

RiverStone Health
Board of Health Meeting Minutes
September 25, 2025

Jim Harris Chairperson of the Board, Presiding

Members Present: Carol Beam; Brent Cromley; Michael Dennis; John Dorr; Jim Harris; Lionel Tapia (virtual); Casey Wheeler; Derek Yeager

Members Absent: Spencer Anderson; Debbie Davis; Erin Lambert; Mark Morse; Steve Wahrlich

Staff Present: Jon Forte, President & CEO / Health Officer; Megan Gibson, Behavioral Health Systems Improvement Manager; Bob Janicek, Chief Integration Officer; Megan Littlefield – Chief Medical Officer; Carrie Ludwig, Executive Assistant; Eric Owen – Chief Operating Officer; Shanna Zier, Chief Financial Officer

Guests Present: Stewart Kirkpatrick, legal counsel – Crowley Fleck; Jena Lervick, legal counsel – Crowley Fleck

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Harris called the September 25, 2025 Board of Health meeting to order at 7:00 AM.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson Harris opened the floor for public comment. Hearing none, he proceeded to the next item on the agenda.

APPROVAL

August 28, 2025 BOH Meeting Minutes: Chairperson Harris requested a motion to approve the minutes (copy on file) of the August 28, 2025 Board of Health meeting that were previously distributed in the September 25, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

M O T I O N

Upon a motion duly made (Dennis), seconded (Dorr), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 28, 2025, BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING AS PRESENTED

CEO / HEALTH OFFICER REPORT

Jon Forte discussed highlights and provided updates and of the CEO “H.E.L.P” report (copy on file) that was previously distributed in the September 25, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

- RiverStone Health joins major medical organizations (ACOG, AAP, Society of Internal Fetal Medicine, etc.) in opposing misinformation regarding acetaminophen use during pregnancy. Acetaminophen remains a safe and important option for managing pain and fever during pregnancy when used under medical guidance.
- RiverStone Health donated an Automated External Defibrillator (AED), to the Huntley Seniors Group in support of community health and safety.
- The CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) met on September 18–19 to review vaccine recommendations for young children. The committee voted to remove the MMRV (Measles, Mumps, Rubella, and Varicella) combination vaccine from the childhood schedule for children under age four. ACIP maintained current guidance for separate MMR and Varicella vaccines and deferred any changes to the Hepatitis B schedule pending further review. The panel also unanimously reaffirmed approval for COVID-19 vaccines, recommending vaccination decisions be based on individual risk, particularly for those at higher risk of severe illness. Once approved by the Acting CDC Director, these vaccines will continue to be covered by all major insurers, including Medicaid, Medicare, and the Children’s Health Insurance Program.
- RiverStone Health is monitoring recent CDC changes introducing “shared clinical decision-making” for certain vaccinations, which emphasize individualized provider-patient discussions rather than routine recommendations. While awaiting guidance from Montana DPHHS on implementation, RiverStone Health remains committed to ensuring equitable access to vaccines, with influenza vaccinations available beginning October 1, 2025.
- Measles and other vaccine-preventable illnesses are resurging nationwide, signaling declining public trust in vaccines. Jon emphasized the importance of vaccinations to preserve community immunity and prevent loss of life.
- The University of Montana’s *State of Mind* project will host a community meeting on Friday, September 26, from 9–11 a.m. at RiverStone Health’s Lil Anderson Center. The program aims to strengthen youth mental health and resiliency through theatre, storytelling, and open community dialogue.
- Cushing Terrell selected RiverStone Health’s KidConnect program as the beneficiary of its Golf Classic tournament. The tournament, held at Pryor Creek Golf Club on August 22, raised an estimated \$20,000 in support of the program. Jon thanked Cushing Terrell for their continued partnership and commitment to helping kids and families in Yellowstone County connect with essential care and resources.
- RiverStone Health is actively recruiting a Chief People Officer to lead its Human Resources department following the retirement and departure of key leadership staff. This role will play a vital part in sustaining and enhancing the organization’s commitment to a positive workplace culture and strong employee engagement.

- August recorded the highest number of overdoses so far this year in Billings and Yellowstone County, with 22 incidents reported through the Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program (ODMAP). Of the 22, one was fatal, though it is unknown if naloxone was administered. The Billings Downtown area extending into the North Park and Pioneer Park neighborhoods was identified as the hotspot, accounting for eight overdoses.
- RiverStone Health is working to correct misinformation that suggests fentanyl exposure from handling mail or surfaces can cause overdose. Guidance from OSHA and the DEA indicates that fentanyl is not readily absorbed through the skin unless in a medical-grade transdermal patch with prolonged contact. RiverStone Health will offer training to educate the public on the use of Narcan in an emergency, ensuring they are prepared to respond quickly, safely, and effectively without fear of secondary exposure.
- No new measles cases have been reported in Montana; however, additional cases have emerged nationwide. On September 11, 2025, Los Angeles health officials reported the death of a child from subacute sclerosing panencephalitis (SSPE), a rare but fatal progressive brain disorder that develops as a complication years after measles infection. The child had contracted measles as an infant before they were eligible for the measles vaccine.
- A pertussis-related death was reported last week in Yellowstone County, marking the first in Montana since 2019. The patient, a woman in her seventies, had multiple underlying health conditions that contributed to the fatal outcome. Pertussis, or Whooping Cough, is a contagious respiratory illness that can cause severe complications, particularly in older adults or those with comorbidities. Vaccination and early treatment remain key to prevention and reducing illness severity.
- Board members received copies of RiverStone Health's Mission, Vision, and Values Core Strategic Pillars pocket reference guide. This guide outlines RiverStone Health's key strategic priorities and was created as a reference for staff to ensure alignment and reinforce RiverStone Health's mission and strategic goals across the organization.

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER REPORT

Dr. Megan Littlefield provided updates on activity in the CHC and the Chief Medical Officer Report (copy on file) that was previously distributed in the September 25, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

- Recruiting efforts are underway for the Montana Family Medicine Residency (MFMR) Class of 2029. We are implementing the Lightning Bolt scheduling system to improve the scheduling process.
- Planning is underway to launch our new Advanced Practice Provider (APP) residency program for nurse practitioners and physician assistants. While residency is not required in these fields, a national trend toward additional training is emerging. The program is scheduled to begin in summer 2026, accepting two residents each year. It will be built upon the existing Montana Family Medicine Residency (MFMR) model, incorporating weekly didactics, pediatric and geriatric rotations, and experiences at the hospital and Rimrock for substance use disorder treatment. A draft recruitment flyer has been created, and the program webpage is being developed for recruitment to begin in January 2026.

- RiverStone Health continues to face a significant shortage of Medical Assistants (MA), which limits provider capacity in clinics. Efforts are underway to develop an internal MA training program that formalizes onboarding, provides hands-on clinical experience, and could potentially support national certification in the future. This program is expected to launch within the next year to grow the pipeline of qualified MAs and strengthen clinic staffing and patient access.
- Recruitment for behavioral health providers, particularly in pediatrics, remains challenging due to limited candidate availability and wage considerations. Licensed candidates (LCPCs and LCSWs) require extensive supervised clinical hours before independent practice, creating additional training demands. RiverStone Health is expanding its capacity to supervise and mentor new behavioral health candidates while balancing the workload of experienced providers. Currently, two candidates are being supported, with plans to increase faculty involvement for training and supervision.
- September marks Suicide Prevention Month. Montana continues to rank among the top five states for suicide rates per capita, highlighting an urgent, ongoing public health concern. Mental health awareness remains a priority, and recent updates to the Montana Sports Physical form now include depression and anxiety screening questions, a positive step toward early detection and support for youth.
- RiverStone Health’s new telehealth platform is now fully operational and has exceeded performance and usability expectations. The platform allows providers to conduct virtual visits with patients seamlessly, even with limited staff support, enhancing access for patients and efficiency for clinicians.
- Online scheduling for same-day care appointments has launched successfully. Once initial testing is complete, this feature will expand to additional clinics. This development represents a major step toward improving patient access and streamlining appointment workflows.
- New automation tools, including a Droidal bot, are being implemented to reduce manual data entry in the electronic medical record system. These innovations aim to streamline workflows and improve efficiency, allowing staff to focus more on patient care rather than administrative tasks.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Shanna Zier provided an overview of the September 18, 2025 finance committee meeting and discussed highlights of the July 2025 financial statements.

Chairperson Harris requested motions to accept the meeting notes of the September 18, 2025 finance committee meeting and the July, 2025 financial statements (copies on file) that were previously distributed in the September 25, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

MOTION

Upon a motion duly made (Cromley), seconded (Beam), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE SEPTEMBER 18, 2025, FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES AS PRESENTED.

M O T I O N

Upon a motion duly made (Cromley), seconded (Dorr), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE JULY 2025 RSH FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AS PRESENTED.

SAFETY AND QUALITY COMMITTEE

Lionel Tapia, Committee Chair, provided an overview of the September 2, 2025 Safety and Quality committee meeting.

Chairperson Harris requested a motion to accept the meeting notes of the September 2, 2025 Safety and Quality committee meeting (copy on file) that were previously distributed in the September 25, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

M O T I O N

Upon a motion duly made (Cromley), seconded (Dorr), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE MEETING NOTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 2, 2025 SAFETY AND QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING AS PRESENTED

PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

Jon Forte provided an overview of the September 2, 2025 Public Health Policy Development Committee meeting.

Chairperson Harris requested a motion to accept the meeting notes of the September 2, 2025 Public Health Policy Development Committee meeting (copy on file) that were previously distributed in the September 25, 2025 Board of Health meeting packet.

M O T I O N

Upon a motion duly made (Dorr), seconded (Cromley), and unanimously carried, it was

VOTED: TO ACCEPT THE MEETING NOTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 2, 2025 PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING AS PRESENTED

OLD BUSINESS

No old business discussed.

NEW BUSINESS

Behavioral Health Systems Improvement Manager Introduction and Role Overview: Megan Gibson, RiverStone Health’s new Behavioral Health Systems Improvement Manager, introduced herself and provided an overview of her role and efforts to rebuild the Behavioral Health Systems Improvement Coalition in Yellowstone County. The coalition, now housed under RiverStone Health, aims to identify service gaps, strengthen crisis response coordination, and align local, state, and federal funding to better support behavioral health and substance use services. Current priorities

include crisis diversion planning, improving data collection and reporting, and developing a sustainable mobile crisis response model in partnership with local first responders and community agencies.

The coalition is transitioning from the former Substance Abuse Connect model to a broader behavioral health framework. An executive committee will convene within the next month to begin strategic planning and resource mapping, with the goal of completing a countywide behavioral health systems plan by summer. RiverStone Health continues to collaborate with the Montana Opioid Abatement Trust and other partners to ensure coordinated, data-driven, and community-informed system improvements.

Behavioral Health Gap Analysis: Jon Forte provided an overview of the recently completed Behavioral Health Gap Analysis noting that local legislative leaders requested that RiverStone Health, in collaboration with regional partners, including Billings Clinic, Rimrock Foundation, Intermountain Health, Community Crisis Center, New Day, Alternatives Inc., Bridgemont – Mental Health Center, Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch, Upstream, and the Hope Coalition, conduct a behavioral health facility gap analysis for the proposed Eastern Montana Forensic Behavioral Health Facility. The group expressed strong support for the facility, recognizing the urgent statewide and regional need for expanded behavioral health capacity, but also identified several key issues that must be addressed.

The analysis highlighted workforce shortages, noting limited behavioral health provider availability and insufficient training pipelines to support a new 35-40 bed facility. Additional gaps include the absence of a step-down facility for patients transitioning out of state hospital care, inadequate housing and community support systems, and poor discharge coordination from the Montana State Hospital leading to recidivism. The group also called for improved data transparency, integrated tracking systems, and Medicaid reimbursement rates that reflect inflation and staffing costs.

RiverStone Health and partners emphasized the importance of a coordinated, collaborative approach between state agencies and regional providers to ensure long-term sustainability, workforce development, and wraparound community supports. They continue to engage with DPHHS and legislative committees to advocate for funding, planning, and resource alignment that will strengthen Montana’s behavioral health continuum of care.

MEETING SCHEDULE

The next meeting of the Board of Health is scheduled for Thursday, October 23, 2025 at 7:00 AM in the first-floor conference rooms of the Lil Anderson Center.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

The September 25, 2025 Board of Health meeting was adjourned at 8:44 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Spencer Anderson
Secretary/Treasurer, Board of Health

Jonathan Forte
President & CEO

cc: Leadership Team, County Commissioners, hd\BOH\2025\minutes\09.25.25 BOH Minutes