

State Camp Safety Advisory Council (SCSAC)

November 20, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Members

Present: Dawn Ewing; Douglas Pierce; Thomas Welch, MD; Eric Bacon; and Meir Frischman

Non-Members

Present: Gary Ginsberg, New York State Department of Health (DOH)
Roger Sokol, DOH
Dan Lang, DOH
Timothy Shay, DOH
Kristen Navarette, MD, DOH
Christopher Chin, DOH

Due to concerns with COVID-19 and limitations on gatherings, the Council Meeting was held virtually using the Cisco WebEx platform. In addition to the non-members listed above, 104 individuals were registered for the meeting including camp operators, directors, health department staff, and other interested parties. Ms. Ewing called the meeting to order at 10:32 AM. Mr. Shay provided ground rules for the WebEx meeting and stated that public comments would be heard at the end of the meeting.

Council Administrative Business

Ms. Ewing held roll call; a quorum was present with all members in attendance.

The meeting minutes from October 17, 2019 were unanimously approved by the Council.

Mr. Shay noted that Mr. Bacon's and Mr. Frischman's terms are both expired, and they are in the process for re-appointment. Dr. Welch's term will expire in January 2021, and he has expressed interest in continuing with the Council. There are currently four Council vacancies: two representing for profit camps, one not-for-profit camps, and one consumer representative. There are currently two candidates in the process for the vacancies representing a not-for-profit camp and a for profit camp. The Department is seeking candidates to fill the remaining two vacancies. Mr. Shay stated that anyone interested in one of the positions should contact him. He also noted that, based on a past Council discussion, the Department has reached out to the Justice Center for a recommendation, but so far has not received one.

Mr. Shay announced the recent Department retirements of Brad Hutton, Mike Cambridge and Brian Miner. He also noted the Rich Hess has replaced Jacob Scott as the Bureau of Community Environmental Health and Food Protection's children's camps program lead.

Ms. Ewing called for the Council Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson elections. Ms. Ewing and Mr. Bacon were both nominated and unanimously re-elected as Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, respectively.

Mr. Shay presented the draft amendments to the Council By-Laws as a result of the Public Health Law (PHL) amendment discussed at the last meeting regarding how a quorum is determined. Previously a quorum was determined by the presence of a majority of the 9 members from the council. This included both filled and vacant positions. The PHL amendment changed this to be a majority of the filled positions present to determine a quorum. The bylaw amendment was voted on by the Council and unanimously passed.

Vaccine Preventable Diseases

Mr. Shay stated that as discussed at the last Council meeting, the Department is considering measures to help prevent the occurrence and spread of vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs) including measles at children's camps and to improve the public health response in the event a VPD is identified in a camp setting. For background, he reviewed past discussions on the 2019 measles outbreak in New York State, measles guidance and recommendations developed as a result of the outbreak, and possible areas where the State Sanitary Code could be revised to help prevent the spread of VPD within a children's camp and to other settings during camp trips.

Mr. Shay asked for the Council's input on the collection of official immunization records for day and overnight campers, collection of official immunization records for staff including international staff, challenges of collecting this information, and on the recommendation in the 2019 measles guidance for screening campers and staff for any exposure to measles for the 28 days prior to camp attendance.

Dr. Welch suggested that it may be easiest if camps could rely on schools' infrastructure to obtain camper vaccination records. Mr. Shay commented that children's camps have the same ability as schools to access immunization records through the New York State Immunizations Information System (NYSIIS) and the Citywide Immunization registry (CIR) for New York City. Dr. Welch noted that the use of the systems is not 100%.

Mr. Shay asked if Council members with a camp in a county with a local order in 2019 for proof of immunizations for campers and staff could share their experiences. Mr. Frischman did not recall that the local mandate impacted his camp dramatically. Ms. Ewing indicated that it was more difficult to obtain the immunization records for older and international staff. Mr. Shay asked if it prevented the hiring of staff. Ms. Ewing responded that it did not, but it did require some work to get the records.

The Council generally thought that it would not be very difficult to obtain immunization records for day campers, but it may be more difficult for overnight campers from out of state. They thought the real challenge would be with older and international staff, which may have a difficult time obtaining or locating acceptable records. The Council concluded that it would like to review this issue more and report back to the Department on camp operators' experiences and thoughts on the matter.

Dr. Navarette acknowledged that it can be challenging to get official records at times; however, during an outbreak official documents are required in order for public health officials to take appropriate actions. One of the reasons to require official documents prior to arrival at camp is to speed up an outbreak investigation which is time sensitive. She also noted that Dr. Welch's comment regarding not all providers entering immunization records in NYSIIS is well taken; however, there have been recent improvements with immunization records being entered in NYSIIS especially since the school mandate for vaccinations. The fact that NYS children are

now required to have immunizations for school should help reduce the burdens on camps, but out of state/country records may remain difficult to obtain, especially in areas without vaccination requirements.

COVID-19 Discussion

Dr. Kristen Navarette, Medical Director for the Center for Environmental Health provided a presentation on COVID-19. The presentation included an overview of COVID-19, current New York State, National, and Global situations, community mitigation practices, COVID-19 vaccine progress, and COVID-19 resources.

Ms. Ewing suggested creating a committee for the collection of COVID-19 information related to children's camp operations and to discuss the 2021 camp season. Ms. Ewing, Mr. Pierce and Dr. Welch volunteered to sit on the committee.

Dr. Welch stated he was the Associate Editor of the Journal of Pediatrics and on the subgroup of the Editorial Board that is triaging COVID-19 papers. It is likely that in the next two months peer reviewed papers will be available in the medical literature that will provide usable data related to camp and school operation during the pandemic. He also noted that in addition to the mental health issues noted in Dr. Navarette's presentation, the published literature show that there is an increase in obesity among children related to decreased physical activities over the past months.

The Council had some discussions on the 2020 season. Mr. Pierce noted that from his personal experience on Long Island, camps had a successful season because of all the hard work by camp operators to implement best practices and guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19. He noted that it was tough on overnight camps not being able to open and that he hoped they would be able to do so in 2021 based on the availability of vaccines, information that is currently available from camping organizations and collaboration with the Department. The Council concluded that the best step forward would be for the committee to convene as soon as possible and to get available information to the Department.

Other Business

Mr. Shay noted that other than COVID-19 there were no major issues from this past season to report on. The preliminary data received showed very low reportable incidents and no fatalities.

Public Comment Period

Jamie Sirkin, New York State Camp Director Association Board member and director of a day camp in Westchester County addressed the Council. She requested that the pod size number for campers be increased from 15 and that guidance to allow overnight camps to open in 2021 is issued quickly as it takes many months for camps to prepare.

Next Meeting/Adjournment

The next Council meeting was scheduled for February 2, 2021. The Council adjourned at 12:25 pm.