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## FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

May 24, 2019



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Ground Floor, State Capitol Building

Des Moines, Iowa 50319

515.281.3566

### GOVERNOR'S FLOOD RECOVERY ADVISORY BOARD — PUBLIC HEALTH WORKING GROUP

**Meeting.** The Public Health Working Group of the Governor's Flood Recovery Advisory Board met on May 22, 2019, in Des Moines with a conference call option available. The Public Health Working Group is one of six working groups created by the Advisory Board and is being supported by the Iowa Department of Public Health.

**Members.** The members of the Public Health Working Group include:

- Gerd Clabaugh, Director of the Iowa Department of Public Health.
- Mike O'Neal, Grape Community Hospital in Hamburg, Iowa.
- Tammy Jacobs, Iowa Concerns Hotline, Iowa State University.
- David Brown, Iowa State University Behavioral Health Specialist.
- Leslie Wright, United Way of East Central Iowa.
- Richard Crouch, Mills County Supervisor.
- Karen Hyatt, Iowa Department of Human Services.
- Christine Templeton, Iowa Department of Human Services.
- Roger Bruner, Iowa Department of Natural Resources.
- Dean Decker, Iowa Department of Public Health.
- Meaghan O'Brien, Governor's Office.

**Working Group Scope.** The meeting began with a discussion on the overall scope of the working group, as outlined in the Governor's [Executive Order Number Four](#). Director Clabaugh explained that he saw the scope of the working group's responsibility fit into four domains:

- Mental Health and Substance Abuse (MH/SA). Most of these impacts will not be present immediately or in the near term but will begin to surface later and linger as time progresses and recovery efforts develop.
- Water Quality. There are concerns about water supply (both public distribution and private wells) and wastewater (public systems and private septic systems).
- Acute Health Care Delivery. There are concerns about the efficacy of service delivery through hospitals, pharmacies, and clinics due to the unavailability of clean water. There are also concerns regarding workforce strains due to the dislocation of community residents.
- At-Risk Populations. There may be disparate impacts on populations such as the elderly, maternal and child health service recipients, MH/SA service recipients, or others.

There was also discussion about how public health will have connection points with and affect aspects of other working groups, such as the Economic Development Working Group, but that the focus will be on communication and allowing each group to cover its respective area.

**Current Challenges.** Members offered several observations regarding challenges faced by residents of flooded areas. These challenges include:

- Food. Food availability was presented as both a current challenge and a success as free food distribution continues. Distribution is projected to continue as long as the recovery lasts. Economies of scale are certainly being reached through this method, as preserving food at campsites for individuals and families would be very difficult and expensive on an ongoing basis.
- Environmental Health. Bugs, primarily mosquitoes, were brought up as a problem. Unfortunately, due to the massive amounts of water and difficulty in reaching the standing water breeding areas, the

mosquito population is probably not addressable at a macro level. Individuals will have to manage from their locations. Water contamination is less of a problem due to the volume of water diluting contaminants. However, debris, both visible and undetectable, in the water is a concern. There are not many known well/septic system problems yet, but there are some reports of the water pressure pushing well cistern systems out of the ground, and there is additional concern about the recoverability of septic systems.

- **Multiple Stressors and Recovery Timeline.** Multiple stressors, including financial, employment, farming, and housing difficulties, are causing an ongoing concern about mental health and substance abuse. Another difficulty is the disruption of routine, especially with the impending end of the school year and projected 8- to 18-month process of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) buyouts and appeals. A lack of recreational activities and child care for children during school breaks has led to concerns about child safety. A need for delivery and distribution of anti-overdose agents, such as Narcan, to campgrounds was also discussed.
- **Housing Insufficiency.** The displacement of residents has led to community members searching for new housing outside of the affected area or indefinitely residing in campsite tents. This has lengthened commutes and impacted employment and child care.

Additionally, there is little to no storage available for donations for those affected by the flood, and seasonal clothing needs will change over the next 6 to 18 months.

**Long-Term Challenges.** Members of the working group noted key long-term challenges for the group to address. These challenges include:

- **Financial Assistance.** There was discussion about the scarcity of resources for impacted individuals and families and how additional assistance through paying for medication copayments, cell phones, utilities, gas cards, and clothing could reduce pressures to hopefully avoid larger MH/SA problems from occurring in the future.
- **Communication.** There was discussion about getting accurate and credible information to the public in a timely manner. The spread of information through rumors and social media have made this difficult.
- **Mental Health and Substance Abuse.** Service outreach, securing Narcan in the area, increasing access to psychosocial education and treatment, and removing barriers to access were identified as issues.
- **Coordinating Resources.** Discussion was held regarding areas of housing, food, mental health, and substance abuse, and building capacity to respond to families in need.
- **Environmental Health.** Improving water quality and the operability of septic systems, addressing the mosquito problem, and addressing solid waste disposal were identified as issues.

**Additional Information.** The following websites have additional information related to Iowa's flood and disaster recovery:

- [2019 Iowa Floods](#) has flood-related information, including flood recovery and road closures.
- The [Rebuild Iowa Office](#) has archived information from the flood event in 2008.
- The DHS Project Recovery [Facebook page](#) and hotline (800.447.1985).

**Next Meeting.** The next meeting of the Public Health Working Group is tentatively scheduled for early June in Des Moines. The next meeting of the Advisory Board is scheduled for Friday, May 24, 2019, in Malvern, Iowa.

LSA Staff Contact: Angel A. Banks-Adams (515.281.6301) [angel.banks-adams@legis.iowa.gov](mailto:angel.banks-adams@legis.iowa.gov)  
Kent Ohms (515.725.2200) [kenneth.ohms@legis.iowa.gov](mailto:kenneth.ohms@legis.iowa.gov)