

**State Health Commissioner's Advisory Council on Health Disparity and Health Equity
(ACHDHE)**

July 8, 2025, Meeting Minutes

FeedMore

8020 Villa Park Drive, Richmond, VA 23228

(In-person and via WebEx) – 11:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.

In person attendance: Karen Shelton, MD; Stephanie Dunkel, MBA, David C. Rose, MD, MBA, FAAP; Breanne Forbes-Hubbard, MPH; Sandra Serna, MPH; Nia Harrison, MPP; JohnJason Cecil, BA; Ryan M. Crowder, BS; Antonio Villa, MD, MPH; El Hadji Djibril Niang; Patti Kiger, M. Ed; George Worthington, MS; Karen O'Brien, BS; Kathryn Zapach, MSW; Carolyn C. Turner, MS; Mary T. Brandenburg, B.A; Linda Lee Redmond, PhD.

Virtual Attendees: Kate S. K. Bradshaw, Ph.D., FACHE, CPHQ; Kimberly Dyke-Harsley; Amy Christine Hodge, M. Div.; Gordon Walker, MS; Barbara Board, PhD; Karen A. Legato, MSW; Olugbenga O. Obasanjo, MBBS, Ph.D., MPH, MBA.

Did Not Attend:

Maceo E. Freeman, D.MIN; Linnaya Graf, PhD, MCHES, CPH; Melody Armstrong, DNP, MPA, BSN; Eleanor Woodson, BSN, RN.

VDH Staff: Augustine Doe, MS, MPA; Tammie Smith, MPH, Janet Harris, AA.

WELCOME

Before the meeting began, FeedMore's Chief Collaboration and Programs Officer, David Waidelich, welcomed members of the ACHDHE and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH). He provided a brief overview of FeedMore, highlighting its mission, vision, and its programs and activities impact statewide and nationally. After his remarks, Dr. David Rose, Chair of the ACHDHE, thanked Mr. Waidelich and called the meeting to order.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Dr. Rose provided a summary of the meeting, covering all the items listed on the agenda. The agenda was accepted as presented, with no changes or additions.

Meeting Agenda: [Agenda](#)

Link: [ACHDHE-July-2025-Meeting-Agenda.pdf](#)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The ACHDHE April 8, 2025, meeting minutes were approved. [Minutes](#)

Link: [April-8-2025-Minutes.pdf](#)

ACHDHE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMISSIONER

Dr. Kate Bradshaw read the ACHDHE recommendations from the presentations at the April 8, 2025, meeting, which were shared with the State Health Commissioner.

[Recommendations](#)

Link: [April-8-Meeting-MCRecommendations.pdf](#)

STATE HEALTH COMMISSIONER UPDATES:

Response to the April 8, 2025, meeting recommendations:

Dr. Karen Shelton, State Health Commissioner, thanked the Council for their dedication to promoting health and wellbeing across Virginia's communities. She then highlighted the main points of the recommendation along with the related updates. For more information, see Appendix A on page 5.

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General Updates:

Employee Engagement:

VDH is focused on rebuilding the agency by improving employee engagement, which has recently shown positive results in a staff survey. The rebuilding efforts include developing professional career ladders, establishing an Employee Advisory Council for feedback, updating onboarding and training, and providing leadership training for supervisors and managers. The agency is also strengthening performance management and fostering a positive, culturally supportive work environment to ensure staff have the tools and support they need to succeed.

Healthcare Workforce:

VDH is actively supporting healthcare workforce development across Virginia through various incentive programs, including scholarships and loan repayment for RNs, nurse practitioners, certified nursing assistants, behavioral health professionals, physicians, dental assistants, and pharmacists. Led by Sandra Serna and her team, these efforts aim to remove financial barriers to healthcare education. VDH is also focused on expanding access to training opportunities statewide, recognizing that distance and relocation can be obstacles for many. The agency is grateful for legislative support and funding that have helped strengthen these programs.

Maternal Mortality:

VDH is actively addressing maternal health disparities, particularly the higher mortality rates among Black women during pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum. Collaborating with the Administration's task force and other stakeholders, the agency focuses on key factors like mental health, substance use and overdose, cardiovascular issues, and social needs. VDH is developing a multi-year strategy aligned with Title V, planning regional stakeholder engagement to improve care coordination and support for mothers with medical conditions. The goal is to promote healthy moms, babies, families, and communities.

Substance Use and Overdose Deaths:

VDH is encouraged by recent progress in reducing substance abuse and overdose deaths in Virginia during 2024, including a notable decline in fentanyl-related fatalities. Efforts across the Commonwealth, supported by campaigns like the First Lady's and Attorney General's "One Pill Can Kill," have contributed to these improvements. While the reduction is significant, overdose deaths still occur daily, underscoring the ongoing need to address both long-term addiction recovery and overdose prevention. VDH values the continued partnerships supporting this critical work.

Funding Landscape:

VDH is navigating reductions in federal funding, including cuts to COVID and tobacco control grants, and is exploring partnerships and alternative funding sources to address these challenges. The agency is focused on maintaining core public health functions that only it can provide while recognizing that funding gaps may require stakeholders to step in and share responsibilities. Collaboration is essential to ensure community health needs are met despite budget constraints, with an emphasis on coordinated efforts like closed-loop referral systems to connect people to necessary resources.

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In conclusion, Dr. Shelton emphasized the agency role as a public health strategist for Virginia's communities and looks forward to collaborating with partners in this forum and beyond. Together, VDH aims to address key health issues and ensure the well-being of all communities. The agency appreciates the ongoing support of its partners in fulfilling its mission to promote health across the Commonwealth.

July 9, 2024, Presentations:

PRESENTATIONS:

- Presentation: "[Overview of VDH Measles Disease Planning](#)" by Christy **Grey**, Office of Epidemiology, Maria **Reppas**, Director, Office of Communications, Meredith **Robinson**, Vaccine Preventable Diseases Epidemiologist, Division of Surveillance and Investigation, VDH
Link: [Measles-Overview-and-Planning-in-Virginia.pdf](#)
- Presentation: "[Virginia Cancer Program Overview](#)" by Nikkia L.G. **Ray**, Director, Virginia Cancer Registry, Dr. Jackie Knight **Wilt**, Cancer Epidemiologist Evaluator, Dr. Dane **De Silva**, Director, Division of Population Health Data, VDH
Link: [VCR-Cancer-Burden-Overview.pdf](#)

NEW BUSINESS:

Stephanie Dunkel, Deputy Commissioner for Population Health and Preparedness, shared the following:

- **MyIR Launch** – VDH has introduced *My Immunization Record (MyIR)*, a new online tool allowing individuals to access their immunization records. For more information, click here: [Request Immunization Record – Immunization](#).
- **Public Health and Safety Alerts** – With extreme heat expected, communities are encouraged to connect with local resources such as cooling centers. There is also increased concern around child drownings this summer, and VDH has released prevention materials on water safety and heat-related illness. These resources are available online for community use at [Virginia Department of Health](#).

UPDATES:

Office of Health Equity (OHE) Updates

Sandra Serna, Director of the Office of Health Equity, shared key updates:

- **Federal and State Funding** – Many of the Office of Health Equity's programs, including health workforce incentives and rural health initiatives, are funded through Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grants. While recent Notices of Award (NOAs) have been received, there's a need to stay adaptable due to national uncertainty of public health funding. Thankfully, several VDH programs also receive state support.
- **Role of Community Partners** – As a government agency, VDH cannot advocate, but it can educate. Community leaders and organizations, such as ACHDHE members and the organizations they represent play a vital role in informing and mobilizing support for public health, forming a broader public health ecosystem beyond government agencies.
- **Telehealth Plan Approval** – The Virginia Telehealth Network presented an updated state Telehealth Plan, which was approved by the Board of Health on June 12. VDH and partners will now focus on raising awareness and implementing the plan to improve primary care access across the Commonwealth.

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Access the plan here: https://www.ehealthvirginia.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Revised-Final-Draft-2026-2030-State-Telehealth-Plan_06302025.pdf.

ACHDHE Members' Updates:

Mrs. Kimberly Dyke-Harsley:

Mrs. Dyke-Harsley highlighted the importance of including correctional facility workers and incarcerated individuals in discussions on heat-related illness. She noted that House Bill 1894, which aimed to enforce existing regulations on cell temperatures, did not pass despite reaching the Governor's desk. She emphasized that temperatures in cells can reach up to 125 degrees and urged continued attention to this issue. She concluded by thanking everyone for a productive meeting.

House Bill 1894: [VA HB1894 | 2025 | Regular Session | LegiScan](#)

- **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

No public comments.

ADJOURNMENT:

The ACHDHE meeting was adjourned at 2:06 PM.

Next ACHDHE meeting: October 14, 2025.

Time: 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Host Site: FeedMore, 8020 Villa Park Drive, Richmond, VA 23228.

Kindly send your questions to augustine.doe@vdh.virginia.gov.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Augustine **Doe**, Division of Multicultural Health and Community Engagement (DMHCE)

Minutes Reviewed By:

David C. **Rose**, MD, FAAP, ACHDHE Chair

Kate **Bradshaw**, Ph.D., FACHE, CPHQ, ACHDHE Vice Chair

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APPENDIX A:

April 8, 2025 Meeting [Recommendations](#).

Link: [ACHDHE-April-2025-Recommendations-1.pdf](#)

Summaries of Dr. Shelton's reply to each of the above April 2025 ACHDHE meeting recommendations:

- A. "Virginia 2025 General Assembly Bills Overview," Michael Capps, Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Governmental and Regulatory Affairs:**
- **The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) partners with community stakeholders to educate the ACHDHE on Virginia's legislative process and develop a communication strategy that engages diverse communities ensuring Virginia's vulnerable populations participation in the development of policy recommendations.**

In January this year, VDH provided an update on legislative engagement, emphasizing that while the agency cannot advocate, it can educate and inform stakeholders. VDH staff are developing recommendations for the upcoming 2026 General Assembly session and are open to offering further education on the legislative process at future meetings. Committee members, representing various organizations, may also use their own channels to reach legislators.

Kindly use this link to locate your legislator: [Who's My Legislator?](#)

For upcoming meetings and information, use this link: [Virginia Regulatory Town Hall Home Page](#)

- **VDH works with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to recommend enforcement of intermediate sanctions for Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs) and Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (IIDs) to ensure compliance with federal regulations. Additionally, VDH partners with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS), as requested, to assist in the development of intermediate sanctions to ensure compliance with DBHDS licensing regulations.**

VDH, through its Office of Licensure and Certification (OLC), is working with CMS to implement intermediate sanctions for skilled nursing facilities, with potential future consideration for other disability-related services. To improve responsiveness, OLC is actively recruiting and reviewing staffing and compensation to attract and retain qualified personnel. Additionally, OLC supports increased coordination with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services to better serve individuals in these facilities.

- **VDH collaborates with medical licensing partners and organizations to promote continuing education requirements and credit hours focused on unconscious bias and cultural humility, aiming to address gaps in self-awareness within the medical profession.**

The recommendation to include credit hours on unconscious bias and cultural humility involves collaboration with the Department of Health Professions, which oversees licensing for various medical professionals. Since licensing requirements vary by profession, this would need to be addressed by that agency. Internally, VDH is implementing cultural training for all its employees as part of its language access work and plans to expand this training within the agency.

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- **VDH collaborates with appropriate stakeholders and partners to prevent the rise in Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infections by ensuring continued access to Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) regardless of insurance eligibility requirements.**

VDH is actively collaborating with health districts, clinics, and community partners across the Commonwealth to prevent HIV through testing and Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) services. The Office of Epidemiology and other departments are involved in this effort. As funding decisions are moving forward, VDH emphasizes the importance of supporting these services to protect the health of local communities.

B. "VDH Drinking Water Policy Overview," Office of Drinking Water Recommendations:

- **The Virginia Department of Health (VDH), Office of Drinking Water (ODW) strengthens partnerships with local communities by offering training programs that prepare individuals from disadvantaged communities to become knowledgeable of waterworks operations. This approach will help fill critical workforce gaps, improve emergency response to environmental threats, and enhance the resilience and safety of water systems in underserved areas.**

The Office of Drinking Water is actively strengthening partnerships with local communities and offering training programs, including manufacturer and water operator training. A pilot program with county public schools and a water authority is also underway to introduce a technical school curriculum. These efforts aim to build a strong workforce to ensure safe drinking water.

- **VDH, Office of Drinking Water enhances public education on water management by clarifying the distinctions between ground and surface water, public and private systems, and reporting requirements for contaminants while continuing to provide evidence-based information on the benefits of water fluoridation and its impact on public dental health.**

For public education, the Source Water Protection Program addresses key water management topics. VDH collaborates with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on water services, and fluoridation efforts involve multiple offices and partners.

- **VDH advocates for increased annual funding for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund to strengthen the capacity of the ODW field offices in addressing growing concerns around water treatment and public awareness.**

VDH will continue to seek increased funding, particularly to ensure communities have the resources needed for safe and reliable drinking water. The agency appreciates the recommendations and remains committed to working within these priorities.