

Buffalo County Minutes

Committee/Board: Health and Human Services and Veterans Service Committee

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, September 21, 2021

Electronic and Hard Copy Filing Date:

Location: Department of Health and Human Services
Buffalo County Courthouse
2nd Floor Conference Room
407 S 2nd Street, Alma, Wisconsin

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Roll call was taken. Member's present via ZOOM, REMOTE ACCESS ONLY were Kim Beseler, Larry Grisen, Liz Hoffmaster, Carol McDonough, Richard Mueller, Steve Nelson, Wendy Kleinschmidt, Mary Anne McMillan-Urell and Brad Schmidtknecht.

OTHERS PRESENT FOR ALL OR PART OF THE MEETING

Dave Rynders, Josie Knauber, Sonya Hansen, Jen Rombalski, and Christa Cupp of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services attended via ZOOM, and Tom Bilski, Corporate Counsel/DA via audio only.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT REGARDING ANY MATTERS THAT WILL BE TAKEN UP BY THE COMMITTEE AT THIS MEETING.

None

3. REVIEW/DISCUSSION/ACTION – REPORT ON MONDOVI SCHOOL STUDENT QUARANTINE ORDERS

Ms. McMillan-Urell explained the reason for the special meeting which involved the Mondovi School District and the decision made by the School Board at a meeting held on Wednesday, September 15, 2021, to allow students to immediately return to school on Thursday after they had been in close contact/direct contact with an individual with COVID-19, hence not following the CDC guidelines for quarantine practices.

Mr. Rynders introduced Ms. Knauber, Public Health Officer who shared the mission of the Buffalo County Public Health Department which is *to empower communities to live better longer by preventing disease, protecting health, and ensuring safety*. Ms. Knauber reiterated that the #1 goal is to keep the children and staff at the Mondovi School district safe. Ms. Knauber provided specific state statute language that helped the health department in their decision making. The Health Officer may require isolation of an individual or quarantine of contacts. Local Health Officers shall promptly take all measures necessary to prevent and suppress and control communicable diseases which include COVID.

Ms. Knauber highlighted the order of events that took place:

*Thursday morning was made aware of the School Board's decision to allow close contacts to return to school effective immediately.

*Thursday day consulted with Buffalo County Public Health staff, school Superintendent, school nurse, and Tom Bilski, Corporate Counsel, and neighboring jurisdictions to design a course of action.

*Thursday end of day requested assistance from the State DHS.

*Friday the decision was made to send individual Quarantine orders to each child after end of school day.

*Friday evening received questions from Parents and responded to them via email.

*Saturday received notification from the Mondovi School Superintendent stating the district plans to comply with quarantine orders.

*Students are continuing to be identified as close contacts and are sent quarantine orders from the health department.

Ms. McMillan-Urell questioned what the process was to establish who was and who was not a close contact. The school administration's policy in the elementary grades and lower is as follows: the school nurse is notified of the positive test, the nurse notifies the coaches/teachers, and they ask the student who they have been in close contact with. Buffalo County DHHS was not involved in the determination of who was a close contact and who was not.

Ms. Rombalski, an employee of the State Health department in the division of Public Health consulted with the State Health Officer and shared points from a letter sent to school administrators in the state of Wisconsin.

*Importance of a partnership between local health departments and school districts

*Tools available: masking, testing, isolation, and quarantine to be used consistently and universally to keep children healthy and in school as well as protecting staff and families.

*Overview of the quarantine period (14 days is the safest approach). A 7-day quarantine period can be considered if they are tested on the 6 or 7th day with a negative test and continue to wear a mask and monitor for symptoms for the 14-day period.

Ms. Rombalski supported the statutes that Ms. Knauber presented.

Ms. McMillan-Urell asked the question what continuity there is between the schools and the health department. Ms. Knauber responded that the schools have established their own COVID plans considering assigned seating, use of pods within the classrooms, etc. implementing what they can to reduce COVID with what their school board will allow.

Ms. Beseler inquired how many cases there are with this current event. Ms. Knauber reported 40 students received quarantine orders on Friday, and another 10 per day since Monday.

Ms. McDonough requested confirmation on who is responsible for identifying the close contacts with the students. Ms. Knauber explained that the school made the decision to have the teachers/coaches determine the close contacts, it was not the Public Health department. Ms.

Knauber made the decision to issue the quarantine orders to get the students out of school after the board made the decision to let them come back.

A motion was made by Mr. Grisen and seconded by Mr. Mueller to commend and support Ms. Knauber, Mr. Rynders, and staff for promptly acting on this situation in accordance with state guidelines and county responsibilities. A roll call vote was taken. Motion approved.

Ms. Kleinschmidt recommended that after the meeting on Wednesday, September 22, 2021, a summary of the meeting be put out in the media.

Ms. Knauber clarified that children can be spreading COVID-19 before they develop symptoms, and they can have COVID-19 and spread it without any symptoms. People who have COVID-19 in the school are not publicly released; that information is kept confidential.

4. REVIEW/DISCUSSION/ACTION – NEXT MEETING DATE AND TIME

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 5, 2021, at 6:00 PM.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT NOT RELATED TO AGENDA ITEMS

None

6. ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Hildebrand