

**New York State Department of Health  
State Camp Safety Advisory Council Meeting**

**One University Place  
Edward S. and Frances Gilda George Education Center, Room 110A  
Rensselaer, New York 12144**

**AGENDA  
February 4, 2025  
10:30 A.M.**

1. Roll Call/Quorum Determination
2. Welcome/Council Administrative Business
  - Approval of Past Meeting Minutes
  - Bylaws Discussion
3. Communicable and Vector-borne Disease Trends
  - Bryon Backenson, Bureau of Communicable Disease Control
4. Norovirus and Camps
  - David Nicholas, Bureau of Community Environmental Health and Food Protection
5. Overview of Camp Incidents: Injury and Illness Trends
6. Status of Proposed Amendments
7. Other Business
8. Public Comments
9. Next Meeting
10. Adjourn

Information about the State Camp Safety Advisory Council and any available materials for the meeting will be posted at: [www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/camps/scsac.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/camps/scsac.htm).

# **State Camp Safety Advisory Council (SCSAC)**

## **February 4, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

### Members

Present: Dawn Ewing (Chairperson), Eric Bacon (Vice-Chairperson), Randy DeFrank, Jamie Sirkin, and Michael Clarke

### Members

Absent: Thomas Welch, M.D.

### Department of Health Staff

Present: Christine Westerman, New York State Department of Health (DOH)  
Darby Greco, DOH  
Eric Wiegert, DOH  
William Sacks, DOH  
Kathleen Bush, DOH  
James Maurer, DOH  
Amanda Tarrier, DOH  
David Nicholas, DOH  
Bryon Backenson, DOH  
Lauren Stairs, DOH  
Emily D'Angelo, DOH  
Elizabeth Brower, DOH  
Megan Hughes, DOH  
Jessica Egan, DOH

Mr. Maurer called the meeting to order at 10:32 A.M. at the University at Albany College of Integrated Health Sciences, Rensselaer, New York. A quorum was present with five members in attendance.

### **Council Administrative Business**

The meeting minutes from October 1, 2024, were unanimously approved by the Council.

Mr. Maurer informed the Council that a new meeting location will likely need to be identified going forward. The University at Albany will be moving out of the current space later this year and it is unknown what entity will lease the space in the future.

### **Bylaws Discussion**

The Council discussed potential changes and clarifications to its bylaws regarding membership, chairperson and vice chairperson term lengths and limits, and videoconferencing. Mr. Maurer presented suggested revisions to clarify that a member's term length follows that of the seat the member is appointed to fill. The Council agreed that the revision would be helpful.

The Council then discussed chairperson and vice chairperson term lengths and limits. Ms. Ewing supported increasing term length from two to four years, and said having a limit on the number of terms a member could serve could assist in getting new leadership. Mr. Bacon agreed with a four-year term length. With respect to term limits, he stated that the Council members have acted as equals even though the bylaws give the chairperson and vice-chairperson specific duties, for example if the Council ever needs to talk to a legislative body that the chairperson would be responsible, and that should be kept in mind. Mr. Clarke noted that seniority and experience are important for Council leadership, thus he did not agree with instituting term limits. The Council concluded that while term limits would encourage rotation in leadership, continuity and experienced leadership is also important, and agreed to consider changing the term length to four years but not to impose a term limit at this time.

Ms. Sirkin suggested discussing how videoconferencing is addressed in the existing bylaws and whether any changes were warranted. Mr. Sacks stated Open Meeting Law only permits members to participate from a non-public location through videoconferencing in extenuating circumstances; however, since the SCSAC is not subject to Open Meeting Law the Council could opt for more flexibility in remote participation. The Council felt that in-person attendance was valuable for collaboration but that having the option to participate remotely in extenuating circumstances was also important. They agreed to editing the bylaws to be consistent with Open Meeting Law. The Council also discussed the value of webcasting meetings so they could reach a wider audience. Mr. Maurer suggested that the Department of Health (Department) could explore broadcasting options which would allow for greater access to the public and audience participation, but they would need to investigate the technology.

Mr. Maurer stated that when the bylaws are revised there will also be a few administrative updates including making gendered terms non-gender specific.

Mr. DeFrank proposed a motion for the Department to draft changes to the bylaws for the Council's review that would add language to clarify a member's term length, modify the term length for the chairperson and vice chairperson from two to four years, and add clarifying language for expectations on in-person meeting attendance by Council members. Mr. Clarke seconded the motion, and the Council unanimously approved it.

### **Communicable and Vector-borne Disease Trends**

Mr. Maurer introduced Bryon Backenson from the Department's Bureau of Communicable Disease Control. Dr. Backenson provided an overview of avian influenza (bird flu) and discussed recent detections of the strain H5N1 in birds and mammals in New York State. He stressed that the overall risk to humans at this time is low. There have been 68 confirmed human cases across the United States since 2022, and there is no evidence of person-to-person transmission. However, there have also been confirmed cases in mammals, including in dairy herds in other states, and there is a need to remain vigilant. The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) recently put out a press release and a webpage about reporting instances when multiple dead birds are found to DEC, which is something that may come up in camps.

Mr. Bacon inquired how avian influenza is transmitted to humans and Dr. Backenson explained that it's largely from bird droppings/animal waste. There may also be exposure at cattle farms, such as raw milk splashed into a worker's eyes. Mr. Bacon and Mr.

Clarke expressed concern with bird feces in lake water. Dr. Backenson did not feel there was any increased exposure risk from swimming or boating.

The Council found the presentation informative and useful and thanked Dr. Backenson for presenting.

### **Norovirus and Camps**

Mr. Maurer introduced David Nicholas from the Department's Bureau of Community Environmental Health and Food Protection. Mr. Nicholas presented on foodborne illness outbreaks and considerations for norovirus outbreaks in a camp setting.

Mr. Nicholas provided some background and statistics on foodborne outbreaks. There has been an uptick in norovirus this winter. Although individual illness cases are not reportable illnesses, outbreaks are. He shared best practices for preventing norovirus in a camp setting which are based on preventing direct contact. For dining, this includes not sharing utensils and avoiding the use of self-service of food including family-style dining, salad bars, and buffets. Campers and staff should be screened for illness upon arrival, illnesses should be documented and monitored, cleaning and disinfecting should be done appropriately using products effective against norovirus, and hands washed frequently with soap and water. Hand sanitizer does not work well when hands are visibly soiled. Camps should report any cases of illness suspected of being food-, water-, or airborne, or spread by contact to their local health department, who can assist with guidance for limiting further spread.

The Council found the presentation educational and relevant and thanked Mr. Nicholas for presenting.

### **Overview of Camp Incidents: Injury and Illness Trends**

Ms. Tarrier provided an overview of the 2024 children's camps season incident data. A preliminary review has found that the 2024 season was largely consistent with previous years. Fractures and cuts were the most reported injury type, comprising over 80% of injuries. The most common activities at the time any type of injury occurred were field sports, playing, and walking/running. There has been a downward trend in the overall number of camp injuries over the past two decades, although there was a slight increase in 2024. There was a slight increase in potential rabies exposures in 2024 compared to 2023. The number of epinephrine administrations was slightly lower than in 2023. Numbers of both individual illness cases and outbreaks decreased to pre-Covid levels. Covid-19 was the leading cause of both individual illness cases and outbreaks in 2024, with similar numbers as 2023.

Ms. Ewing inquired about Lyme disease numbers. Ms. Tarrier stated that while there are cases every year, cases are generally not reportable under children's camps incident reporting requirements, and symptoms may not start when the camper is still at camp. Mr. Nicholas stated that Lyme is a reportable disease in New York State and healthcare practitioners are required to report cases to local health departments, but it can be difficult to determine exposure during the investigation, which is why the focus is on prevention.

Ms. Sirkin asked about the number of people with a potential rabies exposure that declined post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) treatment. Ms. Tarrier explained that local health departments assess potential exposures, determine when PEP is recommended and then offer PEP, but staff can decline, and parents may choose not to have their camper receive PEP.

### **Status of Proposed Amendments**

Ms. Tarrier said there were no updates on the proposed amendments to Subpart 7-2 and the existing regulatory package is still moving through the Department. She added that most of the proposed amendments have associated Public Health Law requirements that camps are already implementing. The amendments are not expected to be effective for the 2025 season, and camps should follow the Department's existing guidance on how to comply with recent changes to Public Health Law.

### **Other Business**

No other business was brought up for discussion.

### **Public Comments**

No public comments were posed.

### **Next Meeting**

Mr. Maurer asked the Council if they had any proposed agenda items for the next meeting, or other topics/trends they are seeing in camps. There was support among the Council for more conversations about climate change and Ms. Ewing asked the Department to keep an eye out for weather-related incidents/illnesses that are reported during the camp season. Ms. Sirkin asked that the next meeting include an update on the creation of a registry of non-regulated camps.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for October 21, 2025, and a Spring 2026 meeting was tentatively scheduled for February 25, 2026. The location for both meetings is to be determined.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:21 P.M.