

# ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING

## August 17, 2021

The St. Lawrence County Board of Health (hereafter known as SLCBOH) met on Tuesday, August 17, 2021, in the Large Conference Room, Human Services Center, Canton, New York 13617.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Kevin Acres, (via teleconference), Dr. Gregory Healey, Nancy Potter, Dr. Jessica Scillieri Smith, Dr. Kathleen Terrence, Dr. Andrew Williams

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Jessica Rafter

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Jolene Munger, Interim Director; Shannon Beldock, Administrative Assistant; Alivia Sheffield, PH Sanitarian; Jenesse Watson, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator; Joseph Lightfoot, Legislator (via teleconference).

### CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Andrew Williams, President, called the meeting to order at 6:10 pm.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**Upon motion by K. Terrence, and seconded by J. Scillieri Smith, the minutes from the June 15, 2021 meeting were approved.**

### PUBLIC COMMENT

No Public Comment.

#### **Sanitarian Update: Alivia Sheffield**

**There are (3) open cases:**

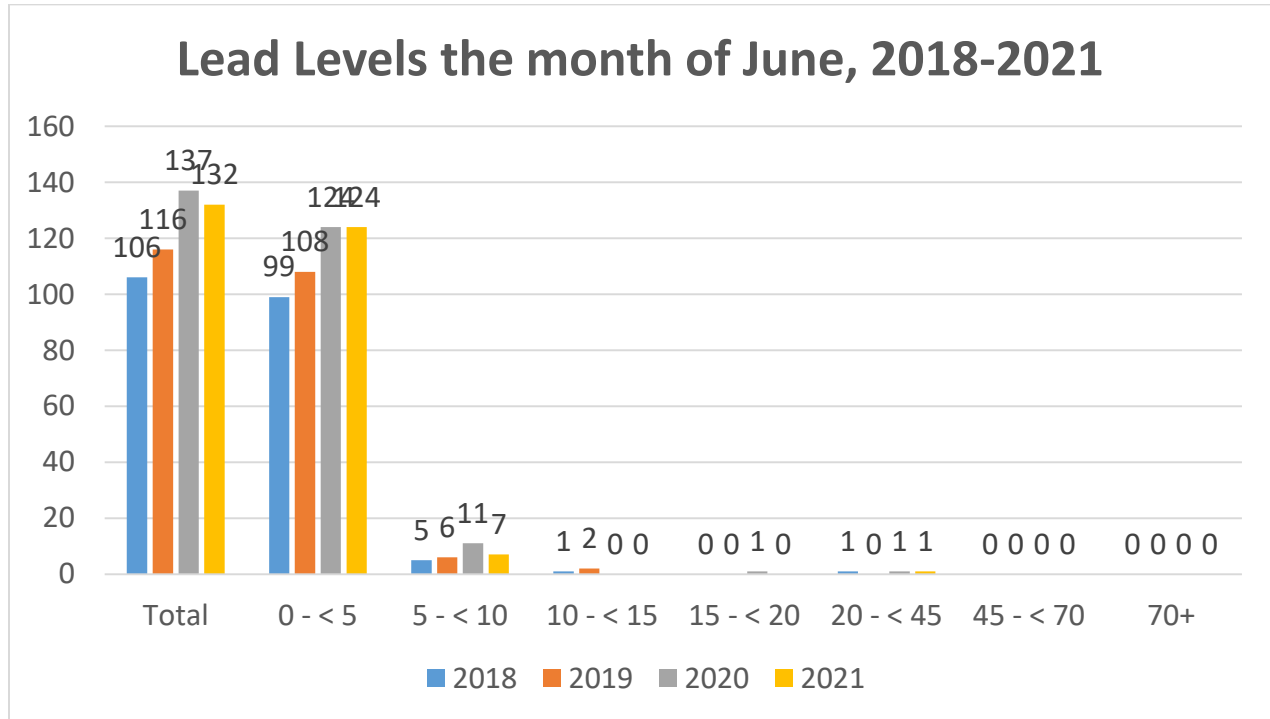
1. Complaint of septic line discharging under a camp in West Stockholm. At one time there were a number of septic lines from camps hooked up to this line. The challenge will be to find out which camp is still connected. Site visit hopefully next week with Code Enforcement.
2. Complaint of smelly grey water discharging on an individual's property, but creating a nuisance to neighbors.
3. Complaint regarding cockroaches at a neighboring home due to apparent garbage inside the home. Code Enforcement will be contacted.

#### **Lead Update: Alivia Sheffield**

Lead level comparisons for June and July, 2021.

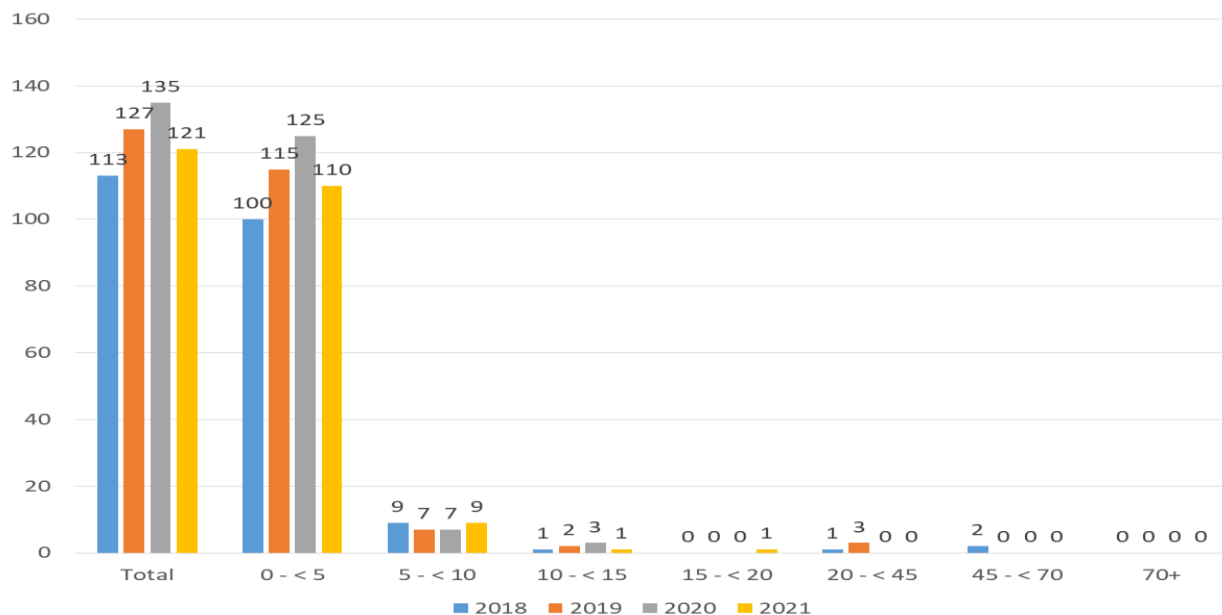
- June 2021 there were (132) lead tests performed.
- Of the (132) there were (8) elevated, which is 6% elevated.
- 5 ug/dL and 10 ug/dL (2 new/5 repeat)
- 15 ug/dL and 20 ug/dL (0)
- 20 ug/dL and 45 ug/dL (1 repeat)
- (5) cases discharged.

- July 2021 there were (121) lead tests performed.
- Of the (121) there were (11) elevated, which is 9% elevated.
- 5 ug/dL and 10 ug/dL (4 new/5 repeat)
- 15 ug/dL and 20 ug/dL (1 new/1 repeat)
- 20 ug/dL and 45 ug/dL (0)
- (3) cases discharged.



Percent elevated				
	2018	2019	2020	2021
Post-2019, ≥5 µg/dL	7%	7%	9%	6%
Pre-2019, ≥10µg/dL	2%	2%	1%	2%

### Lead Levels for month of July, 2018 to 2021



Percent elevated				
	2018	2019	2020	2021
Post-2019, ≥5 µg/dL	12%	9%	7%	9%
Pre-2019, ≥10µg/dL	4%	4%	2%	2%

Reminder: Guidance was different in 2018 and most of 2019. Per that guidance, only 2% were elevated in 2018 and 2019 for June, and 4% for 2018 and 2019 in July. If the guidance had not changed, we would have had 1% elevated in June, 2020 and only 2% elevated in June, 2021; and 2% elevated for both June and July of 2021.

Dr. Williams asked if any cases had to do with well water testing for lead and if tests include testing for arsenic. Noted pesticides have this and someone had found traces of arsenic in their well water. Alivia noted well water testing is only performed when nothing is found in the home to attribute to the elevated level. There was (1) well water testing recently that had low traces of lead and she will check with the labs used to see if this is an option.

Jessica asked about updates on outreach information for providers to encourage more lead testing. Alivia noted nothing has changed since the last meeting. She is planning for the Lead Poisoning Prevention Week in October with all kinds of comprehensive information to be put in packets. Dr. Williams and Dr. Terrance noted they continue to work on getting Point of Care lead testing in provider offices, there are some barriers involved. Jessica mentioned the possibility of sending a survey monkey to family providers and pediatricians on why do you think... Dr. Terrence noted though this is important testing, and this may seem like a simple task

to add on to provider office visits, it does add a task on to a staff member who is already overwhelmed with what they are doing currently.

**Walk with a Doc: Jolene**

St. Lawrence Health Initiative and Bridge to Wellness have taken over Walk with a Doc. We do have a staff member on the committee to help.

**2021 Walk with a Doc: Most walks take place the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of each month unless noted.**

July 31, 2021 11 am to 12 pm – Remington Trail at Partridge Run Golf Course.

September 4, 2021 10 am to 11 am – Gouverneur High School and Fairgrounds – sponsored by Community Health Center of the North Country – Brittany Terpstra, PA will be attending.

October 3, 2021 2 pm to 3 pm – Potsdam Central School Walking Trail – sponsored by St. Lawrence Health – provider TBD.

November 6, 2021 10 am to 11 am – Fort de La Presentation Abbe Piquet Trail – sponsored by Claxton Hepburn Medical Center.

December 4, 2021 10 am to 11 am – Massena High School John Story Trail – sponsored by the Health Initiative and St. Lawrence Health.

Email Patti Hogle [phogle@stlawco.org](mailto:phogle@stlawco.org) if you know a provider who would be interested in attending a walk.

Jessica asked if the Health Initiative could give us updates on attendance for the walks.

**COVID-19: Jolene Munger**

Average daily new cases is (31). Since last Wednesday (August 11) to today (August 17) we have had (217) cases and (8) hospitalizations – we are averaging between the (7-9) range for hospitalizations. Last Monday (August 9) we were in moderate transmission rate, Tuesday (August 10) substantial transmission rate and Saturday (August 14) we hit high transmission rate. On the CDC we have (170) cases – not all of our cases are reported to the CDC. Home tests do not get reported to the CDC, they come to the Public Health Department. This will cause our case count to be a little off from what the CDC is reporting.

Dr. Terrence shared instances where patients have been to urgent care and reported symptoms (sinus pressure, sore throat) and assumed they would receive a COVID test, but was told they would not be tested. She has a low threshold in her office and she provides testing to patients with symptoms. She feels information needs to go out again about more testing in hospitals and providers offices – we need to stress to the medical community to be on alert again.

Dr. Williams will be giving a presentation for medical staff and he will be speaking with Brandon, and colleagues at CHMC as well. If patients have any symptoms – test them! The urgent care providers have also been notified about providing testing.

Jessica strongly suggested Public Health return to reporting COVID case updates on a daily basis and also on the Facebook page. Jolene noted this was not our decision to make, it was decided with the tri-county area (SLC, Jefferson, Franklin) and county administrator, as other departments work on this piece (Planning Office verifies residency). Noted we are working to go back to this, but it may not be until next week. Dr. Terrence and Jessica noted families do look at this information. Jessica strongly suggests St. Lawrence County not link this information

to other counties, as they are not St. Lawrence County, they are not our Public Health. Dr. Williams noted the BOH can make a recommendation to return to providing daily updates. Dr. Terrence suggested possibly using a video with providers and would be willing to participate.

Jessica inquired as to why we are not returning to an indoor mask wearing recommendation. Dr. Williams noted the BOH can make a recommendation, but it will not supersede what the State says, and is not necessarily enforceable, but can be a recommendation. The CDC has specific guidance based on transmission level. There was a discussion on whether or not establishments were enforcing it. Dr. Healey shared he heard it over the store loud speaker that they strongly suggest mask wearing and social distancing while shopping.

Dr. Healey asked about the breakdown on vaccinated or non-vaccinated cases. Jolene is working on getting this data, we don't have a data management system for tracking this information, but she is working on, she doesn't have the information right now. With case numbers rising, staff is currently being retrained on new things. The department is struggling to get individuals to answer their phones and they are refusing to provide information on all contacts. There is an increase in non-compliance – people don't seem to be cooperating this time around.

Dr. Williams shared other counties who are tracking this information, the percentages of breakthrough cases are surprising high and this is concerning. There was a brief discussion of the number of individuals vaccinated vs. unvaccinated and positive cases. Hospitalizations are almost entirely consistent with the national data – mostly unvaccinated.

Brief discussion on the booster shot and eligibility. Jessica noted there is no longer a contingent at SUNY Potsdam to provide booster shots (immunocompromised and 8 months past 2<sup>nd</sup> dose) and this is going to cause a surge on pharmacies and providers. Dr. Williams noted pharmacies are providing the majority of vaccinations in the community per week. Once it gets to be broader, that when provider offices is practical, but believes pharmacies and possibly hospitals will need to step in to help with this.

Jessica asked about trouble shooting for contact tracing and the possibility of the legislature asking for support from the sheriff's department. Asked if it comes up on an individual's phone as contact tracing when they are contacted. Jolene noted we are using the same system we used before. We are unable to take it back in-house, we don't have the staff. Last year when COVID began a lot of our programs shut down. The Communicable Disease, Rabies, Lead and Early Intervention programs are increasing. Noted the department has full time jobs on top of COVID and we are doing what we can. There are some things we are working, if the VCC is unable to contact individuals they send a message back and we do try from the Public Health number. There is a new program through the state called the Public Health Corp Fellowship – we have been awarded up to (10) fellows to come work in our department. We will get (8 or 9) as the funding isn't available to match the county fringe rate. Hiring needs to take place and the individuals will apply through the state – this will provide more in-house support. Jolene told Kevin and Joe it would be helpful to publicly get support for not only vaccination, but also support for helping get the point across that eventually COVID will get to be like the flu – you get the flu shot, you might still get sick, but you are not going to end up on the hospital or die. This is what we want from the COVID vaccine, we want it where people aren't getting sick and have to go to the hospital – we want to reduce hospitalizations and reduce fatalities. We are working with schools on their reopening plans to increase vaccination rates – we do anticipate a

rough September. Jolene noted she was able to put out a press release today stating the Public Health Department does recommend everyone follow the CDC recommendations for wearing a mask indoors.

Dr. Williams noted St. Lawrence Health has continued with their COVID testing availability. The demand for testing had dropped, but it has now gone up significantly. There are more sick individuals being tested, contacts to positive cases and individuals who are traveling.

Joe asked when the vaccine booster shot becomes officially recommended for individuals who are (8) months past their second vaccine shot will it be the same vaccine. Noted the state and county sponsored vaccination sites were of no cost for the initial vaccinations – will there be a cost for the booster shots. Dr. Williams noted the recommendation is that individuals receive a booster of the same vaccine that was their primary vaccination and the expectation is that it will remain at no cost to the patient. Joe believes it is important for the Board of Legislators to have this information if they are going to be expected to publicly advocate for not only getting vaccinated, but following up with a booster.

Dr. Williams noted it's disappointing to go from having been the highest vaccination rate in the state to now being one of the lowest in our region, lowest in the state and below national average, which is not a very high bar. He believes the FDA will give full approval for the Pfizer vaccine in early September. Jessica asked about emergency approval for ages 5-11. Dr. Williams believes it may be a while.

Jolene noted we do track age – for the month of August there were (74) kids tested positive, age 18 and under, out of (340) cases, which does include some for today. So 21% of our cases are age 18 and under. There was a discussion of the higher viral load and potential for spreading. Dr. Healey noted flattening the curve is always good, but we find a way to get more individuals vaccinated. We need some leadership from the Board of Legislators to help promote this. Masks are buying us more time – more time to get vaccinated.

Kevin what is truly the effective mask – the N95? Dr. Terrence shared you have to see masks as somewhat of an immunization. If two individuals are wearing masks, even with a high viral load and some of it escapes, you are going to have less coming to you. Wearing any mask decreases the possibility of you getting ill by decreasing the viral load. Kevin noted we need to promote the fact that the majority of individuals hospitalized are unvaccinated individuals. The public should know the statistics on deaths and hospitalizations and if the individuals are vaccinated or unvaccinated. Dr. Williams noted an individual's decision on vaccination impacts the whole community! Try promoting vaccination from this angle. Kevin asked about promoting vaccination clinics. Jolene noted we are promoting our vaccination clinics as much as possible (website/Facebook) and we are working on contracting with the media. A new Public Health Specialist has been hired. Jenesse noted she is focusing on vaccine promotion. She is working on looking at the actual biological standpoint of what happens when you get vaccinated and why it's important for you to get vaccinated and compile this in an easy to read and understand fashion. Dr. Terrence shared she has some well written information on vaccines done by MIT Health for parents about the vaccination and risks of COVID she will share with us. Kevin asked about posters for retail spots. Vaccine availability information is posted on the store doors in inside the store. Dr. Williams noted there is not a lack of access to vaccinations – there is a lack

of interest in being vaccinated. Brief discussion of SLH reporting on testing, hospitalization and cases (vaccinated or unvaccinated).

### **OTHER ITEMS AND QUESTIONS**

**Jolene Munger:**

Amber Sheppard, Coordinator of Quality Assurance and Improvement, with the Public Health Department was introduced to board members.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

N/A

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Executive session began at 7:32 pm.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

N/A

### **ADJOURNMENT/NEXT MEETING**

**Meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm. Next meeting is scheduled for September 21, 2021 at 6:00 pm.**

### **ACTIONS ITEMS FOR FOLLOW UP**

N/A