



Accreditation Board Meeting

Friday, March 11, 2021

9:30-1:30 p.m.

Zoom

Board Members Present:

Ms. Teresa Ellen, Chair
Kevin Austin
Bertadean Baker
Barbara Beatty
Fleming El-Amin
Dr. Calvert Jeffers
Dr. Susan Haynes Little
Ms. Virginia Niehaus
Jerry Parks
John Rouse
Anna Schenck
Mr. David Stanley
Dr. Rhonda Stephens
Dr. Benjamin W. Tillett

New Board Members Present:

Dr. Saini Raj Kundapati
Karen Powell

Staff Present:

Amy Belflower Thomas
Margaret Benson Nemitz
Aaron Carpenter

Guests:

Anne Brown, Legal Counsel
Andy Smith, Lead Site Visitor
Melanie Campen, Pamlico Health Director
Stormy Meadows, Pamlico AAC
Dawn Jones, Pamlico Assistant to the Director

Welcome

Board Chair Ms. Teresa Ellen welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for joining. She then introduced the board's two new board members, Dr. Saini Raj Kundapati and Ms. Karen Powell, inviting each to give a brief introduction to the board. Chair Ellen then invited all board members and guests to introduce themselves.

Board Chair Ellen then asked the board if there were any edits to the November 2021 board meeting minutes. Ms. Margaret Benson Nemitz shared that Board Member Ms. Virginia Niehaus submitted a few grammar and clarification edits via email and proceeded to review the suggested edits, clarifying that none of the edits were changing meaning.

Board Chair Ellen entertained a motion to approve the November 2021 minutes with suggested revisions. Board Member Mr. David Stanley made a motion to approve. Board Member Barbara Beatty seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Update on Legal Matters

Board Chair Ellen then entertained a motion for the board to move into closed session to seek advice from legal counsel as an exception to the open meetings law. Board Member Dr. Benjamin W. Tillett made a motion to move into closed session. Board Member Dr. Calvert Jeffers seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Board members were in a closed breakout room from 9:45-10:10 a.m.

Board Member John Rouse made a motion for the board to return to open session. Board Member Dr. Rhonda Stephens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, and board members returned to the main meeting room.

The board returned to open session at 10:10 a.m. Board **Chair Ellen stated that the board has returned to the open session from an executive session to receive advice for legal counsel on a matter in litigation.**

Accreditation Adjudication Process & Site Visit Reports

Administrator Ms. Amy Belflower Thomas reminded the board that as authorized by statute (130A-34.1), the board serves as the adjudicating body for the NCLHDA program. In its role as adjudicator, the board assigns accreditation status to local health departments after hearing the report from the Site Visit Team (SVT). The board is here today to hear the recommendation for accreditation for Pamlico County Health Department. Board Members have already reviewed each report prior to this meeting; therefore, the board will hear a very brief summary of the Site Visit Report, presented by the Lead Site Visitor.

Upon the conclusion of the report presentation, the Board may have questions for the Lead Site Visitor. The Board will then hear a response from the local health department with any comments they wish to share. The board may have questions for the Health Director upon the conclusion of their comments. The Board Chair then opens the floor for board discussion. Upon conclusion of discussion, the board may take action on the Site Visit Team's recommendation.

In accordance with the State Government Ethics Act 1, it is the duty of every NCLHDA Board Member to avoid both conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflict. Board members must remove themselves, to the extent necessary, from any proceeding in which impartiality might reasonably be questioned due to a relationship with a participant with an action pending before the board. Does any Board Member have any known conflict of interest or appearance of conflict with respect to any matters coming before the board today? If so, please identify the conflict or appearance of conflict now and refrain from any undue participation in the particular matter involved and so identified. No conflicts of interest or appearance of conflict were identified or disclosed. The board proceeded to hear from the Lead Site Visitor.

Pamlico County Health Department

Lead Site Visitor Andy Smith reviewed the site visit report, emphasizing how much progress the site visit team saw during the most recent Pamlico site visit

Board member Kevin Austin made a motion for the board to grant Pamlico accredited status. Board Member Dr. Rhonda Stephens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, and Pamlico was granted accredited status.

Updates from the Chair

Board Chair Ellen was approached by Beth Lovette to discuss if NCLHDA Board would consider adopting PHAB as their preferred accreditation program. Board Chair Ellen summarized to Ms. Lovette that the NCLHDA strategic plan and the board have already identified moving towards reciprocity with PHAB as a priority. Program staff have been working with PHAB and are meeting with PHAB next week to discuss this further.

North Carolina Institute of Medicine (NCIOM) Taskforce on the Future of Local Public Health also approached Board Chair Ellen and Administrator Belflower Thomas to see if NCLHDA would consider accreditation through PHAB in place of NCLHDA accreditation. Board Chair Ellen explained that if our board would accept that plan, health departments would need to complete PHAB in addition to completing additional activities required by NCLHDA. Board Chair Ellen proceeded to explain some concerns with this plan, including concerns about how PHAB has not been very successful accrediting small and rural health departments, and that this restructure has the potential to make accreditation more expensive for other health departments.

Board Chair Ellen shared the NCIOM Taskforce recommendation to incorporate some reciprocity between PHAB and NCLHDA where PHAB could be used in lieu of NCLHDA with additional NCLHDA modules that would address activities not covered through PHAB.

Administrator Belflower Thomas explained how there are two sides of this discussion. The NCLHDA program has been focusing on how to pursue reciprocity such that if a health department is NCLHDA accredited, they could also achieve PHAB accreditation. Yet the NCIOM Taskforce recommendation focuses on the reverse, where PHAB accreditation would satisfy NCLHDA accreditation. Administrator Belflower Thomas outlined the pros and cons of using PHAB and pointed out that it is still unclear if PHAB accreditation will be tied to additional funding.

Board Member Ms. Niehaus raised that the current draft NCIOM recommendation suggests pursuing PHAB “in lieu of” NCLHDA, which does not seem like what we are discussing. She suggested the discussion focus on utilizing PHAB requirements in “satisfaction of” certain NCLHDA requirements. She noted it will be important to identify what is covered under PHAB versus what is required under NCLHDA and add supplemental requirements to fully meet both.

Board Member Ms. Niehaus also shared that concerns have been raised regarding the timing of changes to underlying public health statutes. She suggested that there’s room for the board to recommend to the rule-making agency, the Commission on Public Health, a layering of the new 10 Essential Public Health Services onto the old version of the 10 Essential Public Health Services, which are currently in statute and provide a floor, not a ceiling, for requirements.

Administrator Belflower Thomas clarified that these are just draft recommendations from a taskforce at this time, and that they are expected to be released in May at the Public Health Leaders Conference.

Administrator Belflower Thomas also clarified that the draft recommendation to have PHAB accreditation in place of NCLHDA would still require local health departments to complete additional modules related to facilities and governance to satisfy North Carolina legislation.

Board Member Dr. Susan Haynes Little expressed that small and midsized health departments would benefit more from PHAB accepting NCLHDA accreditation. Similarly, Board Member Mr. David Stanley also shared that NCLHDA accreditation would better serve small and midsized health departments, rather than a national program. Board Member Jerry Parks gave his support for reciprocity between NCLHDA and PHAB. In response to a question by Board Member Anna Schenck, Administrator Belflower Thomas shared that she and others she has spoken to, could not confirm that CDC or other federal funding will be tied specifically to PHAB accreditation, but it is still unclear at this time. If PHAB accreditation was required, more funding from the state would need to be requested to cover the higher fees and provide more technical assistance to small and midsized health departments. Board Member Kevin Austin expressed support for seeking additional state

funding and suggested that now might be an opportune time to seek additional funding given the focus on public health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Benson Nemitz shared a crosswalk between the 2022 NCLHDA HDSAI and draft Version 2022 PHAB Standards & Measures for Reaccreditation to add context to what reciprocity between NCLHDA and PHAB could be. The crosswalk highlighted similarities and differences between NCLHDA and PHAB at the activity level. NCLHDA covers approximately 90% of PHAB requirements, whereas PHAB only covers about 65% of NCLHDA requirements.

In closing the Updates from the Chair, Board Chair Ellen shared an update about appointing an ad hoc committee to review policies and processes for conditional and unaccredited health departments. Dr. Susan Haynes Little, Ms. Virginia Niehaus, Fleming El-Amin, and Karen Powell were selected to serve on the ad hoc committee. She will continue to work with Administrator Belflower Thomas and Dr. Haynes Little to add an AAC representative to the committee.

Strategic Workplan Progress

Ms. Benson Nemitz shared the NCLHDA Strategic Work Plan, July 2021-June 2025, Year 1. The first and second priorities are interconnected and involve updating the NCLHDA standards, benchmarks, and activities as well as streamlining the NCLHDA program. Ms. Benson Nemitz informed the Board that both priorities are making progress. The third priority, building quality improvement, has also made progress. The Quality Improvement Design Team work just finished and a great webinar with Population Health Partners was held in February. Ms. Benson Nemitz stated that moving forward, some of this work will be paused while we wait to hear back about some funding opportunities.

Ms. Benson Nemitz informed the Board that NCLHDA received more funding from NACCHO to fund the fourth priority which is focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The funds will be used to support internal equity assessments and conduct focus groups with health department representatives.

Ms. Benson Nemitz reminded the board that part of the diversity, equity, and inclusion work includes Board Members completing a demographic survey to better understand how the board and Program align with North Carolina state demographics. Results of this survey will ensure we as a board address one another using the terms, names, and pronouns that each person uses. Administrator Belflower Thomas added that when considering nominations for the Board, different demographics are considered to get broad representation from across North Carolina. Ms. Benson Nemitz stated that the results of the internal equity assessment will be shared with the board.

Ms. Benson Nemitz reviewed the NCLHDA Strategic Work Plan timeline and raised concerns about objective 4.4.2, which requires racial demographic data to be included in the site visit supplemental materials. Ms. Benson Nemitz pointed to the many other program changes the health departments are adapting to this year. Ms. Benson Nemitz proposed moving objective 4.4.2 to a 2022/2023 goal. This would also allow NCLHDA to conduct the equity assessment and focus groups prior to implementing this change. Administrator Belflower Thomas clarified that there is an activity that assesses health departments' policies and efforts to have their management team reflect their community. However, objective 4.4.2 would require additional data that would not be used for assessment.

Ms. Benson Nemitz informed the board that the timeline for the fifth priority, intentionally engaging partners, was also pushed back in order to conduct listening sessions with county managers.

Ms. Benson Nemitz shared the Phase 3 timeline which outlines the steps to change rules in accordance with operational guidelines. The current timeline would provide new rules for review by Board Chair Ellen and the Commission for Public Health in June 2023, and adoption for January 1, 2024. Ms. Benson Nemitz shared that the Standards Workgroup will be re-convened to conduct this work.

Other Business

Administrator Belflower Thomas informed the Board that site visits are re-starting fall 2022 since the executive order expires May 2022. Administrator Belflower Thomas restated the options the board previously approved to pilot in-person or partially remote site visits for health departments for fall 2022 and winter 2023. Administrator Belflower Thomas also restated the options the board previously approved to allow health departments to choose which version of the HDSAI they use to provide evidence. Health departments could use 2020, 2021, or the new 2022 version.

Administrator Belflower Thomas announced that donations through Gillings and NC AHEC funding allowed NCLHDA to have four graduate summer practicum students working with Martin-Tyrrell-Washington District, Tow River District, Hyde County, and Montgomery County to assist with their fall accreditation.

Administrator Belflower Thomas mentioned the new Board Member trainings will be in April. She also reminded the board about ethics training and the statement of economic interest, which must be completed each year.

Administrator Belflower Thomas shared NCIPH's proposed budget for fiscal year (FY) 2023, which will be submitted to the Health Directors Association. She reviewed the core budget items including personnel and site visit expenditures. Administrator Belflower Thomas shared that NCIPH requested the Health Directors Association to keep money that was underspent in 2021 and save for another year when more money is needed. Administrator Belflower Thomas proposed that the annual local health department fees to NCLHDA remain neutral at \$3,250 for FY 2023, the estimated \$32,000 to be underspent in FY 2022 be rolled over to FY 2023 to support extensive Phase 3 efforts, and maintain the \$9,976 underspend in FY 2021 for future needs. Board Member Dr. Benjamin W. Tillet commented that other budgets he has seen for FY 2023 have increased program fees. Administrator Belflower Thomas responded that the program should have sufficient funding for FY 2023, but the year after, the program fees may be different. Administrator Belflower Thomas highlighted that partially remote site visits are a significant cost saving.

Board Member Mr. David Stanley made a motion for the Board to adopt the proposed FY 2023 budget. Board Member Dr. Benjamin W. Tillet the motion. The motion passed unanimously, and the board adopted the proposed FY 2023 budget.

Administrator Belflower Thomas reminded the board of the upcoming meetings on June 17, September 23, and November 18. Board Member John Rouse expressed interest in holding the November meeting in person with a remote option. Other Board Members nodded their heads, expressing agreement with the proposed option.

Administrator Belflower Thomas announced that new and existing site visitor training will occur in April. Board Member Dr. Susan Haynes Little raised a question about site visitor qualifications. She

provided the example of someone who works at the state level is not eligible, even if they previously worked as a local public health nurse. She asked how that compares to someone who is currently retired, but previously worked as a local public health nurse. Administrator Belflower Thomas responded by sharing the NCLHDA Site Visit Operational Guidelines. The qualifications for site visitors are defined in administrative code 10A NCAC 48A.0202 as having “experience or expertise in local public health,” which is clarified in Operational Guidelines initial applicant qualifications as being “active employees in North Carolina local public health, having retired within the past three years, or have retired within the past five years if still active, in some manner, in the delivery of local public health in North Carolina,” which is interpreted to exclude state employees.

Board Chair Ellen entertained a motion to adjourn. Board Member Dr. Susan Haynes Little made a motion, seconded by Board Member Mr. David Stanley.

Next Meeting: June 17, 2022, from 9:30-11:30

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Belflower Thomas, MHA, MSPH, CPH
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