



**CITY OF WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**Department of Health & Human Services**  
**Division of Public Health**

Matilde Castiel, MD  
Health & Human Services  
Commissioner

Karyn E. Clark  
Public Health  
Director

**DATE:** May 1, 2017  
**RE:** WORCESTER BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING MINUTES  
**START TIME:** 6:30 PM  
**LOCATION:** WORCESTER DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
25 MEADE STREET, CONFERENCE ROOM 109  
WORCESTER, MA 01610

**Welcome & Introductions:**

Meeting was called to order at 6:35pm.

Members present: David Fort, Chair, Edith Claros, PhD, Vice Chair, Jerry Gurwitz, MD, Abigail Averbach. Absent: Joanne Calista WDPH Staff: Michael Hirsh, MD, Medical Director, Karyn Clark, Director of Public Health, Zach Dyer, Deputy Director of Public Health, Raquel Castro-Corazzini City of Worcester, Director of Youth Opportunities and Michele Williams, Principal Clerk

**Approval of the April 18, 2017 Minutes:**

Motion to approve the WBOH meeting minutes of April 18, 2017 made by Jerry Gurwitz, MD Second – Abigail Averbach. Approved

**Review and act on update relative to PCB's in Worcester Public Schools:**

Karyn Clark, Director DPH: Air test results for PCB's at Burncoat High School was distributed. The laboratory analysis shows that most of the PCB samples taken had results below acceptable EPA levels. Mayor Joseph Petty announced a plan for the management of PCB's at Burncoat High School and Doherty Memorial High School until the schools are replaced through the Massachusetts School Building Authority program. This plan has been submitted to the School Committee for consideration at the April 29, 2017 meeting. Elements of this plan include cleaning, training and ongoing air testing. The Mayor's plan also includes elements to provide teacher and staff assistance in monitoring compliance with the plan, on-going meetings with the Educational Association of Worcester to discuss remediation plans, quarterly examination of window caulk condition and providing information to parents, staff and community of the progress made with remediation work.

Abigail Averbach: You had originally shared with us an article that talked about a graduate student that had gone into the school and took some of the caulking and tested it. Is there anything that you can share with us to make sure people don't do that?



Karyn Clark, Director DPH: I don't know what their plan is to make sure that people are not doing that other than try to educate the staff and maintenance to make sure people are not doing that and it isn't allowed.

Edith Claros, PhD, Vice Chair: I have not seen testing of PCB's normally done in schools.

Karyn Clark, Director DPH: There has been a lot of conversation with the School Union and EAW regarding staff that have been diagnosed with cancer or other health conditions. There's been a long standing request through the union to have testing done in schools for PCB's. There is a certain way of testing. PCB's can become airborne through fine dust, so because of the testing that was done by the student and the results brought back to the school, that created an additional interest in having the schools tested for these particular PCB's. This is something that a lot of people feel passionate about. There have been a number of City Council meetings where people have testified that they want to see this testing done in more schools.

Edith Claros, PhD, Vice Chair: Prior to this incident, nothing has been done?

Karyn Clark, Director DPH: People are really interested in this issue and want to have the test results, so they can try to make a determination if their health is being impacted. But as you can see from these results, there actually below the EPA requirements at these two particular locations, which was a great finding.

**Review and act on Worcester Youth Office program presentation:**

Raquel Castro-Corazzini, Director of Youth Opportunities: I will be talking about the Worcester Youth Violence Prevention & Reduction Initiative. The plan was originally developed independently from research that had come from a report done by Clark University for boys and men of color. The data highlighted that there was high levels of disparities around anything that has to do with suspensions and arrests. The Community came together in 2013 and a plan was developed. Our mission is beautifully developed and aligned with the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). One of the things we mention is eliminating structural racism, which we think is the cause of what's happening that created the disparity. The two corner stones that we want to address is policy and system change, which is what the plan has instituted for the structure of our working groups. It all started with the Charles Shannon Community Safety Initiative, which was able to fund the original research and then with the community, the plan was developed. Looking at law enforcement data, there were clearly disparities between males and females and specifically with boys and men with color. Our research data is from Clark University, working closely with them, the Police and our school system to receive monthly data. We get arrests and suspension data broken down by gender and race. Our work is organized into three priority areas; 1) increase youth and families access to supports and assets by addressing barriers to community resources, 2) prevent and treat trauma and to promote healing from past trauma, 3) foster opportunities for diversion from the criminal justice system at every decision point possible – from police, to schools, to the courts. One thing that we found is the disconnect of what people believe is a diversion method. For example, if you ask the school system what a diversion method is, they would say an after school program. If you ask the court system, they think of the judge connecting them to someone. This is what is creating some of the problems. What we saw as a community is we have disconnects on how we're addressing the issue, that's what's creating some of the problems. Being able to work collectively we have had some impact on how young people are moving through our system and where we can actually divert them or disrupt further violence. We

also started working with Suffolk University researchers, who have come in to look at our organizational change. We are part of a pilot plan along with Fall River and Lawrence. One challenge we saw were that in order for real change to happen, we had to look at the way institution policies are and what the gaps were. Through the support of Suffolk University we've been able to create some coalitions around where we think perception and reality is. It continues to be a challenge in our community that there's disconnect between the population we serve and the knowledge people have producing the service. Do people really understand the needs of the population? We are constantly trying to do community information sharing. We have seven working groups 1) early childhood intervention, 2) youth and young adult intervention, 3) school climate, 4) employment, 5) behavioral health and healing spaces for boys and men of color, 6) juvenile justice an criminal justice diversion and 7) targeted suppression. We are in the process of developing an eighth one focusing on girls. We have a Governance Committee comprised of city wide decision makers, with the idea that when something comes from the Working Groups it goes through the Planning Committee (who meet weekly), we look at the data coming from the Working Groups and on a monthly basis we report to the Governance Committee who then discuss policies that need to be addressed. We've been at this for 3 years now and we have developed some trust with community members.

David Fort, Chair: Can you give us some examples of the Governance Committee policy?

Raquel Castro-Corazzini, Director of Youth Opportunities: We've developed a youth pass, which is going to be a pass for young people to use the WRTA. Transportation has been an issue. The youth pass, after school program and outreach workers are all coming from the Youth Violence Initiative. Young people and their experiences have shifted because of the Youth Violence Initiative. I'm not sure if this is one written down policy other than us moving towards an MOU. I believe that will be one of our biggest policies.

David Fort, Chair: But you're moving in that direction to be able to create policies?

Raquel Castro-Corazzini, Director of Youth Opportunities: Yes. I think the idea of the MOU allowing us to share arrest and suspension data is probably one of the biggest policies that we will develop. One of the places that we are challenged with is the court system. It is really hard to get a judge to sit in on a meeting and to be open to discuss diversion.

Edith Claros, PhD, Vice Chair: You had mentioned that suspension rates in the schools have been one of the factors. Do you have data to show?

Raquel Castro-Corazzini, Director of Youth Opportunities: We do have the data. Suspension rates are higher for boys. Boys with low income and with language barriers. Homeless boys are the least suspended.

Edith Claros, PhD, Vice Chair: Are the suspension rates related to a gap in our system?

Raquel Castro-Corazzini, Director of Youth Opportunities: All partners across the board say there needs to be diversity training. I think another part of the gap is that there are no targeted programs for the boys. A lot of challenges that the young boys are having in school have to do with the idea that their educators don't have experience or the proper training.

Jerry Gurwitz, MD: Where does this initiative sit? Does the money flow through this initiative or through another office? Who do you report to?

Raquel Castro-Corazzini, Director of Youth Opportunities: The initiative sits under the Mayor and City Manager. I am considered sitting under the Planning Committee. We report back to the Working Groups and Governance Committee. All the people that work on this initiative work for the City. Right now we are seeking funding. We're applying to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and we have some money coming in from Charles Shannon Community Safety Initiative.

Karyn Clark, Director DPH: Matilde "Mattie" Castiel, MD is our Health and Human Services Commissioner. Under her are the Youth Office, Public Health, Senior Center, Human Rights, Disabilities and Veterans. The Manager reconstituted the HHS structure because there are so many issues going on. There was a time where the Youth Office was under Economic Development and then the City Manager saw the alignment with Public Health. We are all working on public health issues. We support each other. This is such an amazing program, it's not just about kids playing in the park, it's really about youth development. Raquel and Scott are doing a great job .

Abigail Averbach: Can you tell us about what school climate means?

Raquel Castro-Corazzini, Director of Youth Opportunities: The convener for the school climate group is Worcester Education Collaborate. The focus is reducing school suspension. They are looking at school climate from holistic prospective. One of the biggest challenges that the school has is attendance. Reasons being; there are a lot of issues in some homes, not having clean clothes;UMass is actually working with the schools to put in a washer and dryer in each of the schools so kids can have clean clothes.

David Fort, Chair: The youth pass is a great idea. Transportation is a big issue. It's good to keep kids busy. They seem to get into more trouble if they're not busy. Who is going to vote on the WRTA passes?

Raquel Castro-Corazzini, Director of Youth Opportunities: Perhaps it will be taken to their Board. One thing that I'm doing is taking it out to the people. As many people that know about this and depend on this, to have it taken away will create outrage.

David Fort, Chair: The people who are making the decisions have a disconnect with the young people. Whether it's the WRTA or the teachers themselves; we have 90% of teachers that are white, and we have a majority of our students that are not. Most of these teachers have no interactions with the students except when they are in school. How do you build the gap?

Raquel Castro-Corazzini, Director of Youth Opportunities: There are multiple strategies that are in place. One of the projects that the School Climate Group is working on, who was able to receive funding from the Health Foundation, is called Worcester Hears. Worcester Hears is a trauma formed initiative in the north quadrant of the City. That initiative is training all staff to be prepared to deal with young people that have experienced trauma and racism.

David Fort, Chair: This is what I think works; you put everything on the table and then find the gaps. Publicize the gaps. Those who follow short have to be accountable.

Zach Dyer, Deputy Director DPH: We have been working on a Worcester Health Disparities Report and we are going to be releasing it on May 23, 2017 at 11:00am here at The Department of Public Health.

David Fort, Chair: What are some of the things that are being done to better our children?

Raquel Castro-Corazzini, Director of Youth Opportunities: In the summer, for 8 weeks, we run a program called Recreation Worcester from Monday – Friday from 9am – 5:30pm. This allows parents to have access to childcare while working.

Abigail Averbach: It's such a complex system and there's a disparity between the parents that know how to work the system vs. the parents that do not.

### **Next Meetings**

**June 5, 2017**

**July 10, 2017**

### **Public Hearing**

**Medical Marijuana Draft Regulations**

**Worcester Division of Public Health, 25 Meade Street, Conference Room 109**

**May 15, 2017 6:30PM**

### **Topics for Next Meeting**

Review and act on tanning bed student research project presentation

Review and act on homelessness, unstable housing, panhandling

### **Adjourn:**

7:47PM