



Herbert
Henderson
Office of
Minority
Affairs

COVID-19 Advisory Commission on African American Disparities

MINUTES

May 19, 2020

7:30 AM

Via Zoom

Chair: Jill Upson, Chairperson and Director, Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs (HHOMA)

Commissioners: Pastor Rahsaan Armand, Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church
Owens Brown, State Conference of NAACP
Joylynn Fix, WV Offices of the Insurance Commission
Delegate Caleb Hanna, Nicholas County, House District 44
Romelia Hodges, StriveN4
Delegate Sean Hornbuckle, House District 16, Cabell County
Mike Jones, Kanawha Institute for Social Research and Action (KISRA)
Senator Patricia Puertas-Rucker, Jefferson County, Senatorial District 16
Reverend James Patterson, Institute Church of the Nazarene
Tiffany Samuels, WVU Cancer Institute
Keisha Saunders, Tug River Health Clinic

Presenters: Secretary Bill Crouch, Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR)
Lieutenant Colonel Tanya McGonegal, WV National Guard (WVNG)
Sarah Sanders, Ph.D., Bureau of Public Health
Dr. Cathy Slempp, Bureau of Public Health

Call to Order: Chairperson Jill Upson, called the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m. and proceeded with welcoming the Commissioners and presenters.

Updates:

Chairperson Upson announced Dr. Cathy Slempp as the first presenter. Dr. Slempp explained that the results for this update from the first round of testing were only about one-third complete. Planning for the next sites and working on ways to strengthen and grow the testing events is underway. Dr. Slempp reported the following:

County	Number Tested	% African American	White	Other	NA
Jefferson	768	22%	68%	4%	6%
Berkeley	872				
Mercer	181	36.5%	61%	0.6%	2%
Raleigh	195	34%	65%	1%	0%

Results from Jefferson with 29% of results back - 218 negative, 3 positive, 548 pending
Results from Berkeley with 28% of results back - 238 negative, 3 positive, 675 pending.

Chairperson Upson then announced Dr. Sara Sanders, Epidemiologist, to provide a case data update. She reported the following:

Twenty-six counties have at least one case in a minority population. Fifteen counties have at least one case in the African American population. Twenty counties have at least one case in a minority population other than African American.

	Number of Cases					Percent of County Cases				
	Black or African American	Other Race	Unknown/Missing	White	Total Cases	Black or African American	Other Race	Unknown/Missing	White	Total Cases
Berkeley	24	13	10	169	216	11%	6%	5%	78%	100%
Braxton		1		1	2	0%	50%	0%	50%	100%
Cabell	4	1		52	57	7%	2%	0%	91%	100%
Fayette	1	5	2	30	38	3%	13%	5%	79%	100%
Gilmer	5			3	8	63%	0%	0%	38%	100%
Hardy	5	4	10	12	31	16%	13%	32%	39%	100%
Harrison		1		35	36	0%	3%	0%	97%	100%
Jackson		1	3	131	135	0%	1%	2%	97%	100%
Jefferson	11	13	5	72	101	11%	13%	5%	71%	100%
Kanawha	14	11	36	145	206	7%	5%	17%	70%	100%
Lewis		1		4	5	0%	20%	0%	80%	100%
Logan	1			14	15	7%	0%	0%	93%	100%
Marion	24		2	21	47	51%	0%	4%	45%	100%
Mason		1		14	15	0%	7%	0%	93%	100%
McDowell	2	1		3	6	33%	17%	0%	50%	100%
Mercer	2			11	13	15%	0%	0%	85%	100%
Mineral		1	1	27	29	0%	3%	3%	93%	100%
Monongalia	12	1	9	96	118	10%	1%	8%	81%	100%
Morgan		1			1	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
Ohio		1	1	36	38	0%	3%	3%	95%	100%
Pendleton	1			4	5	20%	0%	0%	80%	100%
Preston		1	1	12	14	0%	7%	7%	86%	100%
Putnam	2		5	20	27	7%	0%	19%	74%	100%
Roane		1	1	7	9	0%	11%	11%	78%	100%
Wayne		3		92	95	0%	3%	0%	97%	100%
Wood	1	2	3	42	48	2%	4%	6%	88%	100%
Grand Total	109	64	97	1237	1507	7%	4%	6%	82%	100%

African Americans continue to be hospitalized more often, while the mortality rate is higher in White people.

	Number of Cases					Percent of Cases				
	Black or African American	Other Race	Unknown /Missing	White	Total Cases	Black or African American	Other Race	Unknown /Missing	White	Total Cases
Hospitalized	28	3	5	174	210	25.7%	4.7%	5.2%	14.1%	13.9%
Death Rate	3	2	6	57	68	2.8%	3.1%	6.2%	4.6%	4.5%

More African American cases reported symptoms than White cases.

	Number of Cases					Percent of Cases				
	Black or African American	Other Race	Unknown /Missing	White	Total Cases	Black or African American	Other Race	Unknown /Missing	White	Total Cases
Symptom-atic	81	41	38	847	1007	74.3%	64.1%	39.2%	68.5%	66.8%

	Number of Cases					Percent of Cases				
	Black or African American	Other Race	Unknown /Missing	White	Total Cases	Black or African American	Other Race	Unknown /Missing	White	Total Cases
Preexisting Medical Conditions	55	19	22	613	709	50.5%	29.7%	22.7%	49.6%	47.0%
Diabetes	22	8	3	200	233	20.2%	12.5%	3.1%	16.2%	15.5%
Cardio-vascular Disease	25	7	7	284	323	22.9%	10.9%	7.2%	23.0%	21.4%

	Number of Cases					Percent of Cases				
	Black or African American	Other Race	Unknown /Missing	White	Total Cases	Black or African American	Other Race	Unknown /Missing	White	Total Cases
Healthcare Worker	18	15	11	285	329	16.5%	23.4%	11.3%	23.0%	21.8%

Chairperson Upson asked the presenters if the demographic breakdown for the positive tests would be available at the next meeting on Friday, May 22. Dr. Slemph stated that data is available by race and gender for the Eastern Panhandle only at this time. She added that it was just the beginning of the demographic data.

There was discussion about the upload time for results from the testing sites. Dr. Slemph explained that most of the results should be entered into the database by Friday’s meeting. The report for this meeting only included approximately one-third of the results from the first round of testing.

Chairperson Upson next introduced Lieutenant Colonel Tanya McGonegal, WV National Guard, to share an update on the state-wide testing plan.

LTC McGonegal began by stating that the WVNG was pleased with the turnout. There are plans for additional discussion about the opportunity to add new areas or revisit areas based on feedback that there was not enough advanced notice. She stated that there is planning underway to finalize the locations in Monongalia, Cabell, Kanawha and Marion for this coming Friday, May 22 and Saturday, May 23. There is a strong push to get information out earlier and inform the public that the testing is free. This coming weekend is a holiday which may impact turnout. LTC McGonegal shared that coordination is underway for locations in Kanawha, Mineral and Fayette on May 29 and May 30. Fayette County currently has several testing opportunities, so adjustments may be needed. She stated that the WVNG will work with Fayette County to see if free testing available. There is focus on refining the location selection process to ensure easy accessibility. She concluded by stating that, once input from everyone involved is received, an updated plan will be sent.

Discussion:

Senator Patricia Puertas-Rucker asked if the test results would be updated each week at the Friday meeting or if the results could be sent to the group as soon as they are finalized. Dr. Slemp stated that the information could be forwarded to Chairperson Upson. She then shared that updates are given at each of the Governor's press briefings, which includes the race data.

Senator Puertas-Rucker then asked how the retesting events will be determined and if it will fall under the responsibility of the group. Dr. Slemp stated that the results and turnout will be determining factors. She also stated that ensuring that there is local access and local systems that can support the retesting events will be a factor. In the long term, it will be the responsibility of everyone to work with the local communities to support the ongoing work. She then added, that included strengthening and building at the community level. Dr. Slemp then stated that Fayette County is already doing some of this work. Senator Puertas-Rucker concluded by expressing her gratitude for the hard work of all involved and that the testing events in the Eastern Panhandle were very successful.

Mike Jones, KISRA, asked if the task force is coordinating with and gathering data from the local testing initiatives. He mentioned that West Virginia State University offered a testing event last week and another is planned at First Baptist Church in Charleston. He cautioned that the testing events may not receive a good turnout since testing was already offered in those areas. Dr. Slemp stated that they want to make sure to coordinate with what is already being offered locally. The local health departments and community partners in the next site locations have been contacted to learn what they are planning. The Bureau of Public Health is aware of the work being done in Kanawha County and will coordinate to make sure populations in a variety of areas are reached. LTC Tanya McGonegal added that a lot of testing has already occurred in the Kanawha County area. The WVNG focused on reaching the populations that may not have known that the testing was free, that insurance was not necessary and that a physician's note is not required.

Chairperson Upson mentioned that she and the WVNG have been reaching out to community partners. As of now, a location in Charleston is being planned for this coming weekend (May 22-23) and one in Dunbar for the following weekend (May 29-30). She added that she welcomes feedback and ideas for the next two rounds of testing.

Romelia Hodges informed the group that the call with the local health department, WVNG and community partners regarding the testing on May 22-23 was productive. She then asked how to handle any printing costs for brochures. She advised that the African American community is more likely to come out to a livelier environment. She mentioned a testing event in Texas that was offered by Beyonce, which had about 5 miles of traffic. She advised that the key to a successful event is doing the upfront work of spreading the word to the necessary locations, parents, teachers, church organizations, social media and public housing complexes. She has prepared a presentation that Chairperson Upson has added to the agenda for Friday, May 22. Dr. Slemp stated that the group should work together to get the printing done and that costs should not be a barrier. She advised that Ms. Hodges and LTC McGonegal should connect and get the materials printed quickly.

Reverend James Patterson shared that PAAC was approached by a local community health center that wanted to provide testing. It was decided to use the parking lot at a local church as the test site, following the same protocol as the WVNG. He then stated that the primary focus is around reaching public housing and those without personal transportation. Weather permitting, the testing event will be held on Monday or Tuesday of the following week. He concluded by stating that he will keep the group updated and that there are additional outreach opportunities in areas that may have been missed.

Chairperson Upson requested feedback regarding what went well and what could be improved at the testing in the first four counties: Berkeley, Jefferson, Mercer and Raleigh. She noted that no hands were raised to provide feedback. She then noted that the next round of testing included Cabell, Kanawha, Marion and Monongalia counties. The AD Lewis Community Center and the Marshall University School of Pharmacy are being considered as potential sites. Dr. Slemp asked for confirmation that these sites were selected in collaboration with the local partners. Chairperson Upson shared that she worked with Delegate Sean Hornbuckle, LaDawna Walker and Ursulette Huntley about the Cabell County

locations. Senator Puertas-Rucker reminded the group that local officials should be contacted and to focus on getting the word out sooner. She mentioned that she has ways to reach constituents, but that she heard about the testing the night before. Chairperson Upson agreed that it was a very quick rollout. The list of community partners is expanding daily, and conference calls are being planned once the locations have been finalized. LTC McGonegal added that the list of community partners has grown to include local health departments, emergency services, law enforcement, churches and sororities.

Dr. Slemp asked if it would be feasible to assemble a local planning committee or small local task force in the areas to address the long-term needs. Chairperson Upson stated that this is happening, organically, in some locations. Some community partners have been very proactive in planning the testing events. She added that the scope of the work has expanded to add ongoing testing sites. Dr. Slemp added that local health departments can assist in coordinating the long-term efforts.

Romelia Hodges shared that she was on a task force with Tiffany Samuels and found it to be very effective. The community members on the ground know what will draw people out to the event and collaboration is key. The WVNG was very efficient and effective. The local health department is meeting the needs of the community with compassion. Marion County, due to the outbreak incident, has a 36% positive rate for African Americans. Ms. Hodges concluded by stating that they are promoting that testing is a civic duty and responsibility.

Chairperson Upson shared that MC Snow Westside Elementary is the first option and the MLK Community Center on Donnally Street is second for Kanawha County. Tiffany Williams and Rev. James Patterson are the points-of-contact. The Chairperson then stated that Tiffany Samuels and Pastor Rahsaan Armand are the points-of-contact in Marion County. Windmill Park is the first option in Marion County and Palatine Park is second. She then requested comments or feedback for the locations. Chairperson Upson shared that Delegate Danielle Walker is the point-of-contact for Monongalia County. Mountain View Elementary School is being considered as a testing site. Chairperson Upson stated that additional testing is being set up by the local health department.

Owens Brown, NAACP, read a statement on behalf of Dr. Jerry Carr. Walking to the Big Lots parking lot location, as proposed by Emergency Management, is difficult. However, there are three hourly bus runs. The neighborhood also has a bad history, regarding racism. The location at the WVU Coliseum has sidewalk access and a bus running every 20 minutes. They are trying to replace the Big Lots location with Mountain View Elementary, although the bus runs less frequently. Mountain View Elementary is half a mile away from a housing complex with a significant African American population. Chairperson Upson stated that she reached out to Dr. Carr and Delegate Walker and was aware of their concerns regarding the matter. As of now, DHHR and WVNG are looking at having testing events this weekend at all those locations. Mr. Brown responded to Chairperson Upson's previous inquiry about providing a shuttling service for testing events. He stated that he did not feel that offering a shuttle service is a good idea. Mr. Brown then suggested adding a question to the paperwork to find out how participants are arriving at the events. Chairperson Upson agreed that gathering transportation data was a good idea. She then mentioned that a person in Jefferson County shared that he thought there were just as many walkers as there were those driving to the event.

There was in-depth discussion about messaging and addressing misconceptions about testing. Chairperson Upson mentioned a recent conversation with Tiffany Samuels regarding messaging. She then asked for ideas for the fliers and ways to attract targeted communities to these events. She shared that Dr. Deidre Guyton, point-of-contact for the Bluefield State College location, stated that her perception is that there is a general reluctance by the African American community to take the test. The Chair then asked for input on ways to overcome that hurdle.

Tiffany Samuels shared that many are concerned about losing their job if they need to quarantine as a result of testing positive. Secretary Crouch responded by stating that it is an important issue that needs addressed. Ms. Samuels mentioned that some feel that the virus is a hoax and that the test is a way to implant the virus in the community. Chairperson Upson stated that she would contact Work Force for any guidance. Dr. Slemp added that guidance was issued to businesses advising them to make sick-leave flexible for those needing to self-quarantine. Mike Jones stated

that he attended a labor law training where sick leave for quarantining was addressed. He remarked that it would be very dangerous for an organization to fire someone for having to self-quarantine. He mentioned that the law firm of Spilman, Thomas and Battle may be able to advise. Dr. Slemp stated that it also falls under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

There was in depth discussion about the collection of samples. Romelia Hodges asked for clarification in the different lengths of nasal swabs that may be used to administer the test. She stated that one of the myths circulating in the community is that the longer swabs are supposed to be used. When the shorter swab is used it means that a sufficient sample is not wanted. Dr. Slemp stated that there are two ways to collect the sample and the CDC has not listed a preference of which is to be used. Chairperson Upson asked if there is any evidence of false results by using the two different swabs. Dr. Slemp stated that it is important to follow the guidance for using the swabs to collect specimens. Testing has been validated around symptomatic individuals. She stated that with large scale testing, many individuals have been tested positive, but had very low virus levels. She shared that they are learning more about the asymptomatic positives. LTC McGonegal added that only the medical professionals administer tests and not WVNG service members. The WVNG relies on the guidance of the local health departments.

Tiffany Samuels shared the plans for Marion County this weekend. A motorcycle group has been confirmed to attend, along with volunteer greeters, a deejay to play music and a US Census Representative. Several non-profit agencies are setting up booths and offering resources. The event will be held at a centrally located park located in a formerly segregated black neighborhood. She shared hopes that word of mouth will travel about the good experience and draw crowds for Saturday. She concluded by stating that she is coordinating with Delegate Danielle Walker in Monongalia County. Dr. Slemp asked about how to balance drawing a crowd of higher risk people while incorporating the multiple ideas to create the fun environment. Ms. Samuels explained that a safe, social distance is maintained in all aspects of the event. Social distancing and spacing is enforced when approaching test-takers in vehicles and disseminating information. She stated that either she or Romelia Hodges would like to meet the WVNG at the site to ensure that the layout maintains safe distancing.

Chairperson Upson reminded the group to send any additions to the agenda by email. The meeting adjourned at 8:37 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,



Michelle Petties
Executive Assistant
HHOMA