OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Boulder County Board of Health (BOH) Regular Meeting
Boulder County Public Health (BCPH) Auditorium
May 8, 2017

BOH Members Present: President Gregg Thomas and Board Members Morgan McMillan, Olga Bermudez, and Bobbie Watson. Absent: Vice President Jorge DeSantiago.

Staff Members Present: Public Health Director Jeff Zayach, Acting Director of Administrative Services Aaron Pratt, Director of Health Divisions Heath Harmon, Community Health Division Manager Andrea Poniers, Inspire Youth Connections (IYC) Program Specialist Suzy Rippy, Communicable Disease Control Program Coordinator Carol Helwig, Epidemiologist and Opioid Advisory Group Lead Jamie Feld, Public Health Associate Lauren Marek, and Business Operations Manager Tammy Golden.

Meeting Called to Order.
President Thomas called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m.

ITEM 1. Public Comments (on unscheduled agenda items).
None.

ITEM 2. Consent Agenda.
A. Approval of April 10, 2017, Board of Health Meeting Minutes.
B. Approval of March 2017 Financial Statement.
Board Member McMillan made a motion, which was seconded by Board Member Bermudez, to approve the consent agenda, as presented. With all board members present voting in favor of the motion, President Thomas declared the motion approved. Absent: Vice President DeSantiago.

ITEM 3. Presentation on Sources of Strength (SOS) Youth Ambassadors.
Community Health Division Manager Andrea Poniers and Inspire Youth Connections Program Coordinator Suzy Rippy presented this item. Sources of Strength (SOS) is a national, evidence-based program that has been implemented in several Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) and St. Vrain Valley School District (SVVSD) middle and senior high schools, as well as in certain community settings, such as the Open and Affirming Sexual Orientation and gender identity Support (OASOS) Program.

SOS focuses on prevention of suicide, violence, bullying, and substance abuse through provision of training, support, and empowerment of youth peer leaders and caring adults from varying cultures and socio-economic groups who impact others through connection, hope, help, and strength. SOS provides support to students and teachers struggling with life’s challenges so they don’t become overwhelmed and decide to give up. SOS guides them to turn to their strengths and available support systems whenever they are faced with challenges.
The following Sources of Strength (SOS) peer leaders (also known as “youth ambassadors”) presented and shared personal comments about SOS:

- **Fairview High School**: Leah Newman and Renee Wright
- **Peak to Peak High School**: Hunter Allen-Bonney
- **Southern Hills Middle School**: Cade Peyton
- **Casey Middle School**: Stella Dickson and Finn O’Neil
- **Manhattan Middle School**: Sarah Zima and Evan Buchman

The students said although their school communities all vary, they all have seen the positive effects SOS has had on school culture. SOS has strengthened the connection between students and staff, decreased stress, increased kindness and gratitude, and increased overall energy at the schools. It focuses on positives and strengths rather than negatives and deficits, helping students to manage stress and the associated emotions of anger, fear, and sadness. One important element of SOS is normalization of mental health in addition to physical health. SOS strives to make mental health normal so people are comfortable discussing mental health issues that are challenging them.

The students have started presenting on SOS in the broader community to educate parents, neighbors, and community members about the benefits of SOS so they, too, can feel safe and respected. They discussed the importance of the eight cogs on the SOS Wheel, which are the core values of the program: mental health, family support, positive friends, mentors, healthy activities, generosity, spirituality, and medical access. The students shared ways in which they and their peers have used this wheel to lead healthy and supported lives and encouraged others to do the same.

Board Member McMillan referenced comments made by the students about limiting the use of screens and devices as part of healthy activities. They said social media was often used to bully others, which affects the mental health of students. Texting is sometimes the only method of communication used by teens, and that isn’t ideal because it builds walls and discourages people from talking with one other.

Board Member Bermudez asked how SOS was implemented in the schools. She was told SOS peer leaders worked to ensure that their peer students realized they weren’t alone to deal with their problems. They launched a variety of campaigns, including handing out flowers with compliments to fellow students; asking students to fill out cards to distribute to teachers during Thanksgiving that thanked them for being positive influences; and handing out cookies or bringing in puppies during finals week to help students relax and cope with stress.

Unfortunately, Colorado was the #1 state for suicide, so SOS strives to normalize that everyone has both good days and bad days. When people felt overstressed and don’t think they can handle life’s challenges, SOS reaches out, reminding them they’re not alone and that it was okay to ask for help.

Board Member Watson said it was empowering to hear how the students encouraged their peers to address emotional struggles early. She said it was very difficult for adults to discuss their emotional problems, so it was inspiring to hear that students were striving to address their problems early, a valuable tool that will be useful for them later in life.

President Thomas said he was impressed by SOS. He said when he was a youth, they struggled with challenges, too, but nobody talked about how to handle mental health issues, the availability of resources, or worked with the youth to help them find support. He said the SOS youth ambassadors should be proud of themselves and the valuable work they were providing in their schools.
Community Health Division Manager Andrea Poniers acknowledged Inspire Youth Connections (IYC) Program Coordinator Suzy Rippy, a BCPH employee for over 20 years. Ms. Rippy previously worked in the Prevention/Intervention Program before it transitioned to IYC. She said she works with amazing youth and thanked the Board of Health for granting the students an opportunity to present about SOS.

Director of Health Divisions Heath Harmon said he appreciated the work of IYC to help improve the lives of youth in the community. SOS is an evidence-based suicide prevention program that stretches beyond suicide to address other types of stresses and challenges that are faced by youth. He commended the youth for not only being leaders within their own schools, but also in the community.

ITEM 4.  Presentation on Syringe Exchange and Opioids.
Communicable Disease Control/HIV Prevention Program Coordinator Carol Helwig, Epidemiologist and Opioid Advisory Group Lead Jamie Feld, and Public Health Associate Lauren Marek presented this item. Ms. Helwig said Ms. Marek was an associate in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Public Health Associate Program (PHAP), a competitive, two-year, paid training program that places associates in public health agencies and nongovernmental organizations to learn from and work with public health professionals.

Ms. Helwig expressed appreciation to all who have supported The Works Program, including BCPH staff and volunteers; Boulder County AIDS Project (BCAP); Mental Health Partners (MHP); Board of Health; BCPH Medical Officer Chris Urbina, M.D.; Board of County Commissioners; Community Justice Management Board (CJMB); local law enforcement; and the District Attorney’s Office.

In 1989, Boulder became the third city in the country to offer syringe exchange services for injecting drug users (IDU). BCPH had an informal agreement with local law enforcement and the District Attorney’s Office that enabled The Works Program to operate a clean syringe exchange program that exempted Works staff and clients from paraphernalia laws when transporting or possessing syringes and safe injection equipment. The agreement was despite current state laws that acted as a barrier. Then in 2010, state legislators passed legislation to authorize local boards of health to approve clean syringe exchange programs to help reduce the spread of bloodborne disease. In 2011, the Boulder County Board of Health approved Resolution 2011-03, approving Boulder County’s clean syringe exchange program.

Components of The Works Program include disposal of used sharps, as well as the provision of harm reduction supplies and education, HIV and hepatitis C rapid testing, overdose prevention training with naloxone, and “Break the Cycle” intervention (i.e. stopping new initiation of injecting drug use). Seven people were involved in the Break the Cycle program last year; the goal is to engage 30 people this year.

The Works Program works to improve health behaviors of clients so they get tested for HIV/hepatitis C, dispose of their used syringes safely, and not share or reuse IDU equipment. Last year, more than 250,000 syringes were provided in more than 5,520 encounters. The Mental Health Partners (MHP) Addictions Recovery Center (ARC) location was the busiest (3,739) of the four sites in Boulder County, mainly since it is open 24/7. The Hub in Longmont was the second busiest (858), and Sundquist (454) and BCAP (469) were the least active sites. The Works Program conducted 168 hepatitis C (HCV) tests (14 positive) and 262 HIV tests (0 positive) in 2016.

There has been a significant increase in the number of unique clients due to the opioid epidemic, which mirrors national trends. The Works Program had to eliminate its mobile outreach services in 2012 due to
funding issues; however, new clients have found the program through the internet. From 2010-2014, the opioid overdose rate was highest in Longmont (9.4), although the heroin overdose rate (3.5) was highest in southeastern Boulder County (i.e. Superior, Lafayette, Louisville). On average, 30 county residents die each year from accidental opioid overdose.

The Works Program distributes naloxone kits for use in overdose situations to block or reverse the effects of opioids; 42 kits have been distributed since February, and there have been 48 reports of clients administering naloxone since 2016. Naloxone is available without a prescription, and the kits are currently distributed at the Sundquist and Longmont sites. Once staffing increases at the ARC, naloxone kits will be available there as well. The program has conducted or scheduled training for staff of the University of Colorado (CU), MHP, local law enforcement, and Alfalfa’s (grocery store). Wall-mounted syringe disposal is also available at the Boulder library.

A substance abuse survey was conducted, and 215 people participated: 67% (145) have used opioids, 33% (70) reported using other drugs (no opioids), and 43% reported using multiple substances (92). The average age of people taking the survey who had used opioids was 32.

Ms. Helwig said Public Health Director Jeff Zayach successfully advocated for program funding from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). The funding was part of the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (renamed the Colorado Drug Assistance Program), which has seen considerable cost savings due to expansion of Medicaid and elimination of pre-existing conditions for private insurance. The savings were prioritized for local public health agencies (LPHA) that provide syringe access services. The Works Program will use the funding to pilot a 0.4 FTE counseling and navigation position to help link clients to substance use disorder treatment services and increase staffing and services at the ARC.

Board Member Watson asked about volunteer opportunities for medical personnel and was told there are currently volunteers at The Hub; however, the program especially welcomes support from medical volunteers.

In early 2016, a landscape analysis was done that focused on how opioids impacted the community. Results indicated a definite need to address the situation and a high level of community readiness to act. The Community Justice Management Board (CJMB) authorized the formation of the Boulder County Opioid Advisory Group (OAG), which is led by BCPH Epidemiologist Jamie Feld. The group includes participation from law enforcement; Community Justice Services; the District Attorney’s Office; prevention, treatment, and harm reduction partners; and community members. There are more than 100 individuals on the distribution list, and 30-60 people typically attend the OAG meetings.

Ms. Feld said for every opioid death there are 10 treatment admissions for abuse, 32 emergency room visits, 825 non-medical users, and 130 people who are dependent. She outlined the following community efforts that have been done to raise awareness about opioids and address the issue:

- An action planning activity that identified focus areas, strategies, and outcomes for OAG.
- **Angel Initiative**: The Longmont Department of Public Safety partners with the Police-Assisted Addiction and Recovery Initiative (PAARI) to help people suffering with addiction. Rather than arresting participants, the initiative provides them with encouragement and resources and connects them with treatment facilities/programs, as well as employment opportunities following recovery.
- Training local law enforcement agencies to respond to opioid overdose situations, and equipping them with naloxone kits. So far, four lives have been saved by law enforcement officials.
- Training of medical prescribers on opioid prescribing practices.
Development of opioid protocols at Boulder Community Hospital.

Expansion of safe medication disposal sites in Boulder County. There are currently six locations, and Boulder County Sheriff’s Office conducted “Take Back Day” on April 29.

In anticipation of receiving state funding for diversion pilots, a visit to Santa Fe, NM, later this year so OAG can learn about diversion efforts in that community.

Opioid Leadership Summit on May 17, when OAG will present to the Colorado Attorney General, Boulder County Sheriff, District Attorney, and other leaders on various initiatives taking place to address opioid abuse.

Board Member Watson asked if naloxone was available in the schools and was told not currently since they don’t have medical directors to oversee programs. Attempts are underway, however, to make naloxone available for use by the school nurses.

President Thomas asked if prescription pill abuse was the main contributing factor for addiction. Ms. Feld said more than 60% of clients in methadone programs started by using prescription pain meds. Many young clients become addicted after using prescription meds for injuries. When it becomes too expensive to get prescription meds, people often turn to heroin.

Board Member Watson said she was a nurse in the 1970s when pain meds weren’t as readily prescribed. Doctors today often overprescribe pain meds to ensure that their patients remain comfortable.

Ms. Helwig said people must have strong resiliency and coping skills to prevent addiction. There are always people self-medicating, which is one reason why “drug takeback” events are held (to discourage people from keeping and using leftover prescription meds). When someone is put on a ten-day prescription plan, the odds of them becoming addicted are much higher than it is for those on three-day plans.

Public Health Associate Lauren Marek, who is working at BCPH on a two-year fellowship from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), said she has developed a passion for public health through her work at BCPH.

Ms. Marek is currently working on a zero waste sharps container project that will provide an environmentally sustainable collection service with increased accessibility of secure sharps disposal for clients. This project has given The Works Program a unique opportunity to contribute to Boulder County’s vision of being a zero waste community. Through the program, The Works Program contracted with Colorado Medical Waste, a sustainable waste management company, to install two 48-gallon sharps containers at The Hub in Longmont and the ARC at Mental Health Partners. During the past 6 months, there have been 31 pickups, resulting in 1,488 gallons collected. A total of 1,339 gallons have been diverted from the landfill after sterilization and processing by Colorado Medical Waste. A survey was done to determine if the containers had any issues; 17 people responded, and no problems were reported. Usage of the containers continues to increase as word of their availability spreads through the community.

Staff said concerns have been raised about transient people near Boulder Creek who recklessly dispose of their sharps and human waste along the creek. Portable toilets with sharps disposal have been considered, and BCAP, which is located by the creek, has obtained permission from the City of Boulder to conduct outreach with transients by the creek to give them information about proper waste disposal. Robin Valdez from the County Commissioners’ Office previously worked with a program in Denver that did outreach events along a creek, educating people on safe and proper syringe disposal and how to access clean syringes. Mr. Valdez may spearhead a similar project in Boulder.
Director of Health Divisions Heath Harmon said staff is continually asking clients about their needs, preferences, and what services they’d like to receive. Clients have said they are not as inclined to dispose of their used syringes in any open areas for fear of getting caught or being filmed.

Public Health Director Jeff Zayach commended the work of The Works Program and said staff has already done a great deal of work to address the opioid issue in Boulder County.

Ms. Helwig said expansion of Medicaid would help program efforts, and that appears to have bipartisan support. She also said several other communities were interested in replicating Boulder County’s program. She noted that overdose risks often increased after an incarcerated person returned to drug use upon release from jail since their bodies can’t tolerate the jolt back to drug use. Drugs are sometimes laced or are more potent than expected and can result in overdose. Ms. Helwig said staff receives daily reports from emergency rooms as part of a pilot program. Although the program stocks Narcan for distribution, it refers people with insurance to get it from a pharmacy instead of BCPH.

Ms. Helwig said the legislation that passed in 2010 requires syringe exchange programs to submit annual reports to the state; however, there wasn’t an established accounting system at the state to receive the information. Regardless, BCPH does submit an annual report to the state and is working on a system that will generate real-time reports.

ITEM 5. Director’s Report.
There were no questions from board members on the written report. Some board members commented how much they appreciated getting a comprehensive director’s report each month.

ITEM 6. Old and New Business/Announcements.
A. Discussion on Tabled Consent Agenda Items (if any).
None.

B. Old and New Business.
President Thomas introduced Mark Johnuel Duavis and Tanda Gogo Sirait, who were working with President Thomas at the City & County of Denver through a professional exchange program with ICMA (International City/County Management Association).

Mr. Johnuel Duavis said he works for the Philippines Department of Health (federal level) and was particularly interested in the syringe exchange presentation (Item #4), which he said was a controversial subject in his country.

Mr. Gogo Sirait said he was from Indonesia. He used to work in the private sector as an urban planner but now works for the government. He said what impressed him most about the Board of Health meeting was the high level of collaboration between the various agencies and interest areas. He said he planned to propose that collaboration concept when he returned home.

C. Announcements.
President Thomas commended Environmental Health Division Manager Joe Malinowski, Air Quality and Business Sustainability Program Coordinator Pam Milmoe, and Oil & Gas Specialist Patrick Murphy for their work in monitoring air quality and the impact that BCPH and staff have had in Colorado on oil and
gas issues. He said BCPH’s Environmental Health Division has provided a significant amount of valuable, real-time information through their monitoring work at Boulder Reservoir.

Board Member Bermudez thanked BCPH and Director of Strategic Initiatives Susan Motika for hosting Dr. Tony Iton, Senior Vice President for Healthy Communities at the California Endowment. Dr. Iton is a nationally renowned expert in community organizing for policy change to address health equity, and his work focuses on improving the health of disadvantaged populations by addressing the contributions of race, class, wealth, education, geography, and employment to health status. Board Member Bermudez said she had great conversations with regional partners that she was going to share with Ms. Motika.

ITEM 7.   Adjournment.
There being nothing further to discuss, President Thomas declared the meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Gregg Thomas, President

Jeffrey J. Zayach, Public Health Director