

Warren County EPR/LEPC Committee
Meeting Minutes 07/28/2021

In Attendance

Tammie Delorenzo – Warren Co. Administrator's Office
Laura Stebbins – Glens Falls Hospital
Dr. Richard Leach – Warren County Public Health
Jamie Schrammel – Glens Falls Fire Chief
Sandy LeBarron – Finch Paper
Donald James – Red Cross/SkyWarn
Dr. Ellis – NYS Ag & Markets
Chris Alexander – The Pines Nursing and Rehab center
Tim Carota - The Pines Nursing and Rehab center
Robert Higgins
Cory DeLorenzo– NYSDOH
Chris Hanchett - Warren Co. DSS
Scott Sopcczyk – Greater Glens Falls Tranist
Michael Herman –
Don Lehman – Warren County
Dan Durkee – Warren Co. Public Health

The meeting was called order at 9:04 am. Dan Durkee gave a brief overview of the agenda items and then asked Laura Stebbins from Glens Falls Hospital to provide any updates for GFH.

Laura Stebbins, Glens Falls Hospital – Please see hospital notes on page 5.

Dan Durkee read updates provided by AnnMarie Mason regarding LEPC and OES. There were 5 new chemicals added to the Tier II chemical list and none removed. The hazardous materials will be sent out for updates and review. The plan is to have the review and updates completed before the next LEPC/EPR meeting on October 27th, 2021.

The OES Fire Coordinator introduced at the previous EPR/LEPC meeting has left the position. This means that the Fire Coordinator position will be reposted soon. Any interested candidates are encouraged to check online for the job posting.

Ann Marie also wanted to let he group know that Ashley Rivers is now the New Deputy OES Coordinator filling the role previously held by Amy Drexel. Dan Durkee mentioned that Ashley's office is extension is the same extension that was used by Amy Drexel.

Dan Durkee provided updates from Warren County Public Health. Dan stated that Warren County like other parts of the Country has seen an increase in cases of COVID-19 recently mainly among unvaccinated individuals, but some break-through infections are occurring as well. The numbers have increased from an average of 1 or 2 a day in mid and late June to 5 or more a day now. He stated that we had our first confirmed Delta variant COVID positive person on July 8th, but it is likely that the Delta variant has been in our community prior to this confirmed case. The problem is the lack of sequencing of positive COVID tests for variants by NYSDOH means we don't know how prevalent the Delta variant is in our community, but it is likely well established.

Dan also stated that one of the main concerns for Public Health is that there are locations in the County that have low vaccination rates. This information is provided by NYSDOH at the zip code level and is available to the public. These pockets can lead to micro-clusters of outbreaks. Also, unvaccinated people who get infected can give the virus a place to possibly mutate further and create new strains that current vaccines may not protect against.

To try and reduce the spread of COVID in these areas of the County Warren County Public Health has been holding a series of pop-up vaccination clinics in different communities that coincide with other community events. Attendance at these clinics has been low. Dan said that Warren County Public Health is looking at possibly holding a clinic weekly at Glens Fall's Take a Bite food event on Wednesday evenings. Currently Public Health is using the bandstand behind the Crandall Library to give those shots.

Donald James asked if there was a place to find a schedule for pop-up clinics. Dan stated that because of the nature of pop-up clinic and trying to tie them in with other community events no set schedule had been established. Dan did say that any pop-up clinics are posted as soon as possible to the Warren County Facebook page and when possible the Warren County COVID-19 Hub page. Dan said a few of the other locations that have hosted pop-up clinics are Tannery Pond Community Center in Johnsbury and the Horicon Town Hall during Food truck Friday. Dan said that more clinics are likely as Public Health learns about more community events.

Dan also stated that Public health is open to any ideas on how to boost vaccinations including working with businesses and community groups to offer them onsite.

Dan followed up the vaccine update with information about HIPAA and mandatory vaccines. Dan explained that HIPPA laws pertain to specific health care groups and people and that asking someone about their vaccination status is not a violation of HIPPA laws. He explained that businesses and organizations are within their rights to ask for vaccination status and proof of vaccination and people are within their rights to not disclose that information. He also said that if they refuse to disclose their vaccination status a business is within their rights to require other safety measures to reduce the risk of COVID in that business.

Dan also stated that businesses have the right to mandate vaccinations for employees if they choose. He said that several cases have come up in front of the courts and each case has resulted in affirming a business' right to mandate them as long as they meet certain ADA and other business laws.

Dan next stated that the CDC released new guidance regarding indoor masks for everyone including those who have been vaccinated. He said that Public Health Departments received a notice from Governor's Office that it was in consultation with New York State Department of Health and others regarding the new guidance but has not issued any new mandates pending a review of the CDC guidance. Dan stated that no action has been taken locally and that a local action would depend on State action.

Dan next briefly mentioned that no new guidance has been issued regarding mass transit at this time and that was a concern for schools since many of our school districts rely on busing to get kids to and from schools. He said it is not possible for schools to be able bring new buses online to meet the current transportation restrictions of 33%. Dan asked Scott Sopczyk to provide an update from Greater Glens Falls Transit regarding their buses.

Scott stated that things have been okay. He said that the GGFT has a strict policy requiring masks by everyone at all times while riding on any of the GGFT vehicles. To date he said compliance has been good with little problems. He also said that capacity restrictions for their buses were no longer required by CDC so they are able to operate at full capacity except there are no standing riders allowed. He also stated that they have not had any drivers test positive for COVID. He did say that the number of riders is down a little, but that could be due to several factors.

Dan followed up with information about schools. He stated that the goal is to have every student back in school full-time but how that will happen is still not clear. He stated that Warren County Public health and other local health departments are meeting virtually on a weekly basis with representatives from 3 BOCES Districts and a number of school superintendents to try and find a regional approach to in person learning. Dan also state that there is a large amount of money that has been allocated to help schools keep kids in classrooms through layered mitigation strategies that include weekly pool testing of students in all school districts. Dan did say getting parental buy-in is critical.

Dan also stated that getting eligible students vaccinated is a high priority and that current vaccination rates for eligible students is low. He said there are a number of ideas being discussed to encourage parents to get their students vaccinated, but it may be a district by district approach instead of a Public Health approach due to a lack of trust by unvaccinated individuals in the Public Health system. He said even information from a local health department is now looked at with skepticism.

Member Updates

Dr. Richard Leach – No new updates. Thanked the Public Health staff and workers in general that have to interact with public.

Christian Hanchett, Warren County Social Services – Stated he had no updates regarding the meeting topics. He said that he has been promoting vaccine among staff, but many of them are not willing to even consider it. Chris announced that Warren County Office for the Aging is accepting nominations for Senior of the Year. Anyone interested in nominating someone can pick up a form by contacting his office or OFA. This is short notice.

Dan asked Chris to provide an update on the eviction moratorium coming to an end and what type of impact that might have on our County. Chris responded that the moratorium ends at the end of July, but there has been talk of extending it until the end of September. He also said that the emergency rental Assistance Program his staff has been working on with the WAITE House should mitigate some of the immediate impacts. He said that combined over 300 applications for rental arrears assistance and rental assistance have been received. In order for a renter to use the rental arrears program the landlord has to agree to not evict the tenant for failure to pay rent. However, the landlord could evict someone who violates the rental agreement for reasons not related to back rent. The rental assistance program can provide rental help for 3 months if someone qualifies. Chris also said that they have received 50 applications for utilities arrears assistance.

Don Lehman, Warren County – Stated that Public Health is looking for ideas and locations for future pop-up vaccination clinics. Feel free to email him or Dan Durkee if you have any.

Tammie DeLorenzo, County Administrator's Office – Nothing new to report. Agreed that finding the best use of money allocated for keeping kids in school is a priority.

Sandy LeBarron, Finch Paper – She stated that Finch Paper is aware of their right to mandate masks and vaccines for employees, but they have not done so out of fear of losing workers and having to shutdown machines. The tight labor market makes it difficult to put mandates on employees who could just quit. She said instead Finch Paper continues to offer a number of incentives to employees that get vaccinated.

Donald James, American Red Cross – he stated that the Red Cross is beginning to provide help on an in-person basis for things like fire victims and other disaster response. He also stated that in person trainings are beginning as well for Red Cross courses.

Jamie Schrammel, Chief, Glens Falls Fire Department – He stated that he is working with the new Warren County OES leadership to review and update the County HAZMAT plan. He is also working with partners to provide a hands-on HAZMAT training this fall should the status of the pandemic allow. If it does not they will look for a possible alternative using online system.

Chris Alexander, Director, The Pines Nursing & Rehab Center – Thanked Public Health for their responsiveness and willingness to work with them to get vaccine to them when it is needed for new patients or staff that want/need a vaccine. He also stated that 96% of patients and 75% of staff have been vaccinated. It has been over a year since their last positive patient.

Robert Higgins, NYS DEC – reported that DEC has been assisting at a number of State vaccination, but many of them have closed and he is now back in Warren County.

Dr. Roger Ellis, NYS Ag & Markets – he stated not much new with Ag & Markets. He said so far COVID does not seem to be impacting animals, but it is something to continue to watch since previous COVID infections have started in animals.

Michael Herman, Ames Goldsmith – Stated that they have similar issues mandating masks or vaccine as Finch Paper for employees. Thanked Public Health for the update.

Corey DeLorenzo, NYSDOH Glens Falls Office – Stated that they are very busy inspecting children's camps in the area. He also reported that Anita Gabalski has retired, and Greg Reynolds is likely to retire in the next 2 or 3 months. He said Rebecca Bussert is the acting director.

Dan closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their time and reminding them that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 27th at 9:00am.

The meeting adjourned at 10:05am.

Minutes Submitted by

Dan Durkee, Co-Chair
Warren County EPR/LEPC Committee
7/28/2021

WARREN COUNTY EMERGENCY RESPONSE COMMITTEE

GLENS FALLS HOSPITAL

JULY 28, 2021 REPORT

Exercises

- Ebola exercise in the ED resulted in inventory of Ebola PPE and development of scenario for off campus sites
- Chempack exercise in planning phase
- Person with a weapon, tabletops for Glens Falls Medical Group, Rehab service sites, Maternity, Critical Care, Emergency Department, General
- Hot Air Balloon Festival/Americade mass gathering event - planning phase

Education

- Monthly educational sessions/tabletops with GFH Facility Response Team
 - Riot control agents
 - Chempack
 - Event in MRI
 - Pediatric decontamination
 - Decontamination of service animals & forensic canines
 - Chemical suicide
 - Hazwoper training
- Fire Extinguisher training GFFD John Pagano

Regional Healthcare Coalition Update

- New DOH Burn Plan includes new burn contact information
Included in the GFH Explosion Annex
- Capital District Pediatric Emergency Preparedness Work Group