



Benton County Board of Health Minutes

Friday, February 13th, 2026

7:00am – 8:00am

Benton County Service Center - Conference Room

811 D Ave. Vinton, IA 52349

BOH Members Present: Tai Burkhart, Lori Mott, Jean Ohlen, Pamela Keel

BOS Members Present: N/A

Staff Present: Grace Schmidt, Monica Cox & Andrea Morris

Guests Present: Mary McFetridge, University of Iowa public health student; Dianne Anderson, Community Health Consultant IHHS; Hannah Snitkey, University of Northern Iowa public health student.

Meeting called to order:

- Chair Burkhart called the meeting to order at 07:00

Introductions:

- Introductions were made by all individuals present, including BOH members, Benton County Public Health and Environmental Health staff, and guests.

Discuss and/or act on 2026 meeting schedule:

- Will keep proposed meeting schedule. Corrected year from 2025 to 2026.

Complete conflict-of-interest statement:

- BOH member Keel attending the meeting online was instructed to complete the conflict-of-interest statement and to submit the signed document to Schmidt for filing.

Approval of Agenda:

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

Approval of Minutes:

- Motion by Ohlen to approve minutes, seconded by Mott, with an amendment to correct the meeting schedule year from 2025 to 2026. Motion passed unanimously.

Presentation on Benton County Immunization Data

- Mary summarized 2024 immunization trends for two-year-olds and adolescents in Benton County. Among two-year-olds, county rates were higher than state rates for most vaccines except Hepatitis B. In 2025, rates declined locally and statewide but remained higher in Benton County for most vaccines except Polio and Hepatitis B. For adolescents, Benton County's 2024 rates exceeded state rates for all vaccines. In 2025, rates increased for Hepatitis B, MMR, and Varicella, while full-series completion decreased slightly but stayed above state levels. Compared to surrounding counties in 2024, Benton County had the highest full-series completion rate for two-year-olds and the second-highest rate for adolescents. Mary presented school immunization audit trends from 2015–2025, noting an overall increase in religious exemptions and provisional certificates. Childcare audit data for the same period showed less of an upward trend, with an abrupt spike in provisional certificates in 2019. Mary explained the purpose of provisional certificates, and Schmidt clarified that once these certificates are issued by Benton County Public Health, it becomes the responsibility of schools and parents to ensure the required vaccine doses are completed.
- Chair Burkhart noted that, under Iowa Code, the BOH is mandated to conduct immunization audits, with this responsibility delegated to the Public Health Department. She also reported that legislation has proposed changes to school immunization requirements. Both the BOH and the Public Health Department will continue to monitor the bill, and Schmidt will share any call-to-action information distributed by the Iowa Public Health Association and other organizations.

Environmental Health – Environmental Health Report

- Staff presented their report, including activities such as promoting the Private Well Grant Program at two pesticide classes. Even and Morris attended multiple continuing education classes as required by grant requirements. In January there were 7 animal bites, 5 wells tested and 1 binding agreement. Morris noted the department wants to

hire a seasonal staff member and will present a job description for board approval at the next BOH meeting.

- Ohlen requested an update on the fluoride-removal discussion from the February 12th Vinton City Council work session. Schmidt reported that the item was not properly added to the agenda or publicly noticed, so no action was taken on discontinuing fluoridation. Chair Burkhart recommended developing formal BOH policy statements on fluoridation and immunization. She will provide examples to Schmidt, who will draft a policy for board review. Schmidt also noted a new state bill proposing a statewide ban on adding fluoride to public water supplies, with language referencing Board of Health responsibilities. She will monitor the bill and update the board.
- Morris reported on a legislative bill that would define Class A and B septic systems, require county sanitarians to perform annual inspections of such systems, and mandate reporting to the DNR. The Environmental Health Department will monitor the bill and update the board.

Environmental Health – Discuss and/or act on January 2026 Expense Report

- Motion by Mott to approve the January 2026 Expense Report, seconded by Ohlen, motion passed unanimously.

Environmental Health – Discuss and/or act on January 2026 Revenue Report

- Motion by Ohlen to approve the January 2026 Revenue Report, seconded by Mott, motion passed unanimously.

Public Health - Public Health Report

- Schmidt presented the department's Public Health Report, including updates on Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Local Public Health Services grants, immunization services, Stop the Bleed training with local partners, and ongoing training opportunities. Schmidt reported that the BOS has asked her to serve on the Heritage Area Agency on Aging Board of Directors. She also noted a proposed IHHS bill that would realign local AAA agencies; she will keep the Board of Health updated. Mott asked for follow-up on the location of the nearest Community Health Center. Schmidt will gather the information and report back.

- The Public Health Department provided SafeSitter classes at the Marion Homeschool Assistance Program. Burkhart supported offering the training but expressed concern about staff time and mileage being covered by the county budget for services provided outside Benton County. She recommended conducting a cost analysis and adjusting the service fee to account for time and mileage. Schmidt will follow up with Hayley in the Auditor's Office.
- Ohlen requested clarity on the procedures of the Opioid Settlement Committee. It was recommended Ohlen attend a BOS meeting as a citizen and place this topic on their agenda.

Public Health - Discuss and/or act on January 2026 Expense Report

- Motion by Mott to approve the January 2026 Expense Report, seconded by Ohlen, motion passed unanimously.

Public Health - Discuss and/or act on January 2026 Revenue Report

- Motion by Ohlen to approve the January 2026 Revenue Report, seconded by Mott, motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

- Diane shared there has been a bill introduced to align all IHHS programs with the districts. The bill was not introduced by IHHS, but the department is monitoring it, and if passed, IHHS will need to align their programs with the district maps.

Adjournment:

- Motion by Mott to adjourn, seconded by Ohlen, motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 08:09am

Next Meeting:

Friday, March 13th, 2026

7:00am – 8:00am

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