

## **KDHE Public Health Call May 22, 2012**

Miranda Steele, KDHE Communications, welcomed local health departments and hospitals to the fourth Public Health Call of the year. These phone meetings are on the fourth Tuesday of each month, and we didn't host a call in April due to the spring public health conference in Wichita. Miranda reminded everyone that the purpose of these calls is to maintain an open line of communication with local health officials and provide timely updates on topics impacting public health statewide.

Secretary and State Health Officer Dr. Robert Moser thanked Kansas public health partners for attending the 2012 Governor's Public Health Conference, as this year's meeting was a success due to their participation in the workshops and presentations. (Note: A message from Dr. Moser with a recap of the PH Conf. is in the May edition of Public Health Connections)

Nathan Bainbridge, KDHE Senior Executive Policy Analyst, provided a Legislative wrap-up briefing. He said that the omnibus bill provides another year of funding for the Local Environmental Protection Program and additional funding for the Early Detection Works program; however, the final report on funding for these two programs can't be made until the FY13 budget has been signed by the Governor. Nathan noted the passing and signing of Senate Bill 14, which provides an alternate source of funding for the state's Newborn Screening program. KDHE is very pleased with this law, as it replaces CIF funding for newborn screening in FY 13 with the more stable health maintenance organization privilege fee (which is already in existence). House Bill 2660 passed; it made some technical changes to Lexie's Law of 2010 and will allow for progressive enforcement of the law. There were two tobacco-related proposals in the Legislature this year that did not make the cut, thankfully: A resolution considered by the Legislature requiring KDHE to conduct a study and promote smokeless tobacco as a less-unhealthy alternative to cigarette smoking did not pass. House Bill 2690 did not stay alive this session, either; it proposed weakening the Clean Indoor Air Act by allowing smoking in businesses in which employees and customers were 21 or older. Legislators looked at a bill creating a KanCare Oversight Committee, and though that bill did not make it to the Governor's desk, KDHE and its Division of Health Care Finance, along with the soon-to-be Dept of Aging and Disability Services, will make sure that the KanCare planning and implementation process is a transparent one and will work with the current health care oversight committee to inform the Legislature and the public about the transition.

With the ongoing outbreak of pertussis in Johnson County and other places around the state, Cathy Shamwell with the Johnson County Dept of Health and Environment called in to provide a timely, first-hand perspective of a local health department responding to an outbreak of more than 100 cases. Cathy provided a break-down of where JCDHE was on the 127 cases that had been investigated thus far. This outbreak has impacted six school districts; Cathy described how they have been coordinating with school nurses and that the health department had even made a visit to one of the schools. Cathy noted the need for standardized information on pertussis to physicians statewide

during an outbreak such as this. She said KDHE assisted with needed follow-up investigation data and missing information on EpiTrax.

Miranda announced that on May 17 KDHE issued its first Warnings and Advisories for Harmful Algal Blooms in Kansas Lakes. She said this was an early start to the HAB season and reminded local health officials that a Blue-Green Algae toolkit is available on the KDHE website. Also, this year KDHE has made available a toll free number (1-855-HAB-LAKE) with an outgoing message listing the lakes under warning and advisory.

Jane Shirley, Director of Local Health, encouraged everyone to attend any one of the regional public health meetings being scheduled around the state this year. One has already been held in Garden City (May 18), and the topics were of great value to the participants. Jane said we would enjoy having the hospitals join the regional meetings as well. She reminded everyone to sign up for KS-HAN for health alerts and to rely on KS-TRAIN for professional development opportunities (and to register for the regional public health meetings!).