



## **Benton County Board of Health Minutes**

**Friday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**7:00am – 8:00am**

**Benton County Service Center - Conference Room**

**811 D Ave. Vinton, IA 52349**

**BOH Members Present:** Tai Burkhart, Karl Holmes, PA-C, Lori Mott, Jean Ohlen

**BOS Members Present:** Ron Tippet

**Staff Present:** Barbara Fetzer, Matt Even, Grace Schmidt & Monica Cox

**Guests Present:** Ray Lough, Benton County Attorney

### **Meeting called to order:**

- Chair Burkhart called the meeting to order at 7:00 AM

### **Approval of Agenda:**

- Motion by Mott to approve agenda, seconded by Holmes, motion passed unanimously.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

- Motion by Ohlen to approve agenda, seconded by Fairbanks, motion passed unanimously.

### **Public Health – Discuss and/or act on moving Benton County Mental Health Advocate Position under the Benton County Public Health Department's Purview**

- Ray Lough, Benton County Attorney began by discussing the position of the Mental Health Advocate in Benton County. Currently, this role is funded under Benton County General Services, but with changes to the Mental Health & Disability Access Services Region on July 1st, 2025 and service/personnel presence in Benton County, the County is looking for a new department for the Mental Health Advocate position to fall under. The position has been held the past few years by Bethany Wheaton.
- Attorney Lough proposed the position coming under the Benton County Public Health Department for payroll and outreach services support; he has brought this idea to the Benton County Board of Supervisors and to Weaton, with both being in support of the proposal. Lough

estimated a cost of \$25,000 - \$30,000 per year for the role. Currently, there is reimbursement from the State of Iowa for the position, but with changes to the Administrative Services Organization (ASO) starting July 1st, 2025, the future reimbursement process is unclear. Ron Tippet in his former role as Benton County Sheriff used to sign for Weaton's timesheets, but per Lough no one is doing it currently. Per Tippet, Weaton knows her job "inside and out", and her duties are assigned by Iowa Code; he would like to see her have her own office inside the Benton County Service Center.

- Chair Burkhart brought up the future of Iowa HHS realignment in terms of local public health delivery, and that we don't know what this will look like over the next few years. Holmes stated that he is a huge advocate for mental health, and that if Benton County has someone who is talented in this position, that we don't want them to leave. Mott mentioned that this is the 1<sup>st</sup> time she has heard of this position of Mental Health Advocate and of Weaton, and asked about the current caseload on the position. Per Lough, Weaton has worked in this role for about 10 years, and he guesses 40-50 clients ongoing for caseload, with it fluctuating; some clients may need to be seen for 60-90 days, with some all the way up to 20 years. Holmes asked about supervision of the role, which per Lough falls under the Magistrate.
- Director Schmidt discussed that she felt the position of Mental Health Advocate falling under the Benton County Public Health Department would deserve more time & commitment than the department could provide at this time, with the uncertainties from Iowa HHS on local public health realignment and the current deliverables BCPH has already committed to in the FY26 workplan.
- It was determined that further discussion on would be tabled until after July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025 when more information would be known from the ASO.

#### **Public Health – Public Health Report**

- Schmidt shared the monthly public health report, with activities including:
  - o The department attended a virtual measles webinar from Iowa HHS to hear updates and reminders on protocols/procedures when encountering a measles case – as of 4/3/2025, there were no reported measles cases in Iowa.
  - o The department attended an Advanced Epidemiology class hosted by regional epidemiologist Scott Seltrecht at Linn County Public Health; they discussed reportable disease case investigation, and working with state and local partners on immediately reportable diseases and bioterrorism incidents.
  - o Schmidt attended Bureau of Emergency Preparedness and Response workshop at DMACC in relation to her role as Service Area 6 Chair; the meeting discussed cybersecurity, documentation, resource management, information sharing, etc. during an emergency.
  - o The department attended the 2025 Public Health Conference of Iowa; topics included learning about historical public health controversies in the state, a tuberculosis outbreak in Wapello County, Iowa's recent Lassa Fever case, opioid use/harm reduction strategies, working with individuals with sensory needs, resources for those with Alzheimer's, public health legislative updates, vaccine hesitancy in Iowa, etc.

#### **Public Health – Discuss and/or act on March 2025 Expense Report**

- Schmidt shared that both the FY26 Immunization Services Grant and Year 3 of the Local Public Health Services Grant have been signed and sent off to the state via Iowa Grants.

- Motion by Mott to approve the March 2025 expense report, seconded by Ohlen, motion passed unanimously.

#### **Public Health – Measles Education from Iowa HHS**

- Schmidt shared information and graphics from the 3/14/2025 webinar held by the Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE) on measles.

#### **Environmental Health – Quarterly Report**

- Fetzer & Greenlee shared the Quarterly Report for Environmental Health; their team is currently working on ways to share rabies information, including via the Benton County Sheriff's Department on Facebook.

#### **Public Comment**

- No public comment.

#### **Adjournment:**

- Motion by Mott, seconded by Ohlen, motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:01 AM.

#### **Next Meeting:**

Friday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025

7:00am – 8:00am

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