

Minutes of the School Health Advisory Board Meeting 5/12/2021

Present: Rebecca Abernathy, Gemilia Boubert, Erin Callas, Kristen Carty, Kristy Davis, Eileen Gomez, Kevin Kirst, Leanne Knox, Mark Niehaus, Christina Pitsenberger, Jennifer Schaeffer, Chris Siebert

Guest: Dr. Eric Houpt

COVID Vaccine Study Subject Recruitment Dr. Houpt explained his NIH funded study. Purpose: See if vaccinated people are still contagious; Subjects: aged 18 to 29 randomized into study or control; study group gets vaccinated at the outset and control group in 4 months at the end of the study. Subjects must undergo a couple of blood draws and perform nasal self-swabs daily. Subjects will be compensated \$590 for completion of the study. Control group subjects may choose to get vaccinated during the study and may then be moved into the vaccinated group. Project was initially intended for college students, but expanded recruitment due to wide vaccine availability causing students to withdraw. Dr. Houpt proposes seeing if 18 year old students would be interested as well as employees 18 to 29 years of age. Subjects can withdraw at any time. He is not asking ACPS to promote the study, but just provide information about the opportunity.

Benefits to the school division: important information may be gleaned, may be a way to get vaccine indifferent people to get vaccinated, the compensation is significant

Downsides: How would this get advertised? Using school email accounts for students and parents may not be appropriate. How is it decided which studies get advertised and how since other P.I. 's approach ACPS with similar requests?

Discussion points:

- ACPS has roughly 330 employees in the 18 to 29 age range and 1,700 students
- Any communication sent to the 18 year old students should also be sent to their parents.
- Maybe email is not the most appropriate route. Perhaps Facebook or Twitter might be more so.

In a split vote, the board, while maintaining their official stance that every eligible individual obtain the vaccine as soon as possible, recommends that ACPS consider providing this information to 18 year old students, their parents and employees in the age range for informational purposes only. Any questions or concerns should be referred to the study staff.

Graduation and Other End of the Year Celebrations Since evidence has emerged to indicate that COVID is not transmitted through porous surfaces, the board recommends that documents be permitted to be handed from one person to another. All participants in ceremonies should wash their hands before and after, wear masks and continue to be mindful of physical spacing beyond the brief time it takes to hand and receive documents or objects.

Rapid Testing in Schools Eileen explained that the VDH has significant funding for providing school divisions with rapid testing kits for next year. The board has addressed this issue before. Rapid tests for screening are of limited utility due to their sensitivity shortcomings, particularly for individuals without symptoms. It might be of some use for testing symptomatic individuals with known exposures, but negative rapid tests must be followed up with a PCR test, and people who are sick and have a known

exposure should not be in school, so the number in this category should be small. Also concerned about adding another task to already busy school nurses.

Increased Bus Occupancy Eileen reported that out of operational necessity, bus occupancy will have to be increased as more students attend school in person. Currently, the seating plan allows for one student per bench with siblings permitted to sit two to a bench. The plan is to allow 2 students per bench during the summer session and increase capacity to 3 per bench when school resumes in August. In order to help mitigate the risk, HEPA filters will be installed. HEPA filters, which could help in preventing the spread of illness, will not have any impact on the quarantine of students seated in proximity to a student who tests positive; and with increased occupancy, more unvaccinated students will need to quarantine.

- HEPA filters could improve air quality in the buses, but they are an additional layer that can be added to the other strategies such as ventilation, masks, hand hygiene and spacing as practical
- A vent in the top of the bus would be helpful, but not sure if school buses contain such vents
- As many windows as possible should be open
- Buses should load back to front
- Students' time on school buses should be as short as operational necessity will allow
- The importance of getting students to school outweighs the risks associated with potential exposure on the bus
- Bus seating should be assigned and kept consistent for contact tracing purposes; seating charts should be available to school nurses for contact tracing
- Parents should be encouraged to arrange alternative transportation when possible.

Student Vaccine Clinics Eileen reported that planning is underway to hold vaccine clinics for students in schools with the first scheduled clinic at Albemarle High School on May 21 and the follow-up on June 11. Vaccines will be administered to those aged 12 and above but is limited to AHS students and their household members above the age of 12. Parents need to register and sign a consent form, but do not need to accompany a student during regular school hours. Clinics may be scheduled in the other high schools as well as the middle schools.

How will schools handle students who refuse to take the vaccine even if the parent registered them and scheduled the appointment? Clinic staff will not force a child to take the vaccine and will not restrain any student in order to vaccinate. Parents or others may need to accompany the student for support. Parents who accompany students may be asked if they would also like to get the vaccine.

Specific Questions about Summer Schools

- **Temp checks:** Not recommended, not fruitful and not shown to have any impact on transmission in the schools
Sporting events: Temp checks for spectators before entering sports venues is also not believed to be necessary, but might be required under governor's orders
- **Desk spacing:** 6 feet is best, but not always possible out of operational necessity. Recommend sticking to 6 feet when possible, and reducing space to less than that, but at least 3 feet or greater, when necessary
- **Masks outdoors:** Masks can become oppressive in severe heat and there is scant evidence for outdoor transmission, so SHAB recommends that students not wear masks when exerting outdoors, but they should not be permitted to be very close together. For athletics, the same

recommendation applies – masks when indoors but no masks outdoors when playing sports. Schools must come up with a plan for how students will store their masks away from other’s masks before going outdoors.

- **Shared materials:** Students may share materials such as paper and books without having to quarantine or disinfect the objects. They may also share things like staplers, pens and pencils etc. unless they are in the youngest grades or have certain types of special needs. Shared items should be disinfected between these students use.

Questions for SY 2021 – 2022

- **Grab and Go Breakfast:** Breakfast and lunch will still be offered at no charge. Will students who grab breakfast to eat during their first class need to be seated 6 ft from other students while eating? The board does not recommend changing practices outside the official guidance of maintaining 6 ft when unmasked including while eating.
- **Hallway Directionality / Staggered Dismissal:** The board does not advocate strict hallway directionality, but does support school staff encouraging quick transitions so no students are close together for very long while changing classes. In order to maximize instructional time, they also support not staggering dismissal from classes or at the end of the day.
- **Bathroom Access and Capacity:** The board referred back to their previous guidance that capacity be limited to the number of flushing receptacles and that bathrooms not be closed during the changing of classes.
- **Lunch:** The board does not recommend changing the 6 ft requirement for individuals when their masks are off to eat lunch.
- The board advocates not deviating from the CDC and VDH current guidance, but expects that the guidance may change as more people get vaccinated.

Meetings for Next Year Eileen explained that there is an appointee who has a standing obligation on Wednesdays and proposed that the board to consider scheduling meetings on another day. A Tuesday in the middle of the month would work for all present, but members would prefer to know the meeting dates at least 3 months in advance. Eileen and Kevin will schedule them on the ACPS master schedule.

Reconvening in the Summer Most members are willing to reconvene in the summer if the need arises, particularly if the meetings are held via Zoom.

Meetings for SY 2021 – 2022 Board members agreed to move the meeting to Tuesday evenings 6:30 to 8:30 for the upcoming school year. We will determine if the meetings will be in-person or via Zoom depending on the circumstances.

9/21

1/18

3/15

5/17

