

OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Boulder County Board of Health (BOH) Regular Meeting Online/Telephonic Meeting March 13, 2023

BOH Members:

Vice President Morgan McMillan; *Board Members* Brooke Harrison, Ph.D., Lindy Hinman, and Landrey Fagan, M.D.; *Absent: President*, Gregg Thomas.

BCPH Staff:

Interim-Executive Director, Lexi Nolen; *Chief Medical Officer*, Dr. Robert Belknap; *Director of Administration and Finance*, Katherine Palmer; *Family Health Division Manager*, Daphne McCabe; *Environmental Health Division Manager*, Joe Malinowski; *Healthy Eating Active Living/Built Environment Program Coordinator*, Rachel Arndt; *Healthy Eating Active Living/Built Environment Team Lead*, Amelia Hulbert; *Administrative Specialist*, Dalia Mohamed; *Administrative Lead Technician*, Rita Mangeyn.

Boulder County Staff:

Assistant County Attorney, Erica Rogers.

Members of the Public who Provide Comment:

Ryan Scott
Gretchen MacLachlan
Michael Gaeta
Erin Meschke
Marti Hopper
Carolyn Bninski

Meeting Called to Order.

Vice President McMillan called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. and asked all participants to identify themselves for the record (see above). She declared that a quorum was present, that notice of this meeting was posted on the Board of Health website, and that the call-in information was included to allow for public participation. This meeting was held in hybrid-fashion with members of the board and staff meeting in-person and members of the public attending online to test the hybrid-capabilities of the on-site meeting space.

BOULDER COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MINUTES**March 13, 2023****ITEM 1. Public Comments (on unscheduled agenda items).**

Members of the public expressed concerns related to BCPH's response to COVID-19, administration of vaccines to children, and returning to in-person meetings.

ITEM 2. Approval of Meeting Minutes.

Board Member Harrison made a motion, which was seconded by Board Member Hinman, to approve the February 13, 2023, Regular Board of Health minutes. With all Board Members present in favor of the motion, President Thomas declared the motion unanimously carried.

ITEM 3. Impacts of and Responses to the End of the Public Health Emergency.

Lexi presented the Impacts of and responses to the end of the public health emergency. The federal Public Health Emergency is scheduled to end on May 11, 2023. BCPH learned of the end in late-January and have been working with partners within the Boulder County Health Impact Collaborative (BCHIC) to review areas of impact and how to respond to the community's health needs.

The federal Public Health Emergency was put in place by the Department of Health and Human Services in January 2020 to reduce the impact of the pandemic through mitigation measures and economic impacts on families and businesses. Some benefits of the declaration include subsidized COVID-19 vaccinations, tests, and therapeutics, and access to health care through automatic reenrollment. The continuous coverage affected roughly 1.7million Coloradans by keeping them enrolled in Medicaid and Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+), and flexibilities of waivers and telemedicine. The declaration also included housing stability through a moratorium of evictions that was later rescinded by the Supreme Court, and as a result, rental supports were put in place across the country. It also provided food security and nutrition benefits for families.

As the Public Health Emergency ends, BCPH will continue to follow statutory requirements for communicable diseases, integrate COVID-19 vaccines into routine clinics, and focus on long-term care facilities, outbreaks, and those most at risk.

- Vice President McMillan asked who will be responsible for paying for the vaccines once they are integrated into routine clinics and not COVID-19-specific.
 - Lexi noted that BCPH has funding through April 2024 to provide vaccines at no cost.
 - Vice President McMillan asked if BCPH will be responsible for purchasing these vaccines.
 - Lexi will work with Indira Gujral to get this information.

The Boulder County Housing and Human Services department, Clinica, Salud, and Colorado Community Health Alliance are working to help community members to enroll or re-enroll in Medicaid, CHP+, Medicare, Employer Sponsored Insurance, and others. BCPH will continue to



BOULDER COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MINUTES**March 13, 2023**

support several unhoused prevention and assistance programs, and work with the county to find additional funding for rental assistance. Further, BCPH programs such as Healthy Eating Active Living and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) will continue to provide nutritional support to the community (see Program Spotlight: Food Insecurity in Boulder County for more information).

BCHIC is also concerned with the secondary impacts of the end of the public health emergency, including general health inequities, increased family economic stress, mental and behavioral health, substance use disorder, and child welfare. As mentioned in previous board meetings, mental and behavioral health is a county-wide priority and is the focus of the Public Health Improvement Plan. The county is in the process of identifying key strategies and then will seek out funding. Family Connects is BCPH's universal home visitation program, which launched in the fall of 2022 in Boulder and will be implemented in Louisville and Longmont in the future. There is also discussion for school districts to consider telemedicine programs for students.

- Board Member Harrison asked for further clarification on the telemedicine program for school districts.
 - Lexi provided that there are no school-based health clinics in Boulder County, so this program would give children access to providers.
- Board Member Harrison asked if there has been any further analysis of those who are losing coverage, and if they will receive employer-based insurance now that the majority of those who were given Medicaid was due to job loss during the pandemic.
 - Lexi noted that she will get more information for the board.

ITEM 4. Program Spotlight: Food Insecurity in Boulder County.

Amelia presented the program spotlight on food insecurity in Boulder County. The rate of SNAP clients has increased throughout the pandemic, with one in five Coloradans skipping meals due to the inability to afford food. Over the last year, the price of food has increased by roughly 11%, but this does not represent the actual burden of the price of food inflation. The consumer price index is based on the average price of all foods. While premium or luxury food items, which are not typically purchased by low-income community members, have decreased in price; the price for non-premium items are increasing at a much higher rate, i.e., eggs. Therefore, when federal programs, like SNAP, base estimates on the consumer price index, it is undervaluing the burden that lower income households are experiencing based on inflation.

- Board Member Harrison asked what is considered a luxury food.
 - Amelia provided an example of specialty brown spicy mustard versus generic yellow mustard; avocados; organic carrots, etc.
- Board Member Hinman noted that the price of eggs or chicken increased due to supply demand, and asked if there are additional drivers of this inflation aside from supply issues.

BOULDER COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MINUTES**March 13, 2023**

- Amelia noted that the luxury items were beginning to decrease in price prior to the pandemic, and during the pandemic the price of non-luxury items drastically increased. She also provided it is not a uniform increase of prices across all foods, but there could be product-specific reasons for these increases.

Amelia continued to explain SNAP enrollment increased by 22% over the course of the pandemic, and the dollar allotment for those enrolled only increase by 1.5 times through the public health emergency. Now the emergency declaration is ending, there will be a large decrease in the allotted dollars for families. This will result in a large reliance on supplemental programs through BCPH partnerships.

- Board Member Harrison asked if there will be a funding gap that will need to be covered once the emergency declaration ends, or if federal programs will need to change allotments based on guidance.
 - Amelia will get more information for the board.

In 2022, 28,355 individuals participated in SNAP in Boulder County. This equated to \$58,192,366 in benefits, an average of \$4,476,335 per month in benefits. The price per meal prior to the public health emergency equated to roughly \$1.36, which increased to roughly \$2.93 per meal during the public health emergency. It is projected that families will see a reduction in roughly \$90 per month in benefits.

BCPH has three programs to address food insecurity in Boulder County: Double Up Food Bucks for Retail and Farmers Market, WIC Gap at the Farmers Market, and Fruit and Veg - see summary table below:

Program	Population	Locations Offered	Desired Direction
Double Up Food Bucks Retail	• Families and Individuals Enrolled in SNAP	• City of Boulder	• Expand to all Boulder County Municipalities
Double Up Food Bucks - Farmers Market	• Families and Individuals Enrolled in SNAP	• Boulder County - farmers markets (BCFM) in Boulder, Longmont, and Nederland	• Continue providing technical assistance to BCFM • Continue supporting fundraising for program
WIC Farmers Market Program	• WIC Families	• Boulder County	• Ensure long-term viability of home delivery model • Consider reevaluating weekly benefit amount
Fruit and Veg	• Mixed status/undocumented families • people ineligible for federal food benefits who are experiencing food insecurity	• City of Boulder • City of Longmont	• Expand to all Boulder County Municipalities • Consider an increase to monthly benefit to align with inflation • Transition from paper coupons to a digital model

BOULDER COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MINUTES**March 13, 2023**

- Vice President McMillan asked what the three city of Boulder retail sites that participate in Double Up Food Bucks.
 - Amelia provided it is the three Whole Food Markets within the city of Boulder.
- Vice President McMillan asked what the source of funding for the WIC Gap at the Farmers Market Program.
 - Amelia noted that it is funded through multiple sources – Health Equity Funding, Sugar Sweetened Beverage Tax Fund, Longmont Human Services Fund, Sustainability Tax Funding, and state funding from the Colorado Department of Agriculture.
- Vice President McMillan asked if participants in the Fruit and Veg program receive vouchers to spend.
 - Amelia noted that they currently receive vouchers and are working on an improvement to have digital barcodes instead of physical vouchers that are accepted across all participating retailers.
- Vice President McMillan asked about eligibility requirements for SNAP and WIC.
 - Amelia provided WIC has no citizenship eligibility requirements for families with children under the age of five and is based on income. SNAP does have a citizenship requirement and the income eligibility is lower than WIC.
- Board Member Harrison referenced the waitlist to participate in WIC from Lexi's presentation, and asked if this waitlist is due to funding or staff capacity.
 - Lexi confirmed both.
 - Board Member Harrison followed by asking if it is possible to provide coverage with the supplemental food programs while people are waiting to receive full WIC benefits.
 - Amelia noted that the purpose of these programs is to serve as many people in the community as possible, and continually want to expand programs to serve even more community members. The team distributes benefits on a quarterly cycle, which results in an ebb and flow of participants.
- Board Member Hinman asked if the programs have collected demographics.
 - Amelia provided that the team is working with Boulder County Housing and Human Services to gain access to certain data for SNAP participants to assist the program with more targeted outreach. The majority of Fruit and Veg recipients are young families with children, but do focus on older adult populations to reduce this gap.

BOULDER COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MINUTES**March 13, 2023****ITEM 5. Director's Report.**

- Board Member Hinman asked if there was public input on the removal of almost all air monitors throughout the Marshall Fire burn area, with the understanding that one will remain at a school in the Boulder Valley School District.
 - Joe provided there were a couple of inquiries from concerned citizens that were also concerned about the cleaning of schools right after the fire. The decision to remove the monitors is based on the low impact of air quality from the fire, and the remaining air monitor will continue to collect data. The team is also considering placing monitors in areas like the Gateway to Rocky Mountain National Park, the Cemex plant, and other areas to gauge dust and other air complaints.
- Board Member Hinman asked for more information on community education efforts during Radon Awareness Month.
 - Joe will provide more information to the board.
- Vice President McMillan asked if there are publicly available radon kits, or if you have to purchase them at home improvement stores.
 - Joe noted that the county used to receive kits from the state for the community.
 - Lexi noted the funding for the radon program has been eliminated.
- Board Member Hinman asked if there are any mitigation efforts in place to help address the increased workload of the water quality team.
 - Joe provided that BCPH will make a request to the Board of County Commissioners to increase staffing in this area.
 - Lexi noted the team is currently hiring for one staff member that is funded through the Sustainability Tax.
- Board Member Harrison asked for clarification in regard to the shift in the endemicity plan from priority populations to priority settings.
 - Lexi noted priority settings are those such as long-term care facilities where the team will focus on outbreaks, geographics, and spaces of high risk.
- Board Member Harrison asked if there is any analysis or cross-benefit analysis of the resulting changes of the end of the public health emergency, whether at the local, state, or federal-level; and how the communication between these entities is being conducted in relation to endemicity plans.
 - Lexi noted that if these analyses are being conducted, they would be completed at the federal-level, and noted these analyses could take years to truly understand the impacts of the pandemic, the public health emergency, and the transition out of the emergency.
 - Lexi will provide more information to the board.


BOULDER COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MINUTES

March 13, 2023


ITEM 6. Old and New Business.
None.

ITEM 7. Adjournment.

There being nothing further to discuss, Vice President McMillan declared the meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.



Morgan McMillan,
Vice President



Alexandra (Lexi) Nolen,
Interim-Executive Director