



# Health Disparities Task Force Meeting |MINUTES

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June 4, 2020 / 1:00 P.M. – 2:00 P.M. | Location: Via WebEx/Teleconference

Meeting called by:	Office of Minority Health and Disparities Elimination	Approximately:
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:** There are a lot of activities going on across the state such as protest activities. We cannot stress the importance of testing, particularly in Metros. A lot of events are being provided for testing. June 19-20th, we will be pushing testing across Shelby County through several churches which include: Miss. Blvd, Divine Faith. We also will be partnering with community health centers.

Please remember we want to make sure our communities are staying healthy.

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## TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

**Focus:** Davidson County COVID-19

**Presenter:** Dr. Michael Caldwell, Director of Health, Metro Nashville/Davidson County Public Health Department

**Summary:** There is a COVID-19 Assessment Hotline, 615-862-7777. This line is open 7 days a week to 7 A.M. to 9 P.M.

Free testing sites are available 9 A.M. – 3 P.M., Monday through Friday at Nissan Stadium parking lot, Meharry Medical College, and the former K-Mart on Murfreesboro Pike. We now have an efficient amount of testing equipment and kits to continue this type of testing going forward. Meharry Medical College is providing assistance to with staffing these testing locations. In addition, we are working with Meharry Medical to construct a “strike team” to help with specific testing in specific communities especially in North Nashville neighborhoods.

Working with a member from the mayor’s office to come up with Hispanic communication at least weekly and after every press conference that mayor has every day. We’re building bridges with Siloam Health Community Health Center and the Tennessee Immigrant Refugee Rights Coalition to hire community health workers specifically in a number of different cultures and languages to help communicate risks of spreading COVID-19.

Chair of Health of Human Services Council at Metro Council led an initiative with Metro Department of Housing which initially was a pilot program then formed into a full fledged program which offered testing to every resident of Metro Housing.

We continue to do outreach meetings at community centers with educational information and possible sources for more face mask. The importance of face mask coverings is the closest thing to a vaccine to protect yourself and others. We're learning they are more asymptomatic cases of COVID, so we have to assume that anyone should/might have COVID.

We want people to express their 1<sup>st</sup> amendment right and speak about their concerns but continue to do that in a responsible way with face coverings and social distancing. We continue to work with Mayor Cooper, Chief Anderson and Chief Swan to ensure our community stays protected.

The racial and ethnicity data for COVID-19 in Nashville, Davidson County, reflects newer cases trending in the minority, Hispanic, multicultural and African American communities. This is a particular concern because the rate of deaths for African Americans is three times higher in non-African American. Deaths from COVID-19 still seem to be focused in the over 65 year old population. Out of approximately 70 deaths in Davidson County, 53 deaths occurred in people around the age of 55 years old. If you're over 65 the likelihood of dying from COVID is 10% and goes up higher as you get older.

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**Focus:** Debunking Testing Myths

**Presenter:** Katina Beard, Chief Executive Officer, Matthew Walker Comprehensive Health Center

**Summary:** Testing event over the weekend which was also available on Facebook live. Think a lot of people think the testing hurts and is painful and believes this deters a lot of people from getting testing. Encourage to get messaging around the myths about COVID-19 testing. The test is no longer in the nasal cavity it has been modified since testing first began.

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**Focus:** Testing Initiatives

**Presenter:** Andre Anderson, General Overseer, Office of the Bishop, Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church

**Summary:** Mt Zion partnered with Matthew Walker Comprehensive Health Center and held drive up COVID-19 testing. We administered approximately 447 tests over in 2 days. Mt. Zion looks forward to more opportunities to partner in the future. It is important to use our faith-based communities to get the message out to our community. African Americans definitely rely on their communities and it is essential to that we partner with local and state government officials to get information out.

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**Focus:** Testing Initiatives

**Presenter:** Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department

**Summary:** Sabrina Novak, Director of Administrative Services – My focus is community testing in addition to the Health Department testing in various parts of the county. Hamilton County is contracted with a lab facility to be able to process results with a rapid turnaround for our healthcare partners. In community outreach testing, in the last three weeks, we have setup testing at four local schools in areas of high population. There is 7-day a week testing at two of these four schools.

In addition, we have contracted with several transportation companies to add a transportation component for individuals that have mobility challenges. We have also teamed up with Clinica Medicos and CEMPA and other entities already working in the community and are trusted agents. We are organizing pushing out more availability of testing kits which in turn has led to more positive testing which epidemiologists are capturing.

There has been an increase in temporary staff that is bi-lingual. We have partnered with the local Department of

Education and some of Chattanooga Football Association as a number of coaches that are bi-lingual we are looking to bring in also. We have been able to partner with Kroger's Little Clinic to spread out our testing as much as possible. They are a fantastic resource for assisting anyone that need assistance to setup COVID-19 testing.

**Summary:** Bill Ulmer, Director of Community Health Services – We need to continue to talk on regular basis to and exchange ideas. There has been some concern around getting to the Black community in Hamilton County. We are looking for ways to get more testing done in our African American communities around Hamilton. The Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga provided an idea of using churches to host testing sites. We are preparing to launch this weekend. We are trying to get our local African American pastors to buy into this initiative. We are partnering with Servant Leadership Christian Fellowship which is an association of local pastors. We have also had members of the Tennessee Baptist Association who are working with us regarding medical resources.

We have put together “strike teams” who will do testing on every weekend beginning June 6th to the end of August. We are starting off with Mt. Canon Baptist Church and then move to a different church testing site each weekend. They will be testing on Saturdays 10 A.M.-1 P.M. and Sundays from 12 P.M. -3 P.M. This will take place at four churches during the month of June. The schedule for July and August are tentative. We have received request from volunteer churches so we are working on utilizing smaller church congregations to ensure they can also host testing sites since they are connected deep within the Black community. The Health Department has also been of great assistance.

We have been promoting this church testing project through radio stations and Rural Media which owns several radio stations. We send out electronic notifications for Hamilton County COVID-19 weekly updates. We have been able to create a massive distribution list with the faith community in Hamilton County.

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### **Focus:** Testing Initiatives

**Presenter:** Dena Mashburn, Director of Nursing, Knox County Health Department

**Summary:** We have a lot of initiatives starting and stopping because we have been side-tracked some other things. We have been able to do testing in the housing areas about two weeks ago which went very well. We have a discussion today with a coalition made up of about 30 different African-American pastors so that we can partner with them to do testing. Additionally, we are looking into doing pop-up testing out in the community at possible food ministries. Previously, we partnered with the National Guard one weekend but we are still looking into more areas specifically to do outreach. There is a group of people in Knoxville that we speak to once a week that provides some areas for outreach where we can do pop-up testing. We really are trying to ensure the testing is available to the population in the local community which is why churches seem to be great locations.

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### **Focus:** Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Requests

**Presenter:** Matthew Hayes, Emergency Services Coordinator, TN Dept. of Health Emergency Preparedness Program

**Summary:** PPE can be requested through a formal form for facilities providing general care or patient testing which are in need of PPE equipment. We have a centralize warehouse in Middle Tennessee. We distribute about 2-3 times a day and have shipping available to all 95 counties.

The PPE request form walks you through ordering PPE. This request form is not for the general public but we still receive a significant amount of request. We are in contact with the National Guard and all 95 county Health Departments about testing initiatives. If you have needs going forward, we are asking people to enter their request on a weekly basis until you no longer require the PPE. You will have to answer a few questions in reference to your need but PPE is also provided on its availability.

Lastly, we are providing details about CDC's recommendation on how N95 mask can be sanitized/decontaminate. The

State has the capability to disinfect N95 mask and returned. This service is available through a partnership called the Patel Critical Care Decontamination System and they can decontaminate up to 80,000 masks a day. This system was setup in Jackson, TN at their regional airport. Facilities can register and there is a unique identification system. All shipping to and from is paid for and done through FedEx. All the steps are included on the form as well as fact sheets about the system and how it disinfects the mask. This is a way to extend the life of the PPE and to get mask back in the hands of people that need them. All masks are thoroughly checked to make sure they meet the highest quality standard. This is a Federal Government initiative provided to us outside the stay. Receiving masks can take 2-3 weeks; keep that in mind when ordering.

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### ***Member Comments***

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

**Summary:** In both Memphis and Nashville, TN there is a plan to have Black elected officials in particular doing live testing on broadcast media and online about the importance of getting tested for COVID-19. We're requesting the support of Baptist Ministerial Association and Pastor Eric Winston of Mt. Zion Baptist Church, to hold live testing particularly done by city and county elected officials to help with getting the message out about the importance of testing.

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

COVID-19 Assessment Hotline – 615-862-7777. This line is open 7-days a week from 7 A.M. to 9 P.M.

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**Next Meeting: Thursday, June 11, 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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