

- Training and having backups are critical and need support.
- Need to give staff time to process and recuperate.
- Triage incoming work, be patient with hiring freezes.
- Retention
- Have to create varied outlets for staff, where they can express concerns, frustrations, and work towards solutions.
- Assigning roles and providing training.
- We need to prioritize our work.
- We need to be able to say "No" to some work if it is not a priority.
- Staff protections in the field and back in the office.
- COOP Plans - We leaned into our Continuity of Operations Plan in helping prioritize our work.
- Duties - Focus on core work and risk-based approaches to be most efficient with resources.
- Need to celebrate successes.
- Public Health was not staffed to ramp up much and we still aren't. We operate on a minimal budget. We can barely handle an increase in our daily mandated services. There is a lot of angst about this, and it leads to staff burnout. We need to figure out a better to manage these surges.

Lessons about communication for resilience

- Need routine communication; even if it is just letting everyone know that nothing has changed. Also need to capture information going up the command chain, not just down...
- You can never communicate enough.
- Involve partners and create consistent messaging.
- Frequent - transparent, real, and frequent messaging was key. Otherwise, staff, will try to fill in the blanks, or create their own narratives.
- Listen to understand.
- Different groups internal/external need different communications.

- Ensure communication efforts reach all communities, especially those most vulnerable.
- Communications is our currency and should be our first effort, not our last.
- Continuing to send out information and updates, not assuming we have reached everyone "by now".
- Address misinformation.
- See "Prioritize" and "No" under staffing.
- Recognize resilience does not come for free. Budgets reflect priorities.
- Needed to prioritize budgeting for staff resiliency. Staff retention for continuity was a focus over hiring new staff or building new positions.
- Include all levels of staff on efficiencies, prioritize work.
- Ensure those with control over budget [elected] recognize the impacts.
- anxiety!

Feelings/reactions related to current climate (risks)

- It feels like a lot of uncertainty in our relationship with federal partners.
- Things that were once illegal are now being routinely done. Have lost boundaries on what is acceptable.
- Things are going to get worse before they get better. Lots of uncertainty out there.
- Lack of trust and fear.
- So much uncertainty - knowing we'll probably get through it, but every day brings a new "disaster" to react to. How to keep our heads high in the meantime...
- Our pool of trusted partners has shrunk.
- Concerns over increased responsibilities at the local level, but no additional funding, and in many cases potential lost funding.
- Impact -Lack of trust in science and government resulting in Env/PH crisis and increased preventable illnesses.
- The system feels very fragile right now. We are all just waiting for the other shoe to drop.
- Siloed work (reverting to less collaboration), protect your turf.
- If the cost shifts that the Governor is proposing goes through, that will mean do more with less for public health.
- Trust
- Not sure if we will see trust in government return any time soon.

What lessons do we take forward?

- People always have, and always will, be most important.
- Be intentional about staff needs, mental health, and supporting each other.
- Many voices are stronger than one. We need to prioritize what's important and work together to accomplish goals or have our voices heard.
- COVID was a great example of state and local partnership. Communication was excellent. We need to build on those successes.
- Focus on risk.
- Persevere
- Take one day at a time. We continue to do our best to triage the problems as they arise and be innovative in our approach to the work. Know it will not be easy, but it will not last forever.

11:50 p.m. Agenda Topics for Next Time

Next Meeting in June: Working on aligning their work with 21st century public health. Not everything is done at the state level or the local level. How to build our support for the community. a presentation from PNM - they are not delegated but put a lot of effort into assessing EH trends so they could improve planning and response.

12:00 p.m. Word on the Street Forum

Nothing was shared.

12:10 p.m. Closing

Next Meeting: June 16, 2025

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5/28/25

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