

# Health Disparities Task Force Meeting |MINUTES

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May 28, 2020 / 1:00 P.M. – 2:00 P.M. | Location: Via WebEx/Teleconference

Meeting called by:	Office of Minority Health and Disparities Elimination	Attendees: Approximately 92 ppl
Type of meeting:	Weekly Health Disparities Task Force	
Facilitator:	Monique Anthony, Director	

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## OPENING COMMENTS

**Presenter:** Dr. Kimberly Lamar, Assistant Commissioner – Minority Health and Disparities Elimination

**Summary:** I would like to extend the support of MDHE office to assist in addressing any barriers to care or services anyone might be experiencing. Any complaints are welcome and our office would like to address any issues you might be experiencing directly. Please do not hesitate to contact our office for any assistance or concerns.

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## TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

**Focus:** COVID19 – Updates

**Presenter:** Dr. Morgan McDonald, Deputy Commissioner – Population Health

**Summary:** Communication went out on Tuesday to law enforcement and emergency coordinators data sharing will be ceasing May 31, 2020.

Hospitals are experiencing overflow; we are working side by side with Federal support to plan with area hospitals to see what options are available for overflow capacity. We have partnered with Memphis area hospitals to work on building two alternative commercial building care sites. As of last Monday, this Facility is ready to accept patients if needed for people in the Memphis area. Federal funding has been received by General Hospital to work with Army engineers to also be a potential care site. Alternative care sites would not go into effect until needed. TDH is still looking for additional alternative care sites.

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## Member Comments

**Presenter:** Rep. G. A. Hardaway, Chairman, TN Black Caucus

**Summary:** The constitutional violations and privacy rights order being offended for sharing names and addresses with law enforcement was rescinded by the Governor Lee. There may be misunderstandings on when this list should be shared. Jail dockets will be opposed (if necessary) if law enforcement continues to seek information which is considered protected. Additionally, we are seeing inadequate support for the domestic abusers who are currently stuck at home with their abusers due to COVID-19 stay safe at home orders. We want to ensure we continue to provide available information to anyone who needs it.

**Action items:** Keeping focus on drugs and mental health issues. We should look into ACE's and see how we can strengthen and expand those resources in the future.

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**Presenter:** Ezequiel Garcia, Communications, Hamilton County Health Department

**Summary:** Some achievements made in the last few weeks to bridge the communication gap are a new Spanish Facebook page. People tend to trust their pastors; therefore we have setup video calls with pastors to discuss ways to get communication out to their congregation/public. Video communications are being posted and shared through WhatsApp. These videos include details on how to make your own face mask, what are COVID-19 symptoms etc. Meetings are being held with these pastors on a weekly basis to address any concerns.

We have increased verbal communication and health messaging (in Spanish and English) with the help of Hamilton County Department of Education. This messaging included details of available COVID-19 testing sites. We teamed up with local radio stations to run public service announcements weekly.

Some challenges still include the lack of trust the Hispanic community has with possibly being reporting to immigration. Spanish sometimes is not a first language and individuals only speak a dialect so when conveying these messages they do not translate well into Spanish. Internal health department challenges include not having enough bi-lingual staff and cases are increasing. Hamilton County Department of Education has offered to allow some of their Spanish speaking staff to be hired to assist with addressing these challenges.

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**Presenter:** Gwen Hamer, Director of Education and Development, TN Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

**Summary:** In response to Rep. Hardaway talking to the Black Caucus about the opioid deaths in Shelby County and finding additional beds for the medical detox. The Assistant Commissioner for Substance Abuse Services suggests talking with service providers.

Substance abuse and suicide rates are on a rise in Tennessee. We currently do not have the exact rates but will try to have those numbers next week. Department recently received a grant from SAMHSA to assist people with no insurance and indigent. Additionally, this program will assist health workers who need any mental health services. Funding for SafetyNet has been increased but there is a criterion to meet in order to use the services. You can call and they can provide more details.

We continue to promote teleconference and telehealth. Some barriers include insurance companies are not willing to pay for these services. Our office is working with the insurance companies to try to come to some resolutions. We are in the process of developing an Emotional Well-Being hotline for people experiencing problems especially public health workers on the frontlines.

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### **Resources mentioned during call:**

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Resources:

- If you are experiencing a mental health or psychiatric emergency, please call our Statewide Crisis Line: 855-CRISIS-1 (855) 274-7471 or text to 741-741
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – (800) 273-8255 or text TN to 741-741
- If you need a referral to substance use disorder treatment or other resources, call or text the TN REDLINE: 800-889-9789
- If you have issues accessing mental health or substance abuse services and it is not an emergency, contact the TDMHSAS Office of Consumer Affairs Helpline during normal business hours: (800) 560-5767
- The Disaster Distress Helpline, 1-800-985-5990, is a 24/7/365 national hotline dedicated to providing immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.

May 29, 2020 COVID-19 free testing available from 9 A.M. – 1 P.M. Testing will be held in the Mt. Zion parking lot.

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**Next Meeting: Thursday, June 4, 2020 from 1pm-2pm via WebEx. WebEx details are as follows:**

**Meeting number (access code): 610 214 092**

**Meeting password: Health**

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