

July-August 2017

Partners Doing Innovative Work to Integrate Mental, Physical & Behavioral Health

By Cathleen Bennett, Commissioner, NJ Department of Health

Our health care and public health partners have been doing innovative work throughout New Jersey for years to integrate mental, physical and behavioral health care.

The South Jersey Behavioral Health Collaborative, the Camden Coalition of Health Care Providers, the Trenton Health Team and the Greater Newark Health Care Coalition have long used a multi-disciplinary team approach to improve the health of patients and reduce costly and repetitive hospital and ER use. Community health centers, hospitals and private physicians — who previously competed — now work together. The Department of Health has provided more than \$10 million in grants in recent years to Rutgers University Behavioral Health and other providers to offer holistic care for veterans. More than \$2 million has been awarded to establish autism medical homes at

NJ is moving closer to a system of care that treats the whole person.

Children's Specialized Hospital in Mountainside, Hackensack University Medical Center in Hackensack and Jersey Shore University Medical Center in Neptune to improve health outcomes for children with autism by bringing together primary care providers, subspecialists and autism care providers to treat the whole person. In January, we awarded a \$290,000 telehealth grant to Virtua Health to assist veterans who need access to primary and behavioral health care.

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WIC Participants, Seniors join Commissioner Bennett, Secretary Fisher to Celebrate National Farmers Market Week



From left to right—Commissioner Bennett, Rottkamp Farms workers, USDA Regional Administrator Pat Dombroski, Marie Swann and her 5-year-old niece Aaliyah Drews and Secretary Fisher.

Marie Swann doesn't let the \$20 in farmers market vouchers she receives through the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program go to waste. Instead, she looks forward to trading them in for Jersey Fresh produce at local farm stands.

"I'd rather use some of my vouchers here than at the store, because I support the local farm markets," said Swann, of Cedarville, who joined Health Commissioner Cathleen Bennett, Agriculture Secretary Douglas Fisher, Bridgeton Mayor Albert Kelly and federal USDA officials at Rottkamp Farms on Aug. 10 to celebrate National Farmers Market Week.

With red and white "Jersey Fresh" tote bags in front of them heaping with tomatoes, watermelons and corn, about a dozen women from Gateway Community Action Partnership — some pregnant and others with young toddlers in tow — and a handful of seniors listened to Commissioner Bennett explain the benefits of the Farmers Market Nutrition programs, overseen by the Department of Health. The bags also contained English and Spanish recipes provided by Gateway for potato patties, cauliflower in tomato sauce, fruit salad and a fresh fruit drink.

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New Jersey College & University Flu Challenge



Get involved! The Department of Health is kicking off a New Jersey College & University Flu Challenge, enabling colleges and universities in the state to team up with us to improve flu vaccination rates among students. The goal is to encourage friendly competition between institutions while promoting flu vaccination and awareness among students. The challenge is set to begin in September and will continue through December 2017.

It will be up to each participating institution to develop and implement a unique influenza campaign that fits the needs of the student body. The Department will monitor vaccination coverage rates through a short, student self-reported

electronic survey, supply technical updates and provide a resource manual to assist in developing ideas. The Department will provide a link to the survey for schools to circulate. All colleges/universities who are interested in participating can enroll [here](#).

In New Jersey and across the nation, fewer than one-third of young adults get vaccinated against influenza annually. The habits and lifestyles of students living on campus can increase their vulnerability to becoming infected with and spreading the flu. On average, college students with the flu can experience eight or more days of illness. Preventing the flu can reduce time away from class, limit expenses that may arise because of flu illness, and further reduce the spread of the disease.

To make this a successful campaign, we are requesting your participation. You can help to promote a healthy campus during this upcoming flu season by encouraging students and staff to participate in the flu challenge. If you have any questions, please contact Erika Lobe, Adolescent/Adult Immunization Coordinator, at erika.lobe@doh.nj.gov or 609-826-4861. (Photo courtesy of The Centers for Disease Control)

New Jersey Celebrates National Health Center Week 2017

Commissioner Cathleen Bennett joined the New Jersey Primary Care Association (NJPCA), the Metropolitan Family Health Network, and 23 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) across the State to celebrate National Health Center Week (NHCW) at the National Health Center Week Kick-off Ceremony in Jersey City on August 14, 2017.

More than 70 events were scheduled throughout the week to showcase health center programs and services and engage the public through free medical and dental screenings; information sessions and handouts on topics including cancer prevention, improving birth outcomes, diabetes, nutrition and fitness; along with back-to-school giveaways, food and entertainment for the entire family.

The Commissioner discussed what a valued asset health centers are in their communities and received an award from the Metropolitan Family Health Network and NJPCA along with U.S. Congressman Donald Payne, Jr.; Former NJ Governor James McGreevey; Executive Officer of the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Region II Dennis Gonzales; Jersey City Mayor Steven M. Fulop; Channel 12 News Anchor Carissa Lawson; and U.S. Senators Bob Menendez and Cory Booker also received awards.

A CarePoint Health mobile van provided free health screenings, and vendors from Horizon, United Healthcare, Aetna, WellCare, and Barnabas Health Home Care and Hospice provided handouts and educational materials to guests.

This year's NHCW theme, "Celebrating America's Health Centers: The Key to Healthier Communities," focused on populations that health centers serve, including the homeless, residents of public housing, migrant and seasonal agricultural workers, and children who might otherwise go without care.

In 2016, New Jersey's FQHCs provided more than 1.65 million medical and dental patient visits for more than 500,000 individuals. Nearly 28% of these patients are uninsured and 53% are on Medicaid. The services are provided regardless of the patient's ability to pay, and fees are based on a sliding fee scale.

For more information on New Jersey's Federally Qualified Health Centers, visit <http://nj.gov/health/fhs/primarycare/fqhc/index.shtml>.



Commissioner Cathleen Bennett (l.) stands with Jillian Hudspeth, CEO of the New Jersey Primary Care Association (NJPCA), at a celebration of National Health Center Week in Jersey City on August 14, 2017.

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Deborah Heart and Lung Center and Cooper University Health Care have partnered to launch of Hero Care Connect, which provides streamlined access to health care for active and retired military and their families in South Jersey. Veterans have disproportionate rates of mental illness, particularly Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), substance use disorders, depression and anxiety.

Recently, the Newark-based Nicholson Foundation awarded six community health centers and clinics \$225,000 each to support an integration model in their primary care clinics and practices.

“The Foundation’s goal is to make integrated care ‘the new normal’ throughout the state of New Jersey,” said Dr. Arturo Brito, Nicholson’s executive director and former Deputy Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Health.

Through the grants, the six organizations — which collectively serve 42,000 patients — will spend 15 months implementing a team-based integration model developed by Tennessee-based Cherokee Health Systems. The model involves adding a behavioral health consultant to primary care teams so mental and behavioral health care needs are addressed simultaneously with physical health.

The grantees are Kennedy Family Health Services in Somerdale, Hackensack Meridian Family Health Center in Neptune, the Visiting Nurse Association of Central Jersey Community Health Center in Asbury Park, AtlantiCare in Atlantic City and the Eric Chandler Health Center in New Brunswick.

There are many other examples of ongoing integration efforts around the state. In April, Deborah Heart and Lung Center and Cooper University Health Care unveiled HeroCare Connect, a partnership connecting active duty military, veterans, retirees and their families with specialized medical care supplementing primary care services at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst.

The Kennedy Health Care Alliance has already seen improvements in patient health outcomes after hiring behavioral health specialists to work in its primary care offices. Virtua Medical Group added licensed clinical social workers in two of its primary care offices. Lourdes is piloting a program in some of its Accountable Care Organization practices where a behavioral health practitioner is in the office once a week.

These innovations are in line with Governor Chris Christie’s proposed reorganization plan transferring the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services to the Department of Health from the Department of Human Services. The goal is to create a structure and system of care that treats the whole person, instead of patients navigating among different mental, physical and behavioral services. The transition to Health as the single state agency to perform the administrative and operational functions of all health services will expedite the integration of physical, mental and addictions health management.

“There is no longer a practical reason for the separation of two individual agencies to oversee health services, and mental/addiction services,” said Kennedy Health President & CEO Joseph W. Devine.

“The needs and services provided in these areas must be interconnected to ensure the best delivery of care to New Jersey residents,” Devine added. “Achieving this proposed combination will provide an oversight authority, which, in turn, will enable healthcare providers to collaborate more effectively and make an impactful change for the people of New Jersey.”

As our federal Region 2 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administrator noted, integration is critical if we are going to make Population Health progress, and this reorganization highlights the importance of treating health across the spectrum.

*The Value of a Health Educator
By Michael J. Hodges, HO, CHES
Health Officer/Director
Township of West Milford Department of Health*

Do you have a health educator in your health department? Although the profession is sometimes misunderstood, health educators are in the forefront of developing and managing essential relationships that keep the local public health system connected and working smoothly. Applying their skills in various areas, health educators are heavily involved in emergency preparedness planning, implementation and evaluation, STD/ HIV prevention and sex education, risk communication, injury prevention, and disease prevention and management. They act as ambassadors of the "health in all policies" model to other key partners/departments, such as planning, building/zoning, transportation, and first responders. They do this by translating science into actionable steps for fellow staff members as well as the public.

Health educators frequently take the lead and are often the most qualified in performing Community Health Assessments, collaborating with community partners to develop and implement a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), and facilitating the department’s Strategic Planning process. These are foundational processes that provide a roadmap for many of the department’s activities.

However, when local public health budgets are cut or scrutinized, health educators are unfortunately often the first to be reduced. In actuality though, they are essential to the smooth operation of the health department and the provision of the 10 Essential Public Health Services. In fact, CHES (Certified Health Education Specialist) and MCHES (Master Certified Health Education Specialist) are uniquely positioned to lead the process of health department accreditation, which is strongly encouraged throughout the state. Their specialized skill-set is a perfect match for navigating the PHAB (Public Health Accreditation Board) standards and measures and interpreting them to other staff. A crosswalk of health education competencies and PHAB Domains can easily illustrate how health education/promotion is woven throughout the accreditation process. Accreditation highlights the importance of health education to the field of public health. Additionally, the work that health educators do contributes greatly to “activities which are designed to facilitate behavioral and environmental adaptations to protect or improve health” (8:52-6.1). This is integral to developing a culture of health within the communities that we serve.

For more information about health educators in New Jersey, contact the New Jersey Chapter of the Society for Public Health Education at www.njsophe.org. If you currently have a health educator in your department, encourage them to join their professional organization and get involved.

NJ WIC Celebrates National Breastfeeding Month with Excellence Awards



During National Breastfeeding Month (August), the Department of Health is highlighting New Jersey's continued improvement in breastfeeding rates and recognizing outstanding breastfeeding programs and the dedicated professionals, volunteers, counselors, and organizations that encourage, support and empower mothers to breastfeed.

The New Jersey Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program provides breastfeeding promotion and support to low-income women across the state that encourages and empowers them to breastfeed their infants. Women who exclusively breastfeed receive the largest WIC food package to support their nutritional needs while nursing.

This year, three New Jersey WIC agencies will receive the highest level – the Gold Award – from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) *WIC Loving Support Award of Excellence for Exemplary Breastfeeding Support and Practices*. Selection is based on performance measures, effective peer counseling and community partnerships. The award's intent is to provide models that will motivate other local agencies to strengthen their breastfeeding programs and ultimately increase breastfeeding rates among WIC participants.

The recipients are the **Northwest New Jersey Community Action Partnership WIC Program**, the **North Hudson Community Action WIC Program** and the **Gloucester WIC Program**.

The 2017 CDC Breastfeeding Report Card indicates that New Jersey rates continue to increase in all categories. The most significant increases over the previous year occurred in the percentage of mothers exclusively breastfeeding at 3 months – up 13.8 percent (41.4 percent to 47.1%); breastfeeding at 6 months – up 12.4% (52.6% to 59.1%); and breastfeeding at 12 months – up 15.6% (30.2% to 34.9%).

For more information and resources for breastfeeding families, click [here](#).

National Immunization Awareness Month

During National Immunization Awareness Month, the Department of



Health is encouraging residents to make sure they are up-to-date with their immunizations to protect themselves and others from serious and sometimes deadly vaccine-preventable diseases. Vaccines are needed throughout the lifespan, from birth through adulthood.

One of the most important things a parent can do to protect their child's health is to stay up-to-date with the recommended childhood immunizations. When children are not vaccinated, they are at increased risk for disease and can spread disease to others in their play groups, child care centers, classrooms, and communities.

In recognition of National Immunization Awareness Month, the Department encourages health professionals to organize and participate in activities that promote the importance of immunizations. A list of events taking place throughout NJ is available [here](#). To emphasize the continued need for vaccines throughout adulthood, New Jersey designated August as New Jersey's Adult Vaccine-Preventable Disease Awareness and Improvement Month. Many New Jerseyans are not getting vaccinated to protect against vaccine-preventable diseases. Statewide and national adult immunization rates remain lower than childhood vaccination coverage.

Immunizations are especially important for those who are in close contact with infants, seniors, people with weakened immune systems and those who cannot be vaccinated because of their age or certain medical conditions. Everyone should have their vaccination needs assessed at their doctor's office, pharmacy or other visits with health care providers.

Additional vaccines may be recommended depending on a person's age, occupation, medical conditions, vaccinations they have already received or other considerations. Those who are traveling abroad may need additional vaccines. Check the CDC travel website available at www.cdc.gov/travel for more information.

Information about vaccines, recommended immunization schedules for all age groups and the Vaccines for Children Program (a federally-funded program that provides vaccines at no cost to children of low-income families) can be found at the [CDC website](#).

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The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program works with local farmers to provide locally-grown fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs to eligible women, infants and children. WIC certified farmers post yellow signs at farmers' markets to indicate their certification. Participants receive their checks during their regular visits to local WIC agencies.

There are 210 certified farmers statewide serving all 21 New Jersey counties. Certified farmers can accept both WIC and Senior farmers market vouchers.

In federal fiscal year 2016, about 44,000 WIC farmers market checks were issued, but one-third were not redeemed. More than \$300,000 worth of fresh produce that could have provided nutritious meals for eligible children and families was returned to the federal government.

"We do know we can do a better job," Commissioner Bennett said. "We want to make sure that everybody who is eligible for a voucher is actually using it and that our farmers are supported."

Last summer, members of the Governor's cabinet formed the Population Health Action Team (PHAT) to create and advance policies that build healthy communities and improve health outcomes. Promoting consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables is one of the goals of the Action Team.

"Events like these highlight the importance of coordination and support of shared state health policies and programs by the PHAT," Commissioner Bennett said.

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Each eligible WIC participant receives \$20 worth of vouchers for the season to buy fresh produce from authorized farmers. The checks are issued one time for the entire season, and the program operates from June 1 to November 30 annually. All WIC clinics provide classes in nutrition education.

The total value of a WIC farmers market voucher for an entire family depends on family size and situation. For example:

- Each pregnant woman eligible for WIC can receive two \$10 vouchers per season (\$20)



- Each breastfeeding mother eligible for WIC can receive two \$10 vouchers (\$20)
- Each child between the ages of 2 and 5-years-old can receive two \$10 vouchers (\$20)

[Some WIC clinics](#) have farmers come to them or have farm stands within walking distance. Some farmers also travel to WIC offices to sell produce and make it easier for participants to access fruits and vegetables.

The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program promotes nutritional health among senior citizens by providing locally-grown fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs. Participants must be at least 60 years old and meet certain [Federal Income requirements](#). Each eligible senior can receive five, \$5 vouchers per season

(\$25). In federal fiscal year 2016, about 39,000 senior farmers market checks were issued and 76 percent were used.

Through a partnership with OceanFirst Bank, Bridgeton's Mobile Meals and Library operate out of a colorfully-painted, retrofitted school bus that distributes fresh fruits and vegetables to the local area, Mayor Kelly said. Mobile vans and buses are convenient ways to provide low-cost produce right in the communities that could benefit from them, he said.



Community Outreach July-August 2017



The DOH won a 2017 Berreth Award for Excellence in Public Health Communications for our #ZapZika Public Awareness campaign. Nicole Kirgan accepted the award on August 14 during the National Public Health Information Coalition conference in Atlanta.

July 18 Commissioner Bennett (second from left) and Shereen Semple (right), Director of the Department's Office of Local Public Health, had a walking meeting with the New Jersey Society for Public Health Education (NJSOPHE) at Sayen Gardens in Hamilton. Suzanne Miro, 2nd from right, is senior health communications specialist for the Department's Communicable Disease Service and NJSOPHE Chapter Delegate.

July 19 Commissioner Bennett served as moderator of the Hospital CEO panel at the 3rd Annual Healthcare Forum at Rowan University.

August 2 Commissioner Bennett spoke about Department priorities to Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey members in Mount Laurel.

August 10 Commissioner and Secretary of Agriculture Fisher promoted WIC Farmers Markets vouchers at Rottkamp Farm in Bridgeton.

August 14 Commissioner joined the NJ Primary Care Association to kick off National Health Center Week at Metropolitan Family Health Network in Jersey City.

August 17 Commissioner joined Newark Community Health Centers in Newark to celebrate National Health Center Week.



Raising Awareness of Excessive Tanning Behaviors

By Jerod Stapleton, Ph.D



There are well-publicized dangers of excessive exposure to ultraviolet radiation for the purposes of tanning, whether sunbathing outdoors or the use of indoor tanning beds. Tanning has been associated with increased risk of all types of skin cancer, including the deadly melanoma, and is linked to wrinkling and other types of damage that resemble premature skin aging. It is encouraging to see that the increased awareness of these risks appears to have resulted in reduced rates of intentional tanning with tanning beds over the past few years in the United States.

Researchers have recently begun to take a closer look at the possibility that tanning could have addiction-like qualities. Our recent scientific literature review article (Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, published online June 22, 2017) presents the case for considering excessive tanning as a potentially addictive behavior starting with evidence that exposure to UV radiation can result in the stimulation of pleasure/reward responses in the body that mimic, although to a lower intensity, responses produced during the use of addictive drugs. Recently, researchers demonstrated these processes by showing that mice chronically exposed to UV radiation develop biological and behavioral signs of dependency. This small but growing body of research has led a growing number of researchers to begin seriously study tanning as a behavioral addiction and to document the problematic aspects of excessive tanning.

Although there is no official recognition of tanning addiction by the psychiatric community, research suggests there are some warning signs that an excessive tanner may be experiencing addictive-like qualities of UV exposure, including:

- Tanning when feeling distressed or in a bad mood
- Experiencing desires, urges or cravings to go tanning
- Repeatedly making unsuccessful attempts to control, reduce or stop tanning
- Feeling irritable when attempting to cut down or stop tanning
- Experiencing problems or missed time with social, education or work obligation because of time spent tanning

Unfortunately, as highlighted by our recent literature review, effective treatments for tanning addiction or programs to assist in tanning cessation have yet to be developed. For those looking to reduce tanning activity, set a goal and make a plan that might include alternate behaviors such as using sunless tanning products like creams or sprays. It is also important to remember that changing one's behavior is difficult and that it may take multiple attempts to have the desired success.



Jerod Stapleton, Ph.D., is a behavioral scientist in the Population Science Program at Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey and an assistant professor of medicine at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

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