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**Public Health Summit V Convenes to Tackle Broadened Priorities,  
*Encompassing Substance Abuse Prevention alongside Mental Health Promotion***

Brewster, NY—More than 85 public health partners from 43 different community agencies convened at Putnam Hospital Center on Tuesday, October 20, for the Fifth Annual Public Health Summit, organized by the Putnam County Department of Health with support from the hospital.

Health Commissioner Allen Beals, PHC president James Caldas and Commissioner of the Department of Social Services and Mental Health, Michael Piazza, opened the five-hour event, sharing their perspectives on the upcoming challenges as the healthcare marketplace and public health infrastructure shift, regroup and strengthen together.

“Tremendous scientific advances have taken place in medical care over my forty years practicing medicine,” noted Dr. Beals, who practiced as an obstetrician/gynecologist before becoming Health Commissioner in 2012. “Today, 50 percent or more of illnesses have a behavioral component. Now our approaches must be different.”

Preventing chronic diseases and promoting mental health remain top priorities in Putnam. However, given Putnam’s opioid overdose problem—there has been a chilling 233 percent increase in overdose deaths from heroin and opiates from 2011 to 2012 here—this component has been formally incorporated into the mental health priority. In terms of straight numbers, 63 overdose deaths have occurred between 2011 and 2015, according to statistics presented by Kristin

McConnell, executive director of the National Council on Alcoholism and other Drug Dependencies (NCAAD)-Putnam, and Doreen Lockwood, project coordinator, Partnership for Success, Putnam's Coalitions That Care (CTC).

“Promoting mental health and preventing substance abuse are intricately linked,” continues Dr. Beals. “They are part of a cluster of what is called “MEB” disorders—mental, emotional, and behavioral—that affect one in five young people nationally. These include conduct disorders, depression and substance abuse , and about 75 percent of them are first diagnosed between the ages of 14 and 24 years of age.” Putnam's top two priorities now mirror exactly those crafted by the New York State Department of Health's Prevention Agenda 2013-2017.

Unlike last year's summit which was held close on the heels of the U.S. Ebola cases, this year's event had no distractions. From the first presentation to the last, work was highly focused on strengthening community partnerships to anticipate, strategize and problem solve around the county's Community Health Improvement Plan, the “CHIP.” The “Forces of Change” exercise was conducted in the morning session and “breakout” groups were held in the afternoon to allow community partners to split up and focus in on one priority to share ideas, lay groundwork and formalize joint plans.

The Health Department's mission is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit the PCDOH website at [www.putnamcountyny.com/health](http://www.putnamcountyny.com/health) or visit the social media sites on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/putnamhealth](http://www.facebook.com/putnamhealth), [www.facebook.com/RunWalkPutnam](http://www.facebook.com/RunWalkPutnam), [www.instagram.com/PutnamHealthNY](http://www.instagram.com/PutnamHealthNY) and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.