

KNOX COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING MINUTES
February 10, 2021; from 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM
Knox County Health Department
Via Zoom Meeting

Present:

Martha Buchanan, MD, Secretary
Jack E. Gotcher, Jr., DDS, Chair
Maria Hurt, DNP
Glenn Jacobs, Knox County Mayor
Patrick O'Brien, MD
Ani Roma, Citizen Representative
James Shamiyeh, MD
Lisa Wagoner, RN; representing Superintendent Bob Thomas, Knox County Schools

Absent:

Dianna Drake, PharmD
Marcy Souza, DVM

Others Attending:

KCHD: Katharine Killen (Zoom Host), Charity Menefee, Anderson Little (recorder)
Knox County: David Sanders, Esq. representing Knox County Law Department
UTK: Spencer Gregg, MD, UTK Health Center

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dr. Gotcher called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM

II. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

Chair Dr. Gotcher requested Ms. Little take roll call to confirm establishment of the quorum. Eight Board members were in attendance and two members were absent. Quorum was met.

III. PUBLIC FORUM

- Betsy Hobkirk – school teachers perspective
- Patty King – PCR testing
- Jennifer Sauer – mask mandate

IV. BOARD OF HEALTH MEMBER COMMENTS TO PUBLIC FORUM

Dr. Buchanan addressed the PCR testing. This is a qualitative test and not a quantitative test and to use this test in any other way other than what is stated in the FDA's EUA would not be appropriate. Dr. Obrien addressed the comment regarding his appearance at two hearings due to being subpoenaed. Mayor Jacob's noted that Knox County is following the tier qualification issued by the state and vaccine is being distributed based upon availability. Ms. Roma stated it was her understanding that there were no complaints being made by teachers but rather maybe the speakers tonight were expressing support for masking in classrooms since teachers have not yet been vaccinated. Ms. Wagoner confirmed masks were being required in schools and recommended if anyone notices someone in their school not wearing a mask, they need to take that up with their administrator. Addressing ventilation systems in schools, Ms. Wagoner also stated that they have been adjusted to increase air flow due to COVID.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM January 27, 2021 MEETING

Mayor Jacobs moved to approve the minutes seconded by Dr. Shamiyeh. The motion passed via roll call vote, with one member abstaining.

VI. SET THE AGENDA

Motion made by Dr. O'Brien and seconded by Mayor Jacobs to set the agenda. The motion passed unanimously, via roll call vote, 8 to 0.

VII. KNOX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT BENCHMARK PRESENTATION BY DR. BUCHANAN

Waitlist:

- As of 8:30 this morning, qualifying individuals can sign up on a waitlist through KCHD.
- Waitlist can be found by visiting covid.knoxcountyttn.gov
- You must be eligible to sign up. (Phase 1a1, 1a2, 70+)
- As additional vaccine is received, those on the waitlist will be contacted for appointments in the order in which their name appears on the list.
- Those without computers can sign up by calling KCHD's Public Information Line at 215-5555 or 3-1-1.
- Can also add name to 'stand-by' list. This list will be utilized if there are leftover doses at the end of a vaccination event that need to be immediately used. Must be readily available to come to KCHD or a similar central location to receive vaccine as soon as you are called.
- Demand is still high. KCHD expects thousands of names to be on the list and it will take time to move through the list. People need to be patient.

This week, KCHD continues to provide second dose vaccines to those who received their first dose through KCHD at the beginning of January. KCHD is also providing second doses to those living in congregate settings with developmental or intellectual disabilities. This is a priority group as identified by the State and is one that public health is responsible for vaccinating. It requires KCHD to go out to each congregate setting to provide these immunizations. Because of that, it will take more time and resources for KCHD to vaccinate this group. So, board members should expect to see a lower increase this week for vaccines administered internally through KCHD.

There are other opportunities to receive first-dose vaccines this week through other providers across the community. KCHD is encouraged that more opportunities – outside of public health – are coming on board to provide vaccinations. If qualifying community members are able to take advantage of those opportunities, KCHD encourages them [to do](#) so.

For an updated look at vaccine numbers across the county, Dr. Buchanan reviewed KCHD's website, which is which is updated every Tuesday and Friday. More than 56,000 vaccinations have been given in Knox County. KCHD [has](#) administered more than 13,000 vaccines. On this webpage, vaccinations are broken up into first and second doses; demographic breakdown of vaccines administered across the county is also provided.

Local COVID-19 situation:

- 101 new confirmed cases since yesterday's report
- 2,164 are active cases
- 70 Knox County residents are currently hospitalized
- 7 additional deaths were reported today, raising the total to 509.

All of the data discussed can be found on the KCHD website at covid.knoxcountyttn.gov/case-count

Benchmark 1: Sustained reduction or stability in new cases for 14 days / YELLOW

Over this time period, KCHD saw daily new cases drop to approximately 127 cases per day – down from the previous reporting period, which was around 140.

Benchmark 2: Community-wide sustained and increased diagnostic testing with consistent or decreased test result reporting turnaround time / YELLOW

Regarding testing, KCHD saw an increase over the past seven days compared to the previous two weeks. However, it is still a lower volume of tests than near the end of the year. KCHD is hopeful this is an indication of a lower burden of disease across the community but will continue to keep a close eye on it. KCHD continues to urge anyone who has symptoms or has been exposed to COVID-19 to get tested.

Regarding lab turnaround time, this number continues to be consistent at less than 2 days for the community.

Because of the lower testing numbers, coupled with a shorter lab turnaround time, we are representing this benchmark as a cautious yellow.

Benchmark 3: Sustained or increased public health capability

KCHD continues to restructure this benchmark to better reflect [what public](#) health capability. As the bulk of the response activities have shifted from case investigations and contact tracing to vaccine distribution, KCHD is evaluating how to best represent capacity. While KCHD restructures this benchmark, they are not assigning a traffic light color for this week.

Benchmark 4: Health care system capabilities remain within current and forecasted surge capacity / YELLOW

During this time period, KCHD has continued to see hospitalization numbers decrease. This is encouraging.

After speaking with the hospital partners, they have recommended that the benchmark be represented as a stable yellow.

Benchmark 5: Sustained or decreased COVID-19 related death rate for identified positive or probable cases / RED

During this time period, KCHD has seen 50 deaths associated with COVID-19, which is slightly down from last week. Since the beginning of the year, there have been an average of five deaths per day. The information available leads KCHD to represent this benchmark as red.

Supplemental Data:

Chart 1: New daily COVID cases per 100,000 population.

As of Wednesday, the 14-day trendline shows 26 new cases per 100,000 and the seven-day trendline shows 26 new cases per 100,000, which is down from last week. But, it is still above the threshold as identified by the Board of Health.

Chart 2: Percent positive Test

This data is received from the Tennessee Department of Health. The seven-day average for percent positive in Knox County is 13.14% which is slightly down from last week as well, but still above the recession barriers as identified by the Board of Health.

VIII. UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE MEDICAL CENTER AT KNOXVILLE DATA UPDATE BY DR. SHAMIYEH

Dr. Shamiyeh presented data from the University of Tennessee Medical Center and regional data on COVID hospitalization, (see attached PowerPoint):

In the data for new cases we see a significant spike in the data and then a steady week-over-week drop. It is currently pretty flat. We don't know if this is where we will level out but the numbers are better than they were before. This same pattern is being seen across the state reinforcing that this data is real. When you break the data out across the age groups we are also seeing the same trends. Up until this point you could see a direct correlation between numbers of cases versus number of hospitalizations. We are not sure if that will change.

We believe we are starting to have an impact on the 70 and older due to those being vaccinated. Once you get below 70 years of age we are still seeing the numbers start to drop and levelling off. We are still testing a reasonable amount. If we are not testing we will not see the positivity rate drop. The hospital census continues to drop. The census recently spiked at 615 – we are now at a lower census than when we peaked in October. We will need to see what the variants do and what their impact may be on hospitalizations.

Commented [KK1]: Don't believe this is really necessary.

Commented [MB2R1]: Agree, the detail above is adequate

IX. QUESTIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (presentations sent previously)

University of Tennessee Knoxville/Knox County Schools (KCS)

No additional information was added by either institution to the previously submitted reports. Mayor Jacobs asked about antibody testing and getting folks back into schools. Dr. Buchanan stated that the antibody test doesn't tell you anything about immunity. It is more of a surveillance tool. Those tests are not being accepted by KCS.

X. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

A. COVID-19 FACE COVERING REGULATION, NO. 2020-1

No action was taken on this regulation.

B. COVID-19 RESTAURANT OCCUPANCY LIMITATION AND EARLY CLOSURE REGULATION, NO. 20211

This regulation is set to expire on February 18, 2021.

Motion made by Dr. Shamiyeh to extend Regulation 2021-1 to March 4, 2021 and seconded by Dr. Buchanan. The Board voted 7-1 (confirmed by roll call) to continue the measure until 12:01 AM March 4, 2021.

C. COVID-19 SOCIAL GATHERING LIMITATION REGULATION, NO. 2020-8

This regulation is set to expire on February 18, 2021. Motion made by Dr. Buchanan and seconded by Dr. Shamiyeh to extend Regulation 2020-8 to 12:01 AM March 4, 2021. The motion passed, via roll call vote, 7-1.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

The Mayor asked for ideas regarding a case where a single mother was having trouble getting into a physician's office due to having multiple children and no childcare and limitations for number of people allowed on a visit. Dr. Shamiyeh said discussions were happening among health care providers around visitation and such. Dr. Buchanan agreed and reiterated that those decisions are up to the individual private practices. KCHD encourages creative solutions working with providers if possible.

Dr. Buchanan advised the Board of a previously announced issue [regarding Pfizer](#) vaccine

Dr. Buchanan reminded the Board that The Governor's EO for remote meetings expires on February 27th. KCHD may not know until it happens if it will be extended. Mr. Sanders agreed to look into it.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, Dr. Shamiyeh moved to adjourn the meeting with a second by Mayor Jacobs. Meeting was adjourned at 6:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Buchanan, MD, Senior Director and Public Health Officer
Knox County Health Department
Secretary, Knox County Board of Health

List of Attachments:

- COVID-19 Update February 10, 2021; PowerPoint Presentation by Dr. Shamiyeh