



**MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**Thursday, February 10, 2011**

The monthly meeting of the Board of Directors of the Boston Public Health Commission was held on Thursday, February 10, 2011 in the Hayes Conference Room at the offices of the Boston Public Health Commission, 1010 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA 02118.

**Board Members Present:**

Paula Johnson, MD, MPH, Chair  
Celia Wcislo  
Kathleen Walsh  
Joseph Betancourt, MD, MPH

**Board Members Absent:**

Ruth Ellen Fitch, JD  
Harold Cox  
Jack Cradock

**Also Present Were:**

Barbara Ferrer, PhD, MPH, MEd, Nancy Norman, John Townsend, Nakisha Skinner, Maia Brodyfield, Pam Jones, Debra Paul, Chuck Gagnon, James Hooley, Jeanne Cannata, Ann Scales, Gerry Thomas, Sandra Vasquez, Lisa Conley, Triniese Polk, Cindy Theodore, Gita Rao, Andrea Lam, Bernard Killarney, Fred Brack, Julia Gunn

**Visitors:**

Scott Mason, Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers

**Proceedings:**

***Chairwoman's Comments***

*Dr. Paula Johnson, MD, MPH*

- The meeting was called to order at 4:10 P.M.

## ***Executive Director's Report***

Barbara Ferrer, PhD, MPH, Med

- Dr. Ferrer requested that Lisa Conley, Director of the Intergovernmental Relations inform the board members of two updates regarding the federal budget: (1) the House Appropriations Sub Committee published its program budget cuts; and (2) Health and Human Services announced its appropriation of this year's funding. Roughly \$750 million was allocated to the public health and prevention fund with \$290 million for community-based prevention and \$145 million for community transformation grants. Chairwoman Johnson asked if there was a greater willingness to make cuts because of the allocation of the Affordable Care Act. Ms. Conley responded that she believes there was a greater willingness to make cuts. Chairwoman Johnson stated that she would like to look at the gains from the Affordable Care Act and the losses from the proposed cuts. Dr. Ferrer stated that the Boston Public Health Commission (Commission) receives 30% of its funding from federal grants and it was acknowledged that the public health prevention fund is at serious risk.
- Board Member Wcislo asked whether any funding was lost through state public health cuts. Ms. Conley responded that the only state cuts that affected the Commission were those to school based health centers.
- Dr. Ferrer stated she would come before the board in the March board meeting with the Commission's proposed budget.
- The Mayor is going to have a meeting regarding the Neighbor Care Initiative. Dr. Ferrer stated that she would keep the board updated on this initiative and invited the board members to participate in the meeting.

## ***Update: Influenza***

Julia Gunn, Director, Communicable Disease Control Division

- Ms. Gunn gave an overview of the current status of influenza in the city. She stated that out of the two strains of influenza, 80% of individuals were infected with strain A, and only 20% were infected with strain B.
- In order to improve prevention efforts this year, the Commission suggested that every Boston resident get vaccinated. Last year the suggested vaccination population was limited to young children and the elderly. Board Member Wcislo noted that this inconsistency could have resulted in some confusion in the general population as to who is really at risk for contracting the influenza virus.
- Distribution of the vaccine has mostly been to individuals between the ages of 18 and 44. Disparities are still prevalent with the Black population representing 37% of all influenza cases. Board Member Wcislo asked what the percentage is for Boston. Dr. Ferrer responded 24%.
- In response to Board Member Walsh's inquiry, it was acknowledged that there are disparities in immunization and hospitalization rates as well.
- Chairwoman Johnson asked if we are able to map the spread of influenza in Boston. Ms. Gunn responded that they have mapped it somewhat in the presentation, but would be happy to create more specific maps at the board's request.
- The faith based vaccination initiative was discussed. Triniere Polk, Director of Outreach, Office of Outreach and Education and Cindy Theodore, RN, BSN were introduced. Ms. Polk and Ms. Theodore have been working with congregations and helping nurses and clinical providers become trained to



vaccinate their congregations. Board Member Wcislo offered to provide contact information for the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization.

- The most recent influenza commercial was shown and it was noted that this commercial is being broadcast in English and Spanish.
- Chairwoman Johnson asked if the Commission has data indicating the number of individuals getting vaccinated as part of the Commission's vaccination clinics. Dr. Ferrer stated that the Commission has access to a database that collects information regarding the residence of individuals getting vaccinated, however obtaining residency information is not a state requirement and most of the vaccine is not distributed by the Commission so this information is not often recorded. As a result, the Commission targets neighborhoods in need based on the distribution of illness rather than vaccines.
- Chairwoman Johnson asked if the Commission has any explanations for individuals who do not take advantage of the vaccine. Ms. Polk mentioned that a survey of church congregations revealed that some people are not getting vaccinated because of fear of the vaccine and a lack in understanding who is at risk.

#### ***Update: Community Meetings***

Pam Jones, Director, Policy and Planning

- Community meetings are held each year to share health data, increase awareness and education, and engage residents in finding solutions to address public health issues. This year's community meetings were held in the South End, East Boston, Codman Square, and Allston/Brighton neighborhoods. The meeting format is interactive and includes icebreakers, and data presentation. Ms. Jones noted that each meeting was a learning experience for the Policy and Planning Office staff and provided opportunities to improve future community meetings.
- The community meeting held at East Boston was more heavily attended than the other meetings. In response to Board Member Wcislo's inquiry regarding East Boston's high participation, Ms. Jones noted that the location of the East Boston meeting was hosting a class for English as a Second Language (ESL) students on the same evening and many of the ESL class attendees also attended the Commission's meeting. After the East Boston meeting the Policy and Planning Office performed follow-up, calling 50 individuals to thank them for their attendance to the meeting and to engage them in a discussion of how to get involved in community issues.
- The community meeting reports are not yet available. Ms. Jones noted that one of the challenges faced by the Policy and Planning Office regarding the community meetings was documentation. Ms. Jones promised to send the Board a copy of the community meeting reports as soon as they are available. Board Member Walsh asked if there was controversy surrounding the reports and if this was the reason they were not yet completed. Ms. Jones replied that there was no controversy.
- Moving forward, the Policy and Planning Office plans to finalize and produce the community meeting reports, follow up with community members, and begin the planning process for next year's community meetings.

### ***Building a family Centered System of Care***

Gita Rao, MD, Program Manager, MYCHILD

- Dr. Ferrer noted that the Commission's early childhood mental health program is in its first year. Key components of the program are family-driven decisions, family partners, diverse care teams, community linkages, care coordination, and quality improvement.
- The program's two initiatives are Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health (Project LAUNCH) and Massachusetts Young Children's Interventions for Learning and Development (MYCHILD). These two initiatives are designed to provide family-centered care for youth, up to age 8 at Project LAUNCH and age 5 at MYCHILD, who have demonstrated or are at risk of suffering serious emotional disorders. Project LAUNCH focuses on promotion and prevention, while MYCHILD focuses on intervention. Board Member Wcislo asked how these programs are different from early intervention programs. Dr. Rao responded that there is more focus on social and mental health.
- Both initiatives engage several health centers and agencies to aid in providing care and support. Board Member Walsh asked if the grant to fund the two initiatives forced other agencies to get involved. Dr. Rao responded that it was not a requirement for the various agencies to get involved, and that the extensive agency involvement can be attributed to the work of Debbie Allen, the Bureau Director of Child, Adolescent, and Family Health.
- Board Member Walsh asked what is done when a family unit does not function well together. Dr. Rao responded that the broad needs of the family, as well the caregiver's mental health, are addressed through the two initiatives.
- Chairwoman Johnson stated that she felt these programs were a real breakthrough in public health and Board Member Walsh stated that it makes sense to spend money now and then save money later on once the kids are on track.
- Board Member Wcislo noted the importance of working with schools to pave the way for children who are being "handed off" to the schools after having received "wraparound care" from the programs. Dr. Rao agreed that the program's relationship with the schools is important.
- Chairwoman Johnson stated that she was interested in learning more about MYCHILD and Project LAUNCH as they grow. Dr. Johnson also suggested that the programs keep track of non-traditional outcomes and identify what other important issues are being addressed outside of the scope of the grant.

### ***VOTE***

- The Board voted to adjourn the meeting after the presentations and reconvene in executive session.

The votes were as follows: 4 in favor, 0 opposed, 3 absent.

### ***Adjournment***

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 5:29 P.M.

Submitted By:

  
Jamie L. Martin, Secretary