MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH COUNCIL

Meeting of March 8, 2023

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

**PUBLIC HEALTH COUNCIL MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

**Henry I. Bowditch Public Health Council Room, 2nd Floor 250 Washington Street, Boston MA**

**Docket: \*\*\*REMOTE MEETING\*\*\* Wednesday, March 8, 2023 – 9:00AM**

***Note: The March Public Health Council meeting will be held remotely as a video conference consistent with St. 2021, c. 20, s. 20, which provides for certain modifications to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law due to COVID-19.***

Members of the public may listen to the meeting proceedings by using the information below:

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Dial in Telephone Number: 844-621-3956 Access code: 2539 316 6173

1. **ROUTINE ITEMS**
   1. Introductions.
   2. Updates from Commissioner Margret Cooke.
   3. Record of the Public Health Council Meeting held February 8, 2023 **(Vote)**.
2. **REGULATIONS**
   1. Request to promulgate 105 CMR 800, *Registration of Sanitarians* **(Vote).**
   2. Request to promulgate 105 CMR 801, *Certified Health Officers* **(Vote).**
3. **INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATIONS**
   1. Update on the Office of Problem Gambling Services.

*The Commissioner and the Public Health Council are defined by law as constituting the Department of Public Health. The Council has one regular meeting per month. These meetings are open to public attendance except when the Council meets in Executive Session. The Council’s meetings are not hearings, nor do members of the public have a right to speak or address the Council. The docket will indicate whether or not floor discussions are anticipated. For purposes of fairness since the regular meeting is not a hearing and is not advertised as such, presentations from the floor may require delaying a decision until a subsequent meeting.*

Attendance and Summary of Votes:

Presented below is a summary of the meeting, including timekeeping, attendance and votes cast.

Date of Meeting: March 8, 2023

Start Time: 9:06 am Ending Time:10:18 am

| **Board Member** | **Attended** | **First Order: Approval of February 8, 2023 Meeting Minutes (Vote)** | **Second Order: Request to Promulgate Amendments to 105 CMR 800, Registration of Sanitarians (Vote)** | **Third Order:**  **Request to Promulgate Amendments to 105 CMR 801, Certified Health Officers**  **(Vote)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Commissioner Margret Cooke** | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Edward Bernstein** | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Lissette Blondet** | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Kathleen Carey** | No | Absent | Absent | Absent |
| **Secretary Elizabeth Chen** | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Harold Cox** | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Alba Cruz-Davis** | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Michele David** | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Elizabeth Evans** | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Eduardo Haddad** | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Joanna Lambert** | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Stewart Landers** | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Mary Moscato** | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Secretary Jon Santiago** | Yes | Abstain | Yes | Yes |
| **Gregory Volturo** | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| **Summary** | 14 Members Present;  1 Member Absent | 13 Members Approved;  1 Abstained  1 Absent | 14 Members Approved;  1 Absent | 14 Members Approved;  1 abstained |

**PROCEEDINGS**

A regular meeting of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health’s Public Health Council (M.G.L. c. 17, §§ 1, 3) was held on Wednesday, March 8, 2023, by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 250 Washington Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108.

Members present were: Margret Cooke; Edward Bernstein, MD; Lissette Blondet; Secretary Elizabeth Chen, PhD; Dean Harold Cox; Alba Cruz-Davis, PhD; Michelle David, MD; Elizabeth Evans, PhD; Eduardo Haddad, MD; Joanna Lambert; Stewart Landers; Mary Moscato; Secretary Jon Santiago, and Gregory Volturo, MD.

Also in attendance was Rebecca Rodman, General Counsel at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

Commissioner Cooke called the meeting to order at 9:06 am and made opening remarks before reviewing the docket.

Dr. Michelle David arrived at 9:09 am

**1. ROUTINE ITEMS**

*b. Updates from Commissioner Margret Cooke*

Commissioner Cooke proceeded to update the council on the following:

**Welcome Secretary Santiago / Thank you Secretary Poppe**

On March 1st, a new secretariat for the Executive Office of Veterans’ Services was established. On the same day, former State Representative Jon Santiago was sworn in as the first Cabinet-level Veterans’ Services Secretary. Secretary Santiago is a major in the U.S. Army Reserve, and emergency medicine physician at Boston Medical Center, a former volunteer in the Peace Corps, and had served as State Representative for the 9th Suffolk district since 2019. Commissioner Cooke welcomed him as a member of the Public Health Council for his first meeting. She said we must also bid farewell to our friend and former PHC member, former Secretary Cheryl Poppe who is now serving as Senior Advisor to the Executive Office of Veterans’ Services. She first joined the Council in July 2020, and her contributions over the last two and a half years have been invaluable.

**MA Coalition for Suicide Prevention State House Award Day**

Commissioner Cooke reported this morning, DPH Deputy Commissioner Jen Barrelle is standing in for her to represent the Department at the Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention State House Award Day, an event recognizing this year’s leadership in suicide prevention. Former Secretary Poppe is an award recipient this year, along with the 988 Implementation Team, a cross-sector collaboration that includes representatives from DPH. The 988 Team achieved significant capacity building that ensured sufficient and consistent coverage and support for callers seeking crisis support. This was a remarkable effort that took place over 9 months prior to the go-live date. DPH’s Suicide Prevention Program has been responsible for the contracting and funding for 988 centers within the Massachusetts Suicide Prevention Helpline Network. She said that all these awards represent the powerful impact of collaboration across sectors and communities, and spotlight significant contributions to the suicide prevention field.

**“Time for More” Campaign**

Commissioner Cooke highlighted a few media campaigns that DPH has been running this month. The first is the “Time for More” campaign, which was re-launched as part of Gambling Awareness month. The campaign aims to raise awareness about problem gambling among adults 45 and older, and to encourage adults to try new things and to engage in rewarding activities, rather than gambling. Ads have been running since February on a variety of platforms, including social media, gas station TV, and radio. Last year’s campaign run delivered over 4.1 million impressions, and we look forward to seeing the success of this iteration.

**MA Substance Use Help Line Campaign**

The second campaign Commissioner Cooke highlighted was the Massachusetts Substance Use Helpline. This marketing campaign promotes the Helpline as the connection to substance use treatment, recovery, and harm reduction services to individuals and families across Massachusetts, by sharing stories told by real people about their experiences with substance use disorder and recovery. This media campaign supplements and enhances our outreach activities across the Commonwealth, including the interpersonal outreach work of volunteer Helpline Champions, many with lived experience, representing diverse communities and populations. The campaign will run through June and appear statewide on various media platforms, including billboards, convenience store posters, social media, YouTube ads, Google Display ads, search engine marketing, and TV broadcasts.

**Budget Highlights**

Last week, the Healey-Driscoll Administration filed its Fiscal Year 2024 budget recommendation, a $55.5 billion blueprint for Massachusetts’ future that makes historic investments in climate action, public education and transportation, and workforce development. She highlighted a few noteworthy pieces of the budget that pertain to the department. The budget, filed as House 1, funds DPH at $861.4 million in FY24. This includes new investments in climate change and public health response, as well as funds for: meeting increased demand for vital records and statistics; a state-specific inspection team; clinical lab program staff expansion; mental health services for international evacuees resettled in the Commonwealth; and Tuberculosis outpatient treatment services. She said the budget also includes $10 million for the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services to annualize funding for the Family Supportive Housing Program, as well as a number of key increases for programs within our Bureau of Community Health and Prevention and Bureau of Family Health and Nutrition.

Upon conclusion of the updates, Commissioner Cooke asked if the members had any questions.

With no questions, Commissioner Cooke turned to the docket.

**1****. ROUTINE ITEMS**

*c. February 8, 2023 Minutes* ***(Vote)***

Commissioner Cooke asked if there were any changes to the February 8, 2023, minutes. There were none.

Commissioner Cooke asked if there was a motion to approve the February 8, 2023, minutes as amended.

Dr. Haddad made the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Landers. Secretary Santiago abstained. All other present members approved.

**2. REGULATIONS**

1. *Request to promulgate regulations 105 CMR 800, Registration of Sanitarians and 105 CMR 801, Certified Health Officers (****Vote****)*

Commissioner Cooke invited Sam Wong, Director of the Office of Local and Regional Health to present a request to promulgate regulations regarding Registered Sanitarians and Certified Health Officers.

At the conclusion of the presentations, Commissioner Cooke asked if the members had any questions.

Ms. Blondet asked to clarify that both credentials will be overseen by the Office of Local and Regional Health.

Dr. Wong confirmed they were.

Dr. Haddad asked if there is a minimum requirement of training for certification being that the new regulation states that the department will have discretion to determine appropriate training.

Dr. Wong answered that going forward there are minimum education requirements for health department certification and workforce standards. Those who did not fall under the guidelines of the new education requirements will be “grandfathered” and approved to apply for certification at the discretion of the Department based upon their years of experience and knowledge. He also said that the certification exams are National with their own set of requirements needed for certification.

Dr. Evans commented that the actions taken to increase professionalism in this field are commendable and asked how we can continue to the conversation moving forward.

Dr. Wong said that they have just completed a capacity assessment for the local health system, never done before in Massachusetts, which they will present to the Public Health Council later this year.

With no further questions, Commissioner Cooke asked the members to vote on each regulation separately. First, she asked if there is a motion to approve amendments to 105 CMR 800, *Registration of Sanitarians*. Dr. Haddad made the motion, which was seconded by Ms. Blondet. All members present approved.

She then asked if there was a motion to approve amendments to 105 CMR 801, *Certified Health Officers*. Dr. Bernstein made the motion, which was seconded by Ms. Blondet. All members present approved.

**3. INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATIONS**

1. *Update on the Office of Public Gambling Services*

Commissioner Cooke invited Victor Ortiz, Director of the Department’s Office of Problem Gambling Services to give an update on his Office’s work.

Upon the conclusion of the presentation, Commissioner Cooke asked the council members if there were any questions or comments.

Dean Cox asked how success is defined in this framework and if the goal is to bring awareness of problem gambling and/or to address those directly that have gambling disorder. He wanted to understand what was meant by click rates mentioned in the presentation and if any action happens as a result. He said that he understood the idea presented to consider social determinants but asked how it is related.

Mr. Ortiz answered that creating awareness of problem gambling is a priority, but the overall goal is to mitigate harm. They have evaluations for activities that measure all their programs to ensure they are meeting goals and objectives regarding success.

Dean Cox asked how this success is measured.

Mr. Ortiz used an example of their Ambassador Program, for men of color, who are disproportionately impacted by problem gambling. These men raise awareness among other men of color. They evaluate such programs to demonstrate whether they are successfully meeting the goals of the program. Some programs are awareness-based, such as their communications campaigns. He used another example of the Help Line being at one time singularly focused on gambling disorder, but was integrated 3 years ago with the substance use disorder line, screening up to 20,000 people for gambling disorder. He said this is a vast improvement.

Dean Cox appreciated the work and the success of the help line but suggested there be more specific data. He then asked about click-through rates.

Mr. Ortiz explained that this is a rate that is measured by whether the campaign being viewed, and secondly, whether viewers clicking through to follow up resources, or to the help line.

Dr. Bernstein asked how they apply the social determinants of health.

Mr. Ortiz responded that to work without a coordinated effort hurts the community level workers and the work overall. A collective approach to social determinants provides a unified front to address these determinants. You cannot look at gambling in isolation without confronting related issues and seek collaborations. The Community Level Health Project is an example of this.

Ms. Blondet commended Mr. Ortiz on the work he is doing and mentioned that in the past six years he has demonstrated that gambling is an extension of economic inequity. She also said she would like to partner with the Office of Problem Gambling Services to utilize their framework system and apply it to the Community Health Organizations.

Mr. Landers asked what resources he felt were needed and if there were any community partners to advocate for those resources.

Mr. Ortiz said they receive resources from the Public Health Trust Fund giving them the opportunity to do the level of phase work that they continue to do. He said they are in a good position but deeper in the community there are other needs to deal with the intersectionality of problem gambling and related issues. It comes down to the advocacy to continue to address the inequities that continue to burden. Gambling is not in isolation but is connected to substance addiction, mental health, poverty, and other health related issues. The greater call is to think about resource elements to address those social determinants.

Mr. Landers and Ms. Moscato both mentioned their appreciation for the tag lines used for the campaigns and Mr. Ortiz gave credit to the DPH communications team.

Dr. Alba Cruz-Davis emphasized the program’s goal to find healthier ways to fill time instead of the isolation of gambling and appreciated their work.

Dr. Bernstein brought up the idea of holding the industry accountable around issues of addiction.

Mr. Ortiz responded that when one speaks of accountability and resources it is imperative to keep resources within DPH and a firewall between public health and the industry.

With no further questions, Commissioner Cooke stated that this concluded the final agenda item for the day and reminded the council that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 19, 2023, at 9 AM.

Commissioner Cooke asked if there was a motion to adjourn.

Dr. Cruz-Davis made the motion which was seconded by Dr. Bernstein. All present members approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:18 am.