

State Camp Safety Advisory Council (SCSAC) October 17, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Members

Present: Dawn Ewing, Eric Bacon, Gordon Felt, Douglas Pierce, and Thomas Welch M.D.

Members

Absent: Meir Frischman

Department
of Health Staff

Present: Michael Cambridge, Timothy Shay, and Megan Mutolo

Ms. Ewing called the meeting to order at 10:31 a.m. at the Empire State Plaza Convention Hall, Meeting Room 1, Albany, New York. Meir Frischman was absent. A quorum was present.

Council Administrative Business

Mr. Shay apologized to the Council for not having the draft meeting minutes to the members more in advance of the meeting. Ms. Ewing stated the Council would wait until the end of the meeting to vote on the minutes. Mr. Shay announced that Ms. Ewing has been reappointed to the Council representing not-for-profit children's camps. Her new term will expire on January 1, 2024. Mr. Shay stated that Mr. Bacon's membership was in the process for reappointment and that after 11 years of service, Mr. Felt is retiring from the Council and this will be his final meeting. Mr. Felt commented that it was an honor to serve on the Council and he was thankful for the opportunity. He commended the Council on the good work it does. Mr. Shay commented that with Mr. Felt's retirement the Council would have 3 vacant positions but two of the vacancies, one for profit camps and one for not-for-profit camps, are in the process of being filled. Mr. Shay informed the Council that the Department is looking for a replacement in the Consumer Interests vacancy and asked for recommendations for the seat. Mr. Felt recommended obtaining a representative from a special needs camp as a replacement to fill one of the vacancies. Mr. Shay asked Mr. Maurer to reach out to the Justice Center to see if they had any recommendations for a representative for campers with special needs. Mr. Shay announced the recent retirement of Carolyn Caldwell and the appointment of Jacob Scott to a Principal Sanitarian position in the Bureau of Community Environmental Health and Food Protection. Mr. Scott will be Bureau's children's camps program lead.

Public Health Law Amendments

Mr. Shay announced to the Council that on October 3, 2019 there was an amendment to Public Health Law (PHL) that changed the requirements for establishing a quorum. Previously, a majority of the 9 Council members specified by PHL needed to be present for a quorum. This was regardless of any vacant positions on the Council. The PHL amendment now allows for the majority of the appointed members serving on the council to be the basis for determining a quorum. Therefore; vacant positions will no longer be considered for establishing a quorum. Mr. Shay stated that DOH would draft an amendment to the By-Laws to match the newly enacted provision in PHL. Mr. Pierce asked how long the appointment process takes for new members of the Council and if there was anything the Council could do to assist in the process. Mr. Shay stated that the process has multiple internal steps including confirmation by the Senate and can take some time, but there was nothing the council could help with.

Measles

Dr. Elizabeth Rausch-Phung, Director of the Department's Bureau of Immunization gave a presentation on the measles outbreak in New York State that began in 2018. The presentation identified the impacts on the State, the number of cases, the counties that were most affected by the outbreak, and the public health response conducted by the Department, local governments, and health care providers. Mr. Shay noted that there were no measles cases associated with a children's camp for the 2019 season and discussed the children's camp initiatives taken to prevent measles at camps. He also noted that Greene, Orange, Sullivan, Ulster, and Rockland counties enacted local orders mandating measles vaccination or proof of immunity for campers and staff to attend a children's camp within their jurisdiction. Mr. Pierce asked how the size of the outbreak in New York State compared with other large states. Dr. Rausch-Phung responded that New York State had the highest number of cases. Mr. Shay praised the Department, camp operators, and local health departments on the effort put forward to prevent the spread of measles at children's camps. Mr. Shay stated that the Department is assessing the need to require immunizations at camps to prevent future outbreaks and asked the Council for comments. The Council discussed the topic and concluded that the most difficult part of a requirement for immunizations would be related to staff. They also stressed that continued collaboration and providing information to camp operators as early as possible regarding any new requirements was extremely important.

Preliminary Overview of the 2019 Children's Camp Season

Mr. Shay reported that there were no fatalities, drownings, or non-fatal drownings reported associated with a regulated children's camp in 2019. The preliminary review of data received so far indicates fewer gastrointestinal outbreaks in 2019 than in previous years. There were, however; two large outbreaks of impetigo at different camps and vaccine-preventable diseases outbreaks of varicella, pertussis, and influenza A. He also noted that there was one fire that occurred at a day camp that resulted in substantial damage to a building but did not result in any fatalities or injuries.

Mr. Shay provided a brief overview of statewide beach closures due to harmful blue-green algae blooms (HABs). It was noted that at children's camps there were 13 beach closures and a suspension of boating activities due to HABs. Additionally, a camp was required to discontinue use of a surface water supply when it was impacted by HABs. No illness was associated with HABs at regulated children's camps or bathing beaches during the 2019 season.

Non-Regulated Children's Camps Disclosure

Mr. Shay informed the Council that on July 16, 2019 legislation was signed adding a new Section 398-f to the General Business Law. The legislation had an effective date of October 14, 2019 and requires non-regulated children's camps for children under 16 to provide parents or guardians notice that they are not regulated by the New York State Department of Health. This notice must be included on the camp's application or enrollment form, posted at the camp, and placed on the camp's website, when a website is maintained. Enforcement of the legislation will be done by the Attorney General's office.

Other Business

Mr. Pierce raised concerns with ongoing mental health issues involving staff and campers. He felt it would be beneficial for children's camps to have the capability of hiring mental health staff

to assist in any mental health crises that may occur during day to day operations. Dr. Welch asked why mental health professionals could not be employed at a children's camp. Mr. Shay commented that State Education Law prohibits mental health professionals from being employed at camps. Ms. Ewing suggested tracking mental health issues at camps to see how widespread the issues are. Mr. Bacon stated that he sat on a local school board where he was informed that 50% of the students in school suffered from mental health issues. Mr. Bacon stated that these kids leave school and come to camp in the summer and his young staff are not properly trained in dealing with mental health issues. Mr. Cambridge stated the Children's Camp Regulations do not prohibit mental health professionals from working at a camp. The Department would be supportive of legislation to allow mental health professionals to be employed at camps to properly manage any mental health issues that may arise. Mr. Cambridge suggested that the Council could submit information regarding mental health issues they have had at their camps to the Department. Dr. Welch suggested that camps may be able to hire mental health professionals on a contract basis.

Next Meeting/Adjournment

The meeting minutes from May 8, 2019 were approved unanimously by the Council. The spring Council meeting was scheduled for April 2, 2020 and the next fall meeting was scheduled for October 15, 2020. Ms. Ewing stated she would appreciate any and all efforts to receive the agenda and meeting minutes for the meetings at least a week prior to the meeting. Ms. Ewing thanked Mr. Felt for his involvement on the Council. The Council adjourned at 11:48 am.