

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
EXECUTIVE BOARD  
May 8, 2024

The in-person and virtual (Microsoft Teams) meeting of the Executive Board of the Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) was called to order at 10:32 am in the Robert O. Yoho Executive Board Room of the IDOH building by Dr. Stephen Tharp, Chairperson. The following Board members were present for all or part of the meeting:

Amelia Clark, DrPH, MA (virtual)  
Brenda Goff, HFA  
Joanne Martin, DrPH, RN, FAAN  
Rex McKinney, FACHE (virtual)  
Holly Robinson, MD  
Armando Soto Rojas, DDS  
Matthew Sprunger, MD  
Dan Cutshaw, PE  
Stephen Tharp, MD (Chair)  
Lindsay Weaver, MD, FACEP (Secretary)

Those not able to attend:

Robin Marks, DVM, JD  
Shelley Rauch, HFA (resigned from Board as of today)  
Suellen Sorensen, PharmD, BCPS  
Troy Weirick, MD

The following staff members were present for all or part of the meeting (in-person or via teams):

Guy Crowder, MD, MPHTM, Chief Medical Officer  
Amy Kent, Deputy Health Commissioner & Chief Strategy Officer  
Jon Ferguson, Director, Healthy Hoosiers Foundation  
Eric Hawkins, State Epidemiologist  
Eden Bezy, Assistant Commissioner, Women, Children & Families Commission  
Haley Hannant, MPH, Epidemiology Director, Maternal and Child Health Division  
Jamie Smith, MS, MPH, Director, Fatality Review and Prevention Division

## Call to Order

Dr. Tharp, Chair, stated that a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 10:32 am. He then asked if Board members had any known conflicts of interest to declare. Hearing none he proceeded with the meeting. Dr. Tharp shared that Shelley Rauch has resigned from the Board effective today due to work demands.

## Minutes

Dr. Tharp asked for discussion and/or corrections to the minutes of the March 13, 2024, Executive Board meeting. Hearing none, he entertained a motion for approval. On a motion made by Dr. Amelia Clark, seconded by Brenda Goff and passed by majority roll call vote of in-person and virtual attendees, the Board approved the minutes as presented.

## **OFFICIAL BUSINESS OF THE INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

### **Secretary's Report**

Dr. Weaver provided a Health First Indiana (HFI) Update. Three more counties – Crawford, Harrison and Wells have opted in for the HFI funding in 2025. 89 counties have now opted in for HFI funding. The Indiana Hospital Association is encouraging hospitals to pledge to collaborate with their local health departments. The Indiana Chamber is working to get businesses to pledge to work with their local health departments as well.

### **Commissioner's Office**

#### Congenital Syphilis Update

Guy Crowder, MD, MPHTM, Chief Medical Officer, reported that the number of congenital syphilis cases in Indiana has increased by 2,300% from 2018 to 2023. Nationally, there has been a 755% increase in congenital syphilis cases between 2012 and 2021. CDC's recent analysis shows that almost 9 in 10 cases of newborn syphilis in 2022 might have been prevented with timely testing and treatment during pregnancy. More than half of cases were among mothers who tested positive for syphilis during pregnancy but did not receive adequate or timely treatment, and nearly 40 percent of cases were among birthing mothers who were not receiving prenatal care. The IDOH has created a new digital Congenital and Adult Syphilis Toolkit with resources for clinicians and public health professionals. This toolkit provides more in-depth information.

## Measles & H5N1 Updates

Eric Hawkins, State Epidemiologist, reported there are no active cases of measles currently; however, in February there was a case in Lake County that developed from an exposure in another state. No secondary cases resulted from this exposure. In April there was a case in Indianapolis at the Children's Museum and there were no secondary cases from this exposure as well. Indiana's MMR vaccination rate is currently 92%. The IDOH has a new campaign entitled Start Smart to encourage children's vaccinations are up-to-date before the school year begins. Eric also reported that the H5N1 highly pathogenic influenza virus is in migratory wild birds nationally. In March, USDA discovered H5N1 in a dairy herd in Texas. In April there was a human case of H5N1 related to exposure to dairy cattle. Currently, H5N1 has been found in dairy cattle in 9 states. At this point, there is low risk to humans. However, drinking raw milk should be avoided. CDC has requested that state's offer PPE to farmers if requested.

## **Women, Children and Families Commission**

### Infant Mortality Update

Eden Bezy, Assistant Commissioner, Women, Children and Families Commission presented an update on infant mortality in Indiana. Eden is the Assistant Commissioner for the new Women, Children and Families Commission which encompasses Maternal and Child Health; Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education; Women, Infants and Children; Children's Special Health Care Services; and Family Health Data and Fatality Prevention. Eden reported the 2023 preliminary infant mortality rate is 6.5% as of March 25, 2024. She stated that perinatal risk is the primary driver of infant mortality rates. Dr. Matthew Sprunger stated that northeast Indiana birthing hospitals are decreasing. Eden stated that the IDOH is helping to expand services through nurse practitioners and local health departments and working on providing grants to the most affected zip codes.

### Child Fatality Review and Maternal Mortality Review Committees Update

Jamie Smith, MD, MPH, Director, Fatality Review and Prevention Division and Haley Hannant, MPH, Epidemiology Director, Maternal and Child Health presented an update on the Child and Maternal Mortality Review Committees. The mission of the Child Fatality Review (CFR) Committee is to better understand how and why children die, take action to prevent other deaths, and improve the health and safety of our children. Their vision is understanding the circumstances causing a child's death which will help prevent other deaths, poor health outcomes, and injury or disability in other children. Each year the CFR teams review all child deaths that were: sudden, unexpected, or unexplained; assessed by the Indiana Department of Child Services; or the cause is listed as homicide, suicide, accident, or undetermined.

Jamie stated the mission of the Maternal Mortality Review (MMR) Committee is to increase awareness of the issues surrounding pregnancy-related death and to promote change among individuals, communities, and healthcare systems in order to reduce the number of deaths. And, to identify pregnancy-associated deaths, review those caused by pregnancy complications and other associated causes and identify problems contributing to these deaths and recommend interventions that may reduce these deaths. The MMR Committee's vision is to eliminate preventable maternal deaths in Indiana.

The Fatality Review and Prevention Division has created a new Bereavement Guide to help anyone navigating grief support. And are also arranging for emotional support for staff who deal with very difficult situations every day.

### **Distribution**

Dr. Tharp thanked staff for professional new hire and separation reports and summary of final orders.

### **Adjournment**

Dr. Tharp asked for any other business to come before the Board. Hearing no additional comments from the Board, staff and/or public, Dr. Tharp adjourned the meeting at 11:45 am. The next meeting is scheduled for July 10, 2024, at the IDOH building.