

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Teresa Wilburn, Southern 7 County Health
Departments

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
TUMULTUOUS 2020 Oral History project

Interview # _ T20-A-L-2022-052

Teresa Wilburn, Director of Nursing at Southern Seven Health Department, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: July 22, 2022 phone interview conducted at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue

Technical Support (cameraman, etc):

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The interview(s) is/are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

Interview being
processed

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Teresa Wilburn, Director of Nursing for the Southern 7 County Health Departments, explains how the COVID Pandemic impacted the seven most southern Illinois Counties from March 2020 to July 2022. The interview looks at the challenges these County Health Departments faced during that time period.

Abstract

Teresa Wilburn, Southern 7 County Health Departments- *Tumultuous 2020*

Teresa Wilburn, born in Sikeston, Missouri in 1979, grew up in Kentucky and graduated from Ballard Memorial High School in 1997. During high school, she was active in the band, playing the saxophone, and assisted with the Senior Play. She later earned a Practical Nursing Degree and an Associate Degree in Nursing from Shawnee Community College (2010).

Before joining Southern 7, Teresa worked in mental health, community health, and as a stay-at-home mom. At Southern 7, she served as the Communicable Disease Director and is now the Director of Nursing for the southernmost counties in Illinois: Johnson, Alexander, Hardin, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, and Union, which border Indiana, Kentucky, and Missouri.

This interview explores the challenges posed by COVID-19 through the perspective of a Public Health Director of Nursing. It covers the response in the seven southern Illinois counties, including the health department's role, services maintained during the pandemic, and the specific challenges faced, such as preparing for COVID in early 2020, securing safety supplies, establishing contact tracing, mass testing and vaccination sites, and supporting high-risk locations like prisons and long-term care facilities. The interview also touches on the personal impact of the pandemic and lessons for future public health crises.

Headings/Key Words:

- 1) Description of the geographic area of the Southern 7 County Health Departments (7 counties, 2303 sq. miles the size of Delaware, & 62,000 people) bordering Kentucky, Missouri, and Indiana and the services provided including Head Start.
- 2) Readiness of the Southern 7 Health Departments following the Pandemic drill of 2018 in dealing with COVID in early 2020 (PPE supplies especially masks)
- 3) Early role of the Nurses in Contact Tracing and in COVID testing including mass testing sites
- 4) Months most difficult for the Health Department (July 2020 and December 2020)
- 5) Process for vaccinations (sites/National Guard/information to the public/Moderna first used)
- 6) Working with nursing homes, long term care facilities, prisons, a county jail, and a detention center with higher risked populations

- 7) Working with IDPH for grants & with other county health department both in Illinois and in Missouri/Kentucky
- 8) Types of questions asked by residents during the contact tracing process
- 9) Personal impact of COVID & impact on other public health areas such as mental health

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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