

**Board of Health Meeting Minutes  
March 19, 2024**

**Board Members & Liaisons Present:**

Joan Cagginello, MS, RN, Chairperson  
Mitchell Quintner, DMD, Vice-Chairperson  
Jennifer Denes  
Ellen Monforte, APRN, MS, CRNA  
Holly Mulrenan, Board of Alderman Liaison  
Ray Vitali, Board of Alderman Liaison

*Board Members & Liaisons not present:*

Atty. Christine M. Gonillo, Secretary  
Jamil T. Azhari  
Penny Vasilas, MS, RN  
Tom Koba, Board of Education Liaison

*Others Present: None*

*Health Department Staff Present:*

Deepa Joseph, MPH, Director of Health  
Carol Soulier, Recording Secretary

J. Cagginello called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes – February 20, 2024**

The minutes of the meeting held on February 20, 2024 were approved unanimously on a motion by E. Monforte and seconded by J. Denes.

**Public Session:** *None*

**Environmental Health Report – Laura M. Miller, REHS/RS**

*Food Protection Program:*

*Foodborne illness investigation* - On February 5, 2024, the MHD received multiple complaints of possible foodborne illness from patrons consuming food from the same Milford food service establishment. Based on the information received from the complainants, MHD Sanitarians and the Community Health Coordinator conducted a site investigation to assess the conditions in the establishment and initiate a foodborne disease outbreak investigation. *A foodborne disease outbreak is the occurrence of two or more cases of a similar illness resulting from the ingestion of a common food.* Typically, investigation of a foodborne disease outbreak is a threefold process and requires coordination between the MHD, the CT Department of Public Health Food Protection Program (“CT DPH”), CT DPH Epidemiology Program, and the State Laboratory to identify and eliminate the source of the outbreak. The main component of this investigation included an

environmental investigation at the suspected location. The purpose of an environmental field investigation is to determine the contributing factors that may be the cause of the foodborne illness outbreak, whether it is improper food handling, ill food workers, or a contaminated ingredient. This investigation focused on the prior and current health status of the food handlers and details of the preparation of identified food items prepared in the establishment. General infection control measures were reviewed with each of the food handlers and managers, and enforced, as necessary.

Public Act No. 23-115 - Connecticut Allergen awareness requirements - On December 1, 2023, the CT Secretary of the State passed Public Act (PA) No. 23-115, an act requiring food allergy awareness specific to Connecticut restaurant employees. The FDA Food Code, which became fully effective in CT on February 17, 2023, requires Permit Holders/Certified Protection Managers (CFPM) to know the nine major food allergens, to know the symptoms that a major food allergen could cause in a sensitive individual who has an allergic reaction, and to ensure employees are properly trained in food allergy awareness. Further, the Permit Holder is required to notify consumers by written notification of the presence of major food allergens as an ingredient in unpackaged food items that are served or sold to the consumer.

PA 23-115 mandates further action specific to Connecticut restaurants and all food establishment employees. The PA requires that, by March 1, 2024, all Class 2, Class 3, and Class 4 food establishments display a food allergy educational poster in a clear and conspicuous location in the kitchen or designated staff area. The Permit Holder, Person in Charge, and/or the CFPM is required to ensure that each employee of the food establishment has viewed the poster and require each employee to confirm, in writing, that the employee has familiarized themselves with the information displayed in the poster. Failure to provide training and keep a written record of the training will result in an inspection violation on the routine inspection report form under section 19a-361 of the CT General Statutes. A memo from the Director of Health was sent out to all licensed food establishments notifying permit holders of the new requirements and included a link to the poster. Sanitarians are also distributing copies of the posters to food establishments during routine inspections.

Food Service Establishment license renewals: In January 2024, Food Service Establishment license renewal letters were sent out to 355 food service establishments for the 2024 licensing year. Food Service Establishment licenses expire on the last day in February every year. Currently, 311 establishments have been renewed with 44 outstanding. Final notices were sent out via certified mail.

Collaborative on Residential Integrity for the disables & Elderly (CRIDE): Members of CRIDE met on March 11, 2024, to discuss the status of three new cases and three current cases of troubled housing. The three new cases were referred to the Health Department from the Fire Department and the Department of Elderly & Protective services. The Health Department investigates and presents each case to CRIDE to determine whether any of the individuals are known to the various entities at the table and for additional perspective on working with the situation.

*Comments:*

- *D. Joseph shared that the new allergen poster, developed in accordance with the public act regarding food allergy awareness, was distributed within a time period where there were recent allergic reaction incidents nationwide as a result of mislabeling of allergens*

*in food products. Sanitarians have been able to utilize the posters as an educational tool with food service establishments to highlight the importance of labeling per the FDA Food Code. J. Cagginello asked where one would expect to see the food allergy educational posters in local establishments. D. Joseph responded that the posters are meant for employees so will be posted in areas frequented by staff.*

- *Of three troubled housing cases recently referred to the Department, D. Joseph reported that two required condemnations. A discussion ensued regarding the Department's protocol for responding to troubled housing calls, which includes a team approach with contributions from both the Department's case manager and sanitarians.*

### **Nursing Division Report – Joan Campbell, MSN, RN**

*Seasonal Flu and Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Campaign:* The Connecticut Department of Public Health has reported that Connecticut is classified geographically as “moderate” for flu activity. As of March 16, 2024, there have been 23,884 positive influenza tests reported to CT DPH. The most frequently reported flu viruses continue to be of the influenza A type. A total of 75 deaths have been reported since the beginning of the flu season – all adults with the majority being over the age of 70.

For the week ending March 9, 2024, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that influenza positive cases had increased nationally from the previous week. Seasonal influenza activity remains elevated nationally with increases in some parts of the country. CDC estimates that there have been at least 29 million illnesses, 320,000 hospitalizations, and 20,000 deaths from flu this season. They continue to recommend an annual flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older as long as flu activity continues.

The Milford Health Department will continue to offer the influenza vaccine through their April 2024 immunization clinic. Both the regular flu vaccine and the high dose vaccine for individuals over sixty-five years of age will be offered. The school nurses and Health Department continue to monitor the Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) and Covid-Like Illness (CLI) activity in the schools.

On March 5, 2024, the *FDA Vaccine and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee* recommended that all 2024-2025 U.S. flu vaccines be trivalent vaccines and include an influenza A (H1N1), an A (H3N2) and a B/Victoria lineage vaccine virus. Because influenza B/Yamagata viruses, which are included in current four component (quadrivalent) flu vaccines, are no longer actively circulating, their inclusion in flu vaccines is no longer warranted.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that trivalent flu vaccines for use in the 2024-2025 northern hemisphere contain the following:

#### **Egg-based vaccines**

- an A/Victoria/4897/2022 (H1N1) pdm09-like virus;
- an A/Thailand/8/2022 (H3N2)-like virus; and
- a B/Austria/1359417/2021 (B/Victoria lineage)-like virus.

*Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19):* The MHD continues to vaccinate the pediatric population and the uninsured/underinsured adults with the COVID-19 vaccine. Two COVID-19 vaccine clinics were held in February and ten doses of the COVID-19 vaccine were administered.

According to the CT DPH, there were 101 positive COVID-19 cases reported in Milford for the month of February.

The Milford Public Health Nurses are following the CDC COVID-19 protocols and guidelines in their school health office setting. They are following up on positive cases and reviewing return to school guidance with parent/guardians and staff and continue to be a valuable resource at their schools for administration, staff, and families.

*School Health Services:* During the month of February, the school nurses attended two *Physical/Psychological Management Training* (PMT) sessions provided by Milford Public School personnel. Preventative techniques such as verbal interventions and de-escalation strategies were reviewed along with other MPS specific procedures.

*Comments:*

- *D. Joseph added that the CDC recently changed isolation guidelines grouping together common respiratory viruses, including COVID-19, influenza, and RSV. The recommendations suggest returning to normal activities when, for at least 24 hours, both are true—symptoms are improving overall and, if a fever was present, it has been gone without use of a fever-reducing medication.*

#### **Emergency Preparedness Report - Tara Mustakos Wassmer, REHS/RS, CHES**

Milford Health Department completed the annual review of the Milford Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) program. The review which will occur annually moving forward is conducted by the US Department of Health & Human Services (HHS), Administration for Strategic Preparedness & Response (ASPR), Office of Emergency Management & Medical Operations Region 1 Liaison officer. A Capabilities Assessment Worksheet is completed prior to the review. The worksheet is a self-assessment of MRC activities within the host organization.

The assessment is utilized nationwide to evaluate readiness or deployment uses of MRC volunteers in the following capabilities:

- Incident response support
- Medical countermeasures dispensing
- Behavioral health
- Epidemiology
- Environmental health
- Animal & veterinary care
- Medical care
- Other/specialties

The MRC program is very diverse across the United States. Most Connecticut MRC programs do not rely on volunteers for basic public health work or to meet the 10 Essential Service of Public

Health. The Milford MRC is an extension of the Health Department, an asset to support meeting the needs of the community when existing resources are overwhelmed.

*Comments:*

- *None*

### **Community Health Division Report - Jennifer Clarke-Lofters, MPA**

Communicable Disease: For the month of February, there have been 182 communicable diseases reported. Flu is the lead disease reported this month.

Programming/Funding:

- **Food Insecurity-** The food insecurity group has disseminated one of two surveys into the community. The initial survey is meant to gain information from providers and the services they offer. We had 13 providers complete the survey. We learned that out of those who responded to the survey, most of the Milford food providers are strictly volunteers, over 60% do not require an application, and almost all track the number of people they serve and meals provided. We hope to share the results further through a simple one-page report. The second survey will be for consumers and will be disseminated in March. The ultimate goal is to develop a big picture of what the landscape of food looks like in the city of Milford.
- **Heart Health Month-** We celebrated Heart Health Month in February. We promoted Go Red Day on social media and hosted a local community collaboration with the Milford Senior Center, Bridgeport Hospital Milford Campus, and Bridges Wow Van to encourage the community to receive blood pressure checks, get tips from a dietician, and much more.
- **Health Improvement Alliance (HIA) -** We have been working closely with HIA to begin planning our next round of Community Health Assessment (CHA) efforts. This time around 2025-2028, there will be more input from health departments along with ways to increase partnership.

Accreditation/Pathways: Milford Health Department has hit the SUBMIT button to provide all documentation for the Pathways Recognition with PHAB (Public Health Accreditation Board). We have continued the momentum to update our VMSG system to track activities for our Strategic Plan. We anticipate meeting with core staff to begin accreditation document collection once we have heard from PHAB regarding Pathways Recognition.

Grant Reports: We have been searching to apply for new grants to implement new initiatives for the department. Grant reports for ELC1, Lead and Immunization funding have been submitted. Next month we will have reports due for ELC 2 and Immunization.

*Comments:*

- *M. Quintner asked if Milford Public Schools cafeterias ever established a “sharing table,” where students could contribute food that they had leftovers from their lunch that other students could then use. D. Joseph reported that a few schools have piloted the practice*

*of sharing packaged foods and whole fruits that have been provided through the MPS food service.*

- *H. Mulrenan inquired about a recent substance abuse awareness survey by the Milford Prevention Council. D. Joseph reported that the survey is still available for completion and results are not available yet.*

**Old Business:** *None*

**Director's Report:** *Deepa Joseph, MPH*

- *D. Joseph reviewed the use of Robert's Rules at board and commission meetings, specifically regarding the approval of the minutes at each Board of Health meeting. D. Joseph also clarified the meaning of quorum and the requirement for a quorum of board members to be present for a meeting to take place.*
- *In response to measles outbreaks in recent news, E. Monforte asked if those who received the MMR vaccine as children are still covered. D. Joseph responded that, if traveling, one should get titers done to assess whether one still has antibodies for protection from the virus. D. Joseph added that the Department recently sent out a reminder about measles protocols to local pediatric providers.*

**New Business:** *None*

**Adjournment:**

*M. Quintner motioned to adjourn the meeting seconded by J. Denes and was unanimously approved.*

The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Carol Soulier  
Recorder