

**Accreditation Board Meeting**  
**February 19, 2021**  
**9:30- 10:30 a.m.**  
**Zoom**

**Board Members Present:**

Dr. Anna Schenck  
Barbara Beatty  
Benjamin Tillett  
Dr. Calvert Jeffers  
David Stanley  
Jerry Parks  
Kevin Austin  
Rebecca McLeod  
Dr. Susan Little  
Teresa Ellen  
Virginia Niehaus

**Members not present:**

Bertadean Baker  
Dr. Connette McMahon

**Guests Present:**

Kathy Dail

**Staff Present:**

Amy Belflower Thomas  
Lori Rhew  
Margaret Benson Nemitz

**Welcome**

Board Chair Teresa Ellen welcomed everyone to the meeting. She noted that the one of the items the Board had planned to discuss was the Pamlico County adjudication, however, it took longer than anticipated to complete the Site Visit Team report. The report was sent to Pamlico County on February 1 and they have 10 business days to submit a response, which is next week and Scott Lenhart, the health director, has asked for the full 10 days. So, we will not adjudicate Pamlico County until the April Board meeting.

Chair Ellen asked for approval of the minutes from the November 20, 2020 meeting. Board Member Virginia Niehaus emailed some edits prior to the meeting. Administrator Thomas called the Board members attention to the notes on the computer screen that showed Board Member Niehaus' recommendations. The suggested edits were to clarify Board Member Niehaus' comments in the meeting. Administrator Thomas asked if the Board would prefer to have the minutes emailed to them so that they could review and approve at the April meeting. Chair Ellen noted that the changes did not seem to change the content, just clarified content. Board Member Niehaus noted that was correct. Chair Ellen asked if the Board preferred to wait and review or to approve the edits, which do not change only clarified content.

**Board Member Dr. Calvert Jeffers made a motion to approve the minutes with the changes recommended by Board Member Niehaus. The motion was seconded by**

**Board Member Dr. Susan Little. The motion was unanimously passed. The November 20, 2020 minutes were approved.**

Chair Ellen asked the Board Members to approve the Board Minutes from the January 29, 2021 meeting. The minutes with Board Member Virginia Niehaus' suggested edits were posted on the computer screen. It was confirmed that the suggested edits were for clarification, not to change content. Chair Ellen asked if the Board wanted to vote on the minutes now or have time to review and vote at the next meeting.

Board Member Barbara Beatty noted that she had joined the January 29 meeting late, but she was listed as absent. This correction was made to the minutes.

**Board Member Dr. Calvert Jeffers made a motion to accept the minutes with changes noted. Board Member David Stanley seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed. The January 29, 2021 minutes were approved.**

### **Executive Order 193**

Chair Ellen noted that the next order of business was to discuss Executive Order 193. The NCLHD Accreditation Board was subdelegated authority from the Secretary of NCDHHS to, upon finding that the waiver or modification of enforcement will provide necessary relief to local health departments responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and will not endanger public health, waive or modify enforcement of the accreditation scheduling requirements of 10A NCAC 48A .0205 and grant an additional extension of accreditation for a period of up to one year and waive or modify enforcement of the community health assessment (CHA) and State of the County's Health (SOTCH) report requirements in 10A NCAC 48B .0201 that would otherwise be due during this State of Emergency or within sixty (60) days following the end of this State of Emergency.

Ms. Kathy Dail from the NC Division of Public Health joined the meeting. Chair Ellen suggested the Board start the discussion with the waiver of the CHA and SOTCH requirements. Administrator Thomas noted that Ms. Dail submitted a document about projected CHA submission dates from 2020 – 2024, which was emailed to the Board this morning, prior to the meeting. The document was also shared on the computer screen during the meeting.

Ms. Dail explained the background on CHAs and the typical timelines. She walked the Board through the projected CHA submission dates on the document that she sent. Administrator Thomas clarified that a health department conducts a CHA during a calendar year and they submit it to the Division of Public Health the following March. So an agency that does a CHA in 2020, would submit it in 2021. She explained that the issue we are coming across is that Ms. Dail's office takes in the CHA and then assesses the CHAs and SOTCHs and sends letters to the counties and that is what is submitted as accreditation evidence. Activity 1.1 states that a local health department must do a CHA at least every 48

months and concerns had been raised that some health departments may not be able to meet this requirement now due to COVID-19 response. The same issue is for Activity 1.2, which states for each year that a county does not do a CHA they must do a SOTCH.

Administrator Thomas asked Ms. Dail to explain how her office handles extensions. Ms. Dail explained that they ask the health department to explain why they need it. Typically a one-month extension is granted for no cause. At this point, her office is basically giving everyone a three-month extension on the SOTCH. Anyone who has one due in March is automatically extended to June. For the CHA, they extended through December. She explained that going past December runs into the next SOTCH cycle and is thus problematic. Her office's stance during COVID-19 response is that they will work with the health departments so that they can get the work done and get their letter for accreditation. Chair Ellen asked if non-profit hospitals have been given an extension from the IRS for their CHNAs. Ms. Dail noted she has not heard of any extension this year; they were given a six-month extension last year.

Ms. Dail shared that the State Center for Health Statistics has prepared all of the secondary data, which is a large part of the work for local health departments. They are preparing the information to send to all of the 2021 counties, and they plan to do this in the future to support local health departments.

Administrator Thomas took off her "Accreditation Hat" to share that the Community Assessment and Strategy Unit at the North Carolina Institute for Public Health has been working with NC AHEC to extend help to local health departments to do primary data collection. Ms. Dail explained they are moving towards Results Based Accountability in their program. Chair Ellen asked if there was any action the Board needed to take. Administrator Thomas explained that how we have handled it in a non-pandemic year is that if a health department requests and receives an extension through Ms. Dail's office, we have language in the HDSA Interpretation document that says it is okay, but by the time of your site visit, you must have the assessment by DPH.

Administrator Thomas explained that if most counties seem to be okay on the CHA end, we could say that for the next 12 months our program will accept any extension provided by Ms. Dail's office. Board Member Niehaus clarified that, pursuant to authority subdelegated under Executive Order 193 and upon finding that it will provide necessary relief to local health departments and not endanger public health, the Board could waive or modify enforcement of the CHA requirements in 10A NCAC 48B .0201 that would otherwise be due during the State of Emergency or within 60 days following the end of the State of Emergency. This is distinct from the subdelegated authority under the Executive Order to extend accreditation for a period of up to one year. Board Member Niehaus posted some text in the chat from the Consolidated Agreement and suggested that the Board might align the requirements of Rule .0201 with variances that are issued by the Director of the Community Health Assessment, State Center for Health Statistics for up to 60 days

following the end of the State of Emergency or until the underlying authority is changed by the Secretary or the Governor. This is one possible direction the Board could take. Administrator Thomas asked if one of the Division of Public Health or Local Health Director members could explain what the Consolidated Agreement is for everyone. Board Member Niehaus described that is it an overarching agreement that exists between the Division of Public Health and Local Health Departments.

Ms. Dail noted that her team is working to streamline the SOTCH. There has been an understanding the SOTCH is supposed to be close to a ten-page document, even though there is not a requirement in the specific length. The SOTCH just has to address four questions. The Division of Public Health has created a web-based template that takes sets out the four questions and suggested approaches for responding, for ease of use. She noted this simplified format may not be the report a local health department will want to present to their Board, but it would meet the accreditation requirement. Administrator Thomas asked if this would be available to local health departments that are not using the Scorecard yet and Ms. Dail said that it would. Administrator Thomas explained that Activity 1.2 is something that she, Ms. Dail and Board Member Niehaus have discussed in the past, and the four basic points can be addressed in a one-pager.

Administrator Thomas explained that if the Board felt that a one-page SOTCH with assistance from Ms. Dail's office is do-able for a health department, the Board would not need to act on the SOTCH piece. No action was taken.

Chair Ellen asked for a motion on the CHA. Board member Niehaus suggested, as outlined above, that the Board align the waiver with the variances that are issued by the Division of Public Health under the consolidated agreement for up to 60 days following the end of the State of Emergency, unless the underlying authority is otherwise changed by the Secretary or Governor.

Administrator Thomas asked If there was easy language, we could use that basically says, we as a program, will follow any extension to variances that Ms. Dail's office does for a county up to 60 days following the end of the State of Emergency. Board Member Niehaus responded that this is in alignment with her suggestion.

**Upon requisite findings, Board Member Kevin Austin made a motion to approve a modification of the enforcement of the community health assessment (CHA) report requirements in 10A NCAC 48B .0201 that would otherwise be due during this State of Emergency or within sixty days following the end of this State of Emergency to align with variances granted by Ms. Dail's Office, NCDHHS, Division of Public Health. The motion was seconded by Board Member Rebecca McLeod. The motion unanimously passed.**

Administrator Thomas reminded Board Members that conflicts of interest applies to votes including on Executive Orders. She also reminded Board Members about their ethics trainings and if they have any conflicts of interests to please state those and recuse from voting. Chair Ellen asked if the issue of the extension was a conflict of interest for the health directors on the Board. Board Member Niehaus noted that she is not the ethics liaison or counsel to the Board, but would say that, from her perspective, if the Board's action will benefit all health departments equally, it is unlikely to be a conflict that would prevent health director members from voting.

Administrator Thomas asked if anyone wanted to declare a conflict of interest regarding the vote they just took. No members declared a conflict of interest.

Chair Ellen noted that the second order of business is to discuss the subdelegated authority from the Secretary of NCDHHS to, upon finding that the waiver or modification of enforcement will provide necessary relief to local health departments responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and will not endanger public health, waive or modify enforcement of the accreditation scheduling requirements of 10A NCAC 48A .0205 and grant an additional extension of accreditation for a period of up to one year. She noted that there was quite a bit of discussion about this subdelegated authority at our previous meeting and that there was general support for it.

Board Member Niehaus noted that she was looking back at the Board's last exercise of similar authority under Executive Order 119 and the waiver took effect on May 9, 2020. So, the Board may want to consider renewing the extension as of May 9, 2021 to ensure another full year. Administrator Thomas explained that means that health departments that would have had a visit originally in fall of 2020 would now have a visit in fall of 2022.

Board member David Stanley noted that the local health departments would appreciate the breathing room provided by this extension.

**Upon requisite findings, Board Member David Stanley made a motion to approve waiver of the accreditation scheduling requirements of 10A NCAC 48A .0205 for an additional one year, effective May 9, 2021. The motion was seconded by Board Member Ben Tillett. The motion passed unanimously.**

Administrator Thomas noted that last year when the extension was granted, the program staff created a Retrospective HDSAI Interpretation Document, where they looked at what could be provided to alleviate some of the annual requirements for local health departments. She provided a detailed analysis of annual requirements with the executive committee of the Health Directors Association. She suggested that 2021 be added to the document that was created for 2020. She reminded the Board that the revised HDSAI Interpretation Document will go into effect on January 1, 2022 assuming things are starting to get back to normal next year. She explained that program is offering webinars to make

sure that local health departments are clear about the extension and the HSDAI Interpretation Document revisions.

Administrator Thomas explained that her staff will update the Retrospective Interpretation Document, adding 2021, and will send it to the Standards and Evidence committee for review and approval and it will go to the full Board in April.

Administrator Thomas noted that the extension also impacts the program budget. This is another year where there will be no site visits held. She explained that the extensive review process undertaken for the HSDAI Interpretation Document along with the strategic planning process and responding to Pamlico County have required a significant amount of staff time. She said this work underscores the importance of the program having had a full budget this year. We have really been able to move the program forward. She explained that she would like to request a full budget for next year also.

In April, Administrator Thomas will be presenting a full budget that includes continuing to move the process with the HSDAI revisions forward, looking at initiating a change to rules to address activity language, additionally they need to work on guidelines and procedures for unaccredited health departments and continuing to work on strategic planning. She explained that doing revisions and strategic work is hard in normal year with the normal budget. She explained she really thinks we need to move forward with the Rules changes, which will take about 18 months. She said this work cannot happen in a normal year when there are site visits.

Chair Ellen asked Administrator Thomas if she would follow up with the Association of Local Health Directors regarding the extension. Administrator Thomas said that she would and would also let the local health departments know. Board member Niehaus noted that the Board would also need to send a letter to the Secretary and the Governor.

Administrator Thomas provided an update on new Board members. John Rouse has been nominated to replace Chris Dobbins. Rebecca McLeod will be retiring in July and we are awaiting a nomination on her replacement. Dr. Schiffel will be representing the Association of North Carolina Boards of Health, Dr. Rhonda Stephens has been nominated to represent the Division of Public Health and Commissioner Fleming El-Amin has been nominated to represent the Association of County Commissioners. Their nominations will be sent to the Secretary of NCDHHS and we hope to have them approved by the April Board meeting.

Board member Ben Tillett made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Dr. Susan Little.

**Next meeting: April 9 from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. via Zoom**

Respectfully Submitted,

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