



**755-3655 / 755-3656 / 755-3657**

**Chandana Vavilala, M.D.**

**Health Officer**

**Board of Health Meeting Minutes & Discussion Overview:** Follow up meeting from 2/5/25 Board of Health Meeting to finalize approval of Health First Indiana funding requests.

**Date:** February 12, 2025

**Time:** 7:30am – 8:45am

**Location:** Health Department Conference Room

**Call to Order** - Meeting called to order by Dr. Nchekwube.

#### **Roll Call**

**Members Present:**

Marla Hoyer-Lareau, Michael Foreit, Cynthia Hoess, Leona Chandler -Felton (late), Chiedu Nchekwube, Deborah McCullough

**Members Absent:**

Stacy Coduti, TJ Wigmore, Philip Golden

**Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes 2/5/25** - Minutes approved

## **Health First Indiana Funding Proposals**

### **Program Proposal: Aliveness Project**

1. **Infectious Disease Prevention Program \$200,000**– HIV/STI testing and outreach expansion.
2. **Linkage to Care Program \$200,000** – Ensuring individuals who test positive are connected to treatment within 30 days.

#### **Key Objectives with Funding:**

- Expand testing capacity and geographical reach (targeting areas without municipal health departments such as Merrillville, Highland, Griffith, Crown Point, Schererville).
- Hire additional staff, including a second linkage coordinator and a nurse practitioner.
- Upgrade clinical infrastructure to offer more wraparound services (e.g., blood pressure checks, pregnancy testing).
- Transition into a more clinical service model supported by telehealth and in-person care.

#### **Planned Impact with Additional Funding:**

- Increase reach to underserved populations (particularly men who have sex with men [MSM] of color).
- Enhance immediate linkage to care and retention in care.



---

**755-3655 / 755-3656 / 755-3657**

**Chandana Vavilala, M.D.  
Health Officer**

- Broaden clinical offerings in a welcoming and non-stigmatizing environment.
- Motion passed to approve program funding for the Infectious Disease Prevention Program, however funding was denied for the Linkage to Care Program.

**Program Proposal: Methodist STAR Center - \$88,300**

- Funded initially by IDOH in 2022 to serve as a sexual assault treatment center.
- Expanded scope includes treatment for victims of child abuse, intimate partner violence, elder abuse, and human trafficking.
- Services: forensic exams, safety planning, community referrals, forensic photography, and courtroom testimony.
- 2023 served 300 patients, up from 158 the prior year.
- Motion passed to approve program funding.

**Program Proposal: Methodist Maternal and Infant Care Center \$107,000**

- Focused on reducing infant mortality, especially in postpartum care.
- Proposed expansion:
  - Additional lactation specialists at South Lake campus.
  - Breast pump provision for underinsured mothers.
  - Enhanced Safe Sleep education and car seat distribution.
  - Increased community partner involvement in baby showers and referrals.
- Current lactation initiation rate at South Lake is 75%, but exclusivity rate is only 17%.
- Discussion around hospital funding limitations and importance of external grants.
- Motion passed to approve program funding.

**Program Proposal: Camp DEAN – Youth Prevention & Mentorship- \$46,000**

- Run by The Papa House, focused on substance misuse prevention and mental health.
- Camp DEAN stands for Determination, Enthusiasm, Achieving New levels.
- A 4-day/3-night summer camp combining nature, digital prevention curriculum, and peer mentorship.
- Targets youth aged 12–17 in Lake County.
- Motion passed to approve program funding.

**Program Proposal: CoAction Maternal & Infant Hammond Clinic \$195,180.77**

- WIC Program presented a proposal to co-locate WIC offices with community partners to create a one-stop shop for maternal and child health services in North Lake County.



**755-3655 / 755-3656 / 755-3657**

**Chandana Vavilala, M.D.**

**Health Officer**

- The goal is to improve access to services like nutrition, immunizations, and social work by reducing transportation barriers and combining efforts with local partners.
- Board members expressed concern about potential duplication of services, especially with nearby Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) in Hammond offering similar services.
- It was clarified that WIC only serves prenatal, postpartum women, and children under five, and is not attempting to become an FQHC.
- A discussion followed about how to ensure services would complement, not duplicate, existing resources. The need for improved immunization access and transportation barriers was highlighted as ongoing gaps.
- The program has plans to pilot the model due to an existing lease that ends in 2028.
- No second motion was brought forward to approve program funding.

### **Program Proposal: Holistic Evolution**

- 1. H.E. Man Healing Tour-Trauma & Injury Prevention- \$80,815**
- 2. H.E Man Healing Tour- Infectious Disease Prevention- \$61,000**
- 3. H.E. Man Healing Tour- School Health Liaison- \$25,000**
- 4. H.E. Man Healing Tour- Chronic Disease Prevention- \$49,121**

Program overview reviewed at last Board of Health Meeting on 2/2/25. Program discussion continued at 2/12/25 Board of Health Meeting.

- **Key Concerns Raised:**
  - One board member felt the budget was "top heavy" with personal expenses (contractor/staff salaries) and questioned whether enough funding was directed to programming.
  - There was a sense that some proposal elements (e.g., HIV testing) duplicated efforts already covered by other initiatives.
  - Despite some strong components, like the "Future Health Fair Simulation" and "Back to Health", not all activities were viewed as compelling.
- **Clarifications Provided by Holistic Evolution:**
  - The personnel listed are contractors, including Youth Participatory Action Researchers, who are local community members trained in research and prevention practices.
  - The staff involved in these roles are considered part of the program, not overhead.
  - Holistic Evolution served 385 young men across Marion and Lake Counties, suggesting measurable community impact.
  - Mental health services are provided through contracted licensed professionals (LCSWs) who lead culturally relevant programming, like the "Barbershop Talk" initiative.
- **Suggestions & Follow-Up:**
  - A board member suggested Holistic Evolution provide comparative salary benchmarks to justify pay levels and show alignment with national standards.



---

**755-3655 / 755-3656 / 755-3657**

**Chandana Vavilala, M.D.**

- They also requested clarification on the Health Officer (CEO, evaluator, etc.) plays in specific projects like the health fair.
- A motion was made to approve the full proposal, however, no second motion was brought forward to approve program funding.

## **Open Comment Period**

### **Board Governance and Compliance - Jackie Sloan**

- Emphasis on the procedural structure of the board to comply with Health First Indiana requirements.
- Concerns raised about proper board member categorization per Indiana Code 16-20.1.
- Recommended:
  - Posting state code and organizational chart on the website.
  - Appointment of key officers (e.g., treasurer).
  - Monthly and annual reports for accountability.
  - Staff review of grants prior to board approval.
  - Program performance evaluation tied to future funding.
  - Need for regular study sessions.

### **2. Meeting Accessibility - Barbara Kotelis**

- Request made for afternoon/evening meetings and larger venues like the Government Center for better public accessibility.

### **3. Board Comments on Meeting Timing**

- Members expressed preference for morning meetings due to professional obligations.
- Emphasized board meetings are decision-making sessions, with public invited but not central to scheduling decisions.

**Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn was made and seconded. Meeting adjourned with unanimous approval.

Next Meeting: June 4, 2025