

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Tulsa City-County Board of Health**

September 20, 2023 at 6:00pm

James Goodwin Health Center  
5051 S. 129<sup>th</sup> East Avenue  
Tulsa, OK 74134

**Board Members Present:**

**Mike Stout, PhD; Chair**  
**Aimee Boyer, J.D., CFP**  
**Krystal Reyes, MPA**  
**Sarah-Anne Schumann, MD, MPH**  
**Mousumi Som, D.O**  
**Mike Jones, DVM**

**Staff Present:**

**Bruce Dart, Executive Director**  
**Marcus Anderson, Assoc. Director Maternal & Child Health**  
**Adam Austin, Assoc. Director Environmental Public Health**  
**Kelly VanBuskirk, Assoc. Director Prevention, Preparedness and Response**  
**Chanteau Orr, Assoc. Director Human Resources & Legal Services**  
**Alicia Etgen, Manager Emergency Preparedness & Response**  
**Sara Rodriguez, Executive Assistant**  
**Leanne Stephens, Senior Director Marketing & Communications**  
**Ellen Niemitalo, Manager Clinic Services**  
**Scott Adkins, Legislative Liaison**  
**Alex Adkins, Legislative Liaison**  
**Angela Carter, Administrative Assistant, Legal**

### 1) Call to Order & Roll Call – Dr. Mike Stout

Dr. Mike Stout called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm. The meeting notice and agenda were posted at the James Goodwin Health Center, the North Regional Health and Wellness Center, and the Tulsa City-County Health Department (THD) website and emailed to the Tulsa County Clerk, the Tulsa City Clerk, and the Tulsa City-County Library on September 14, 2023.

### 2) Approval of Minutes – Dr. Mike Stout

Mike Stout entertained a motion to approve the August 16, 2023 minutes. A typo was found on page 4, paragraph B, line 4 that should read Analyst and not Analystist. Angela will make the correction. A motion was made by Dr. Mousumi Som and seconded by Aimee Boyer. ***The August 16, 2023 minutes were approved:***

Dr. Stout	aye
Dr. Lewis	not present
Dr. Paul	not present
Ms. Boyer	aye
Dr. Som	aye
Dr. Jones	aye
Dr. Schumann	aye
Ms. Reyes	aye
Dr. Galles	not present

### 3) Chair’s Report – Dr. Mike Stout

Dr. Mike Stout advised that Oklahoma Watch released a report on the status of childhood vaccinations for the State of Oklahoma and it was very alarming. The report showed that out of the seven-region area, Tulsa had the lowest percentage of childhood vaccination compliance. In 2021-2022 there was a 46% decrease in the number of children getting their childhood vaccinations. The data supporting childhood vaccines for 2022-2023 is still getting analyzed and put together. Dr. Stout said the data being collected is from 86% of public schools and 48% of private schools across the state. This data does not include home school children who also make up a large percentage. Dr. Stout said these numbers are very concerning and children in the state are not getting their full schedule of vaccines to prevent diseases such as Polio and Measles. The anti-vaccine sentiments that erupted during the COVID-19 pandemic are now having a detrimental effect on childhood vaccines. Dr. Stout stated that as a health department and a Board, we try to make sure that everything is being done to protect the community here in Tulsa and it is discouraging to see this issue moving in the wrong direction.

Dr. Stout advised that he is encouraged about the most recent community health rankings that have come out and they are now incorporating civic health. Civic health includes civic infrastructure and civic participation as indicators of health and there is a lot of research to back-up the relationship between civic health and public health. Dr. Stout said it has been great to finally look at the data showing the opportunities that people are actively involved in their communities and to see the clear relationships with healthy outcomes. This data allows us to focus on moving forward with the strategic planning process and think of ways to make sure that the voices of the community are represented.

Dr. Stout advised that the THD strategic planning committee met a few weeks ago to go through the data that has been collected by Linda and Elsa. A lot of work has been done gathering data from employees at the Health Department and the Board to identify all areas that are working and areas that need to be strengthened. The data is still getting analyzed and the hope is to take the information to the community once the framework for the strategic plan is complete. Taking this information out into the community will help to identify that the same issues we are discussing match the issues that the community is discussing. Dr. Stout wanted to thank everyone for participating in the process and for their input.

#### **4) Director's Report – Dr. Bruce Dart**

Dr. Bruce Dart participated in a call with the new CDC director specifically to discuss the child vaccination issue that is impacting this country from coast to coast. The CDC is really looking into how to discuss vaccines differently so people will have a better understanding. The CDC will need to separate the child vaccinations from the COVID-19 vaccine issue. Vaccines will have to be marketed differently and Dr. Dart is happy to report that the CDC is now responding to these issues. Dr. Dart thanked Angela Carter for taking care of the Board of Health meetings since Makeda Thompson's departure. Dr. Dart announced that Sara Rodriguez has been hired as his new Executive Assistant. Sara will attend the next Board of Health meeting in December and will take over things moving forward. Dr. Dart also advised that the Board will hear from him soon about scheduling a Board of Health retreat for the strategic planning.

#### **5) THD Reports**

##### **A. Legislative Discussion – Scott Adkins & Alex Adkins**

Scott Adkins, THD's legislative liaison announced that there is a constant battle at the Capitol every year when it comes to vaccinations. Social media has always been the biggest enemy and amplifies the opposition when it comes to vaccinations. Scott advised that it has been a slow time at the State legislature. Alex spoke on a few things that they are currently watching in the legislature and one of them was criminalization of pregnant women with substance abuse. Some other items they are watching involve housing availability, affordable housing, food and equity, affordable child-care, primary care and medical marijuana edibles in children. Alex advised that there was also an interim study regarding corporal punishment that they will be looking at again. Last year a bill was presented to prevent corporal punishment in schools for children with disabilities and this bill did not pass. Unfortunately, there are still schools in areas of the State of Oklahoma that are using corporal punishment on children with disabilities. Declining mental health graduate counts is also another matter that they are watching closely. Alex also advised that the Governor wants to eliminate the income tax but the Senate is not interested in doing that. Alex invited everyone to an event that OU Tulsa is hosting on child abuse at the Capitol on October 12, 2023.

##### **B. Breaking Down Accessibility Barriers: THD's New Website – Leanne Stephens**

Leanne Stephens, Director of Marketing & Communications gave a slide show presentation regarding THD's new website. Leanne is excited that the new website will be launching soon! The Marketing & Communications team has worked hard to provide information through the THD website on the things that THD has to offer and the services provided. Leanne discussed how the website averages 20,000 to 50,000 unique visitors per month. There is one team lead with three deep support who are responsible

for updating the website information on a daily basis. The Littlefield Agency has been hired to assist with ongoing tech support. Leanne showed the THD website from 2012 that was informative but not easily accessed. In 2013, a new website was launched that was more responsive. In 2018, the site received an upgrade to become fully mobile responsive and easy to navigate. Leanne showed a preview of the new THD website that is still in the testing phase. They have continued to update the website with a focus on intuitive design and navigation. The goal is to prioritize health equity and empower the residents of Tulsa County with easy access to the information that they are looking for. The new site is fully mobile responsive. A few of the new features on the website are the dual language feature that has a secure URL to provide Spanish features and information links, a user-friendly content management system to help manage things on the site faster and a chat feature for questions to be answered immediately. The chat feature will be tested and evaluated to see if it can be maintained and managed easily. Leanne advised that the photos on the new website were taken with a professional photographer who captured the images in Tulsa County, in the community and at THD.

### **C. Vaccines and COVID-19 Updates – Ellen Niemitalo**

Ellen Niemitalo, Manager of Clinic Services and interim Associate Director for Preventive Health Services gave a slide show presentation on vaccines and COVID-19 updates. Ellen advised that based on the weekly reporting data, COVID-19 rates are increasing. Hospitalization rates as of September 9, 2023 are up 54% in Tulsa County. At this time, the death rate does not appear to be increasing. The percentage of positive tests is 17.3% for the entire region. The wastewater samples that are getting tested in Tulsa County are all showing an increase. In August 2023, THD employees reported 11 positive cases and 7 positive cases in September 2023. Ellen advised that the policy at THD remains the same, if you test positive, you must report it to the employee health nurse who will provide guidance. Ellen recommends that the employee stay out of the workplace for a full seven days. THD continues to offer administrative leave to those who test positive to encourage them to stay at home and isolate. If an employee is exposed, they will need to self-monitor for symptoms and test every one to two days and wear a mask if they are around people.

Ellen stated that there is anticipation for a triple threat this upcoming season. The triple threat includes COVID-19, RSV and the flu. There is a vaccine for all of them. They are seeing a lot of RSV in adults. Ellen recommends washing your hands, staying home if you are sick, cover your cough, seek testing and obtain vaccines. Flu and COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. RSV vaccines are recommended for everyone 60 years of age and older or infants from birth to 12 months of age routinely for the RSV season. High-risk infants will also need routine RSV vaccines from 12 months to 24 months. These vaccines will help prevent serious illness, hospitalization and death.

Ellen reported that the ACIP met last week and approved the mRNA COVID vaccines so everyone 6 months or older can receive this vaccine at least two months after their last dose of COVID-19. A second dose of the new mRNA COVID vaccine may be recommended if you are significantly immunocompromised. Ellen advised that anyone with private insurance or adults who have Medicaid or Medicare can obtain a vaccine from their pharmacy, provider or the health department. Insurance carriers should be covering these vaccines with no out of pocket costs.

Ellen advised that there is a CDC Bridge Access Program available that has a limited supply of vaccines for adults who are not insured or under insured. The vaccines will not be widely available but can be received through the health department, a federally qualified health system and certain pharmacies. As soon as THD receives a list of pharmacies offering the vaccines, it will be placed on the THD website. Ellen stated that THD will begin offering the new COVID-19 vaccine and the flu vaccine on October 2<sup>nd</sup>,

2023. THD is also working with Uma Tulsa and the Caring Van to administer vaccines throughout the community to continue increasing the vaccination rates. Ellen encourages everyone to receive their vaccinations.

### **C. Post Pandemic Improvement – Alicia Etgen**

Alicia Etgen, Manager of Emergency Preparedness & Response gave a presentation with a power point slide show on Post Pandemic Improvement. Alicia showed the Cycle of the Preparedness Plan detailing the Plan, Organize/Equip, Train, Exercise and Evaluate/Improve. Alicia stated that whether we are in a time of emergency or non-emergency, this is the cycle that is followed during a response. Alicia advised that there are over 2,000 pages worth of preparedness plans written for THD on how to respond during an incident. Once the plans have been written it is important that THD organize, equip, train, and have exercises following the written plans. Alicia discussed a few of the Operational Components that THD performed during the COVID response: THD operated and staffed a phone bank, set up and staffed Swab PODS for testing, coordinated with the laboratory for test results, created a team of epidemiologists to work on disease investigation and contract tracing, went to every long-term care facility in Tulsa County to perform testing and swabbing, had strike teams going out to residents who were homebound to swab and test them, used the THD website as a top information sharing platform, the THD data team updated the COVID-19 dashboard on the THD website and THD worked with FEMA to set up a FEMA Community Vaccination Center that delivered vaccine to residents in high risk zip codes. Alicia stated that some of the key strengths of THD during the pandemic: THD vaccinated A LOT of people! THD also strengthened their relationships with community partners, being a trusted source of information for the community. THD set up PODS quickly and efficiently to swab, test and administer vaccine. Alicia advised that there is always room for improvement and discussed the Key Areas for Improvement that have been identified since the COVID-19 pandemic: Staffing! Where are we going to get more people and how will we train new people. Communicating more efficiently internally as well as externally. Finding technology platforms so residents can make appointments or locate test results. Identifying staff to assign for specialty teams. Changing policy in real time as things happen. Alicia advised that there has also been a lot of Improvements in Progress including Continuity of Operations Planning to define essential and non-essential services, software platforms to track skills and licensure for all employees with the help of HR, creating an Emerging Public Health Threats team that meets monthly to discuss threats so we can be ahead of the game. Alicia stated that releasing SharePoint on the THD Intranet will also improve the internal communications. Targeted training for staff and MRC volunteers while providing MRC volunteers access to THD information will also help to improve smoother operations during an emergency.

### **6) Announcements – Dr. Mike Stout**

**The Next Board Meeting** is Wednesday, December 6, 2023 at 6:00pm at the North Regional Health and Wellness Center in Room 208.

### **7) Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:32 pm.

**APPROVED:**



**Mike Stout, PhD, Board of Health Chair**

**Angela Carter** \_\_\_\_\_

**Angela Carter, Tulsa Health Department Assistant**