

Nebraska State Board of Health
Public Meeting
Minutes

This is a draft. Minutes
have not been approved
by the State Board of
Health.

Monday, September 21, 2026, 1:00pm

MEMBERS: Mark Bertch, DPT; Jaime Dodge, MD; Staci Hubert, PharmD; Micah Kohles, DVM, MPA; Brett Lindau, DO (Secretary); Ryan Palmer, OD; Connie Lynn Petersen, PhD; Daniel Pierce, MD; David Reese, MHA (Chair); Jeremiah Rethwisch, DC; Jacob Sikes; Kimberly Stuhmer, RN, MT; Ken Tusha, DDS; Dan Vehle (Vice Chair); Jeffrey Wienke, Jr, DPM.
STAFF: Caryn Vincent, Emma Davis, Emma Soukup, Ellie Rohr

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

David Reese, Board of Health Chair, called a regular meeting of the State Board of Health to order at 1:10 PM on September 21, 2026, in the Goldenrod Conference Room in the Lower Level of the Nebraska State Office Building in Lincoln. Copies of the agenda were mailed electronically to board members prior to the meeting and posted on the Health and Human Services website. The following members were present: Mark Bertch, DPT; Staci Hubert, PharmD; Micah Kohles, DVM, MPA; Brett Lindau, DO; Ryan Palmer, OD; Connie Petersen, PhD; Daniel Pierce, MD; David Reese, MHA; Jeremiah Rethwisch, DC; Jacob Sikes; Kimberly Stuhmer, RN, MT; Ken Tusha, DDS; Dan Vehle; Jeffrey Wienke, DPM. Members not in attendance: Jaime Dodge, MD; Jeffrey Wienke, DPM. Quorum met.

Staff and others in attendance: Caryn Vincent, Emma Davis, Ellie Rohr

A copy of the Open Meetings Act was available in the meeting room.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

- Mr. Reese asked if there were any changes to the agenda for the September 21, 2026, meeting. With no changes proposed, Mr. Sikes made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Dr. Hubert; voting yes: 13 (Bertch, Kohles, Hubert, Lindau, Palmer, Pierce, Petersen, Reese, Rethwisch, Sikes, Stuhmer, Tusha, Vehle); voting no: 0; not voting: 0.

3. Reports and Updates

- Chief Medical Officer – Tim Tesmer, MD
 - Dr. Tesmer gave an update on the status of the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP). Year one ends on October 30.
 - Out of the \$218.5 million, two-thirds were obligated. All the funds will be obligated by the end of October.
 - CMS came last month for a site visit. We are waiting for a final report.
 - Initiative 3.1 Rural Healthcare Workforce Incentive is designed to retain and recruit healthcare professionals in rural Nebraska. A total of 246 awards went out to providers. 241 awards accepted. 40 contracts have been completed.
 - Community Health Workers initiative contracts are nearly complete.
 - Healthcare Advisory Region Committees (HCAR) had three meetings. The six regions throughout the state, their input will help formulate what funding and opportunities those specific regions feel they need to take. L
 - Dr. Tesmer gave an update on cyclosporiasis. The outbreak was officially declared over a week or two ago because what was thought to be the affected product is out of the supply chain.

- Nebraska was included in the outbreak from iceberg lettuce. Taylor Farms de Mexico was the company primarily responsible for the outbreak.
 - a. 343 confirmed cases in Nebraska. Not all confirmed cases are directly linked to the iceberg lettuce outbreak. 199 cases in Nebraska were linked to the iceberg lettuce outbreak.
 - Dr. Tesmer gave an update on measles. As far as we know, Nebraska does not have any measles cases.
 - There have been 3,471 confirmed cases across the U.S. for this year.
 - In 2025, there were 2,289 confirmed cases.
 - Most cases are people ages 5-19 years old. 95% of them are unvaccinated or their vaccination status is unknown.
 - Nebraska is in the top tier of states for the number of children entering school who are vaccinated for measles, mumps, and rubella. Nebraska is at 93.5 percentile.
 - DHHS is working to figure out what towns and schools to see what can be done to boost vaccines.
 - Dr. Tesmer gave an update on West Nile Virus. Nebraska had its first death this year in Lancaster County due to West Nile. To date, there have been 32 clinic cases and 14 cases of positive serology in blood donors. This is a total of 46 cases.
 - Nebraska tests close to a thousand mosquito pools. 101 have tested positive for West Nile.
 - Dr. Tesmer gave an update on the Ebola situation. We do not have confirmed cases in Nebraska but is an extreme situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa. As of late last week, there have been 7,693 total cases with 3,700 deaths. The federal government has issued directives that U.S. citizens that may have visited the Democratic Republic of Congo are not allowed to come back to the U.S. until 21 have passed since their visit.
 - Nebraska has monitored 140 people returning from that area. 34 people are still being monitored.
 - Dr. Tesmer gave an update on the health advisory network message about the 17% increase incidence of rabies exposure throughout the U.S. along with the increase of the use of rabies vaccines.
 - In Nebraska, bats are the primary vector but there are other animals who carry rabies as well.
- Licensure Unit – Lindsay Braddock
 - Ms. Braddock gave an update on the number of licenses from June-August of this year. 37,649 individuals were licensed.
 - The Licensure Unit is updating their license information system and will be finalized by the fall of 2027. The vendor they are working with is providing a user test to look at the system and make sure the process is smooth.
 - The Licensure Unit has two new program managers. Amy Blinston is now the program manager for the office of rehabilitation. Karen Riempe is now the program manager for children services licensing.
 - Dr. Petersen asked to have a report on the time of completion of complaints. Ms. Braddock will ask Dennis Scott from the investigations unit to attend the next meeting to report on this information. Dr. Petersen asked if discipline would follow individual licenses. Ms. Braddock let Dr. Petersen know that the discipline is all on the license lookup website. Dr. Petersen also asked if the list for misdemeanors and criminal charges on an application to be more extensive.
- Board of Health Chairperson – Mr. Reese
 - Welcome Dr. Pierce. He is filling the physician vacancy.
 - Welcome Emma Soukup. Ms. Soukup is filling the Policy Program Specialist position and will be taking over credentialing review, rules and regulations, and legislation.

- Let Emma Davis know if you attend any meetings for the Board of Health.
- The Board of Health has vacancies for the nursing position and the professional engineer position.
- Mr. Reese proposed the meeting dates for 2027. These dates include January 25, March 15, June 14, September 20, and November 15. The Board discussed having the meetings on Thursdays instead of Mondays. Emma D. let the Board know she would check with the Division's leadership team. Dr. Petersen asked to keep the January meeting on Monday because of legislative session. The Board will discuss this further in November.
- If anyone is interested in running for Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary, please let Emma D. know.
- Mr. Reese asked the Board to rank their committee preferences for 2027.

4. Credentialing Review Committee – Dr. Bertch, Committee Chair

- Crematory Operator review is underway. The first meeting is scheduled for today after the Board meeting.
- Certified Nurse Midwives review is also underway. They have their next meeting is October 6.
- A proposal for International Lactation Consultants review. Dr. Bertch asked the Board if anyone was interested in chairing the review committee. Mr. Sikes said he would possibly be interested.
- Dr. Bertch asked the Board to reach out to their respective professions and boards to advertise and share the Technical Review Committee application. Emma D. will send out a template of an email for the Board to send out.
- No other updates.

5. Rules and Regulations Committee – Dr. Dodge, Committee Chair, Dr. Bertch reporting

- The committee had two regulations to review.
 - Title 181 NAC 2 – Screening of Infants for Inherited and Congenital Infant or Childhood-On Set Diseases
 - Title 181 NAC 10 – Screening of Newborns for Critical Congenital Heart Disease (CCHD)
- Dr. Bertch made a motion to certify the review of the regulations, seconded by Mr. Sikes; voting yes: 13 (Bertch, Kohles, Hubert, Lindau, Palmer, Pierce, Petersen, Reese, Rethwisch, Sikes, Stuhmer, Tusha, Vehle); voting no: 0; not voting: 0. Motion carried.

6. Professional Boards Committee – Dr. Hubert, Committee Chair

- Committee conducted interviews today for Professional Boards vacancies. The committee proposed the following members:
 - Board of Nursing – Brenda Smidt (Nursing Service Administrator) and Ryann Ickes (Public Member), Holly Chandler (Advanced Practice Registered Nurse)
 - Board of Cosmetology – Shannon Bingham (Salon Owner) and Maggie Gegzna (Esthetics Instructor)
 - Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers – Paul Seger (Funeral Director) and Larry Wiehn (Public Member)
 - Board of Mental Health – Rebecca Czaja-Stevens (Certified Social Worker)
 - Board of Athletic Training – Mitchell Kurtenbach (Athletic Training), Vanetta Early (Public Member)
 - Board of Dentistry – Gene Giles (Dentist)
 - Board of Behavior Analysts – Victoria Bock (Behavior Analyst)
 - Board of Medical Radiography – Challese Pearson (Medical Radiographer)
 - Physician Assistant Committee – Bethany Berg (Physician Assistant)
 - Board of Optometry – Jeremiah Baumfalk (Optometrist)
 - Board of Pharmacy – Darrell Klein (Public Member)
 - Board of Podiatry – Jon Goldsmith (Podiatrist)

- Dr. Rethwisch made a motion to approve Ms. Smidt, Ms. Ickes, Ms. Chandler, Ms. Bingham, Ms. Gegzna, Mr. Seger, Ms. Czaja-Stevens, Dr. Giles, Ms. Bock, Ms. Pearson, Ms. Berg, Dr. Baumfalk, Mr. Klein, and Dr. Goldsmith to their respective Professional Boards, seconded by Mr. Sikes; voting yes: 13 (Bertch, Kohles, Hubert, Lindau, Palmer, Pierce, Petersen, Reese, Rethwisch, Sikes, Stuhmer, Tusha, Vehle); voting no: 0; not voting: 0. Motion carried.
 - Dr. Kohles asked for the Professional Board vacancies be sent out with the agenda before the meetings.
 - The Committee asked DHHS staff to send the letters sent to interviewees for them to review.
 - No other updates.
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7. Public Health, Education, & Legislation Committee – Dr. Petersen, Committee Chair

- The certificate of appreciation for the Public Health Recognition Program is completed and will be presented to the Connection Project.
 - Emma D. is meeting the DHHS's communication team next week to put together a press release and figure out the best way for the Board to present the certificate.
 - The committee discussed the process for the upcoming legislative session. On the Thursday before the January 25 meeting, the committee will meet to discuss the proposed bills. The committee decided they would use the working document from last year to track bills.
 - No other updates.
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8. Approval of Committee Reports

- Dr. Rethwisch made a motion to approve Committee Reports, seconded by Dr. Hubert; voting yes: 13 (Bertch, Kohles, Hubert, Lindau, Palmer, Pierce, Petersen, Reese, Rethwisch, Sikes, Stuhmer, Tusha, Vehle); voting no: 0; not voting: 0. Motion carried.
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9. Public Comments

- No public comments
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10. Unfinished Business

- No unfinished business
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11. New Business

- No new business
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12. Topics for Next Meeting

- Approval of June 2026 minutes
 - Chair for the Lactation Consultants
 - Elections for 2027 Board Officer positions, committee choices
 - Meeting dates for 2027
 - Dr. Petersen requested the timeline for complaints and investigations for licensed professionals.
 - Dr. Tusha requested a review take place for the 407 process
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13. Next Steps and Adjournment

- Next regular meeting is Monday, November 16, 2026, at the Nebraska State Office Building in Lincoln.
- Meeting was adjourned at 2:52pm. Minutes were taken by Emma Davis and will be reviewed at the November 16, 2026, meeting.

Note: *If you would like any attachments mentioned in these minutes, or have other questions, please contact dhhs.boardofhealth@nebraska.gov.*

Updated: September 30, 2026