



Concerning Our Health

Greetings from the Putnam County Department of Health ...

The new year 2012 marks an exciting time for Putnam County. MaryEllen Odell took office in November as the first female County Executive in Putnam's history. It is also a time for the Health Department to reflect on our achievements and new aspirations. Providing the best start for mothers and babies has always been a top priority and this issue highlights both our high breastfeeding rates on page 3 and the new initiative to reduce cesarean births on page 4. Other stories spotlight our growing collaborations with partners throughout the region to preserve and protect the health of our residents.

—Rebecca Wittenberg, RN, BSN, Public Health Director



Disaster Preparedness Experts Provide Training for Putnam Agencies Serving Special Needs Populations

Personal preparedness and continuity of operations during disasters are priority issues for organizations serving the special needs populations. Sponsored by the Special Needs Subcommittee of the Putnam County Disaster Preparedness Task Force, dozens of agency representatives gathered at Putnam Hospital Center in late October to learn from experts at the National Center for Disaster Preparedness, part of the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University.

Michael J. Reilly, DrPH, MPH, Associate Research Scientist and Director, Division of Planning and Response, and David Abramson, PhD, MPH, Director of Research, were the speakers for the event.

Dr. Reilly painted an "unusual-event" scenario, provoking thought and launching the discussion. How events might potentially impact a facility, its infrastructure, and

transportation issues not only by clients, but also by vendors and employees, were all key considerations, along with protecting and educating the organization's workforce so as to ensure continuity of services.

Rather than endorse a cookie-cutter approach, Dr. Abramson advocated that agencies address the three "SOS" elements—**S**ystems, **O**rganization and leadership, and **S**ervices and client/stakeholder support. This open-ended approach for developing a COOP (Continuity of Operations Plan) involves answering some basic, yet key questions:

- What is "mission critical" for your organization?
- How can you protect that and build in redundant and back-up systems?
- What roles will staff play?

(continued on page 2)

2nd Annual Public Health Summit Convened

Dozens of public health and healthcare administrators, along with community providers, have been studying and discussing top public health priorities for County residents. They gathered for the 2nd Annual Putnam County Public Health Summit, held in the Carmada Care Center of Putnam Hospital Center (PHC) last spring. Similar to preceding local and regional Health Summit conferences, the 2011 forum was funded by the Healthcare Efficiency and Affordability Law (HEAL9) planning grant from New York State. The previous local County event and this one were organized by the Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH).

The broad-based regional agenda focused on four priority areas in Putnam—access to care, chronic disease prevention, mental health and substance abuse prevention, and community preparedness—identified jointly through the PCDOH's Community Health Assessment and PHC's Community Service Plan.

Epidemiologist Erin Ray Pascaretti, RD, MPH, HEAL9 project manager from the PCDOH, provided an overview of the collaboration between the seven Hudson Valley counties. Ms. Pascaretti identified numerous challenges that cut across all concerns: care affordability, uninsured/underinsured populations, transportation, coordination of care, *(continued on page 2)*

Share Your Insights

Physicians are invited to share their opinions and insights into the challenges of prescription drug abuse in Putnam County. Take the anonymous survey until May 2012 at [SurveyMonkey.com: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FH93DL5](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FH93DL5)

The survey is being conducted by the Putnam County Communities That Care (CTC) Coalition to formulate a community needs assessment. A special physician seminar to be held at Putnam Hospital Center is planned for the spring. The mission of the Putnam CTC Coalition is to build a safe and healthy family-oriented community. This includes a focus on reducing the use of harmful substances by adolescents. The group is composed of individuals from all sectors of the community who work together to reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors through education, enforcement and policy initiatives.

Flu season 2011/2012 recap: School-based vaccine programs gain popularity

For a second year, school-based influenza immunization programs gained popularity. Two new school districts—Haldane and Putnam Valley—joined the program with Mahopac and Carmel, where convenient flu vaccines were offered last year. More than 1,300 students and employees were immunized quickly, safely and free of charge on-site at school.

The repeatedly successful “Vote and Vax” event on Election Day resulted in the administration of 859 doses of flu vaccine in 4 hours. This large scale undertaking once again served as an emergency preparedness drill, testing Point of Dispensing (POD) procedures that would be utilized in the event of a public health crisis that necessitated mass vaccination.

Other large clinics were held around the county, including four at the Carmel and Garrison firehouses where 989 residents received their annual influenza vaccine.

In all, more than 3,887 influenza vaccines were administered as of January 31, 2012 to Putnam County residents, ages 6 months and up, since September 2011.

Family Preparation is Key for Early Intervention Referral

Physicians play a dual, front-line role in the Early Intervention Program (EIP) in New York State. Not only are they key in recognizing children with developmental delays, but they also have an opportunity to prepare parents and caregivers, helping them form realistic expectations about the EI program. As the chief source of EI referrals to the Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH), pediatricians and family medicine physicians can provide further support to patients and their caregivers by advising them that after the completion of full multi-disciplinary evaluations, close to half of all referred children do not meet the eligibility criteria for services.

Strictly set NYS eligibility criteria fall into two major categories. The first group of *automatic* eligibility comes with a *diagnosed physical or mental condition* that carries a high probability of a developmental delay. Down syndrome or other chromosomal abnormality, or genetic or congenital disorders are examples of this first group. The second type of *possible* eligibility encompasses those *already experiencing significant delays* in one, or

more, of five specified domains—cognitive, physical (including vision and hearing), communication, social or emotional, and/or adaptive development. Medical conditions alone, (such as Torticollis or feeding) without an accompanying developmental delay, are not criteria for EIP eligibility.

Standardized tests, clinical clues, risk factors and other pertinent information are all considered by professional evaluators to make the final determination based on the State criteria.

Easing the process for concerned parents and caregivers is a continuing challenge and the PCDOH is developing an informational sheet designed to enhance understanding of EIP eligibility. Copies will be sent to providers in the spring and available upon request.

Ineligible children who show some delay, or who are at risk of delay, may be referred to the Putnam County Child Find Program with parental permission. A child’s development can be monitored through this program up to the age of three by Child Find Health Department nurses, with re-referral to EIP at a later date if concerns persist.

For information or referrals to Early Intervention

Kathy Fulton
Gail Maisel, LCSW

845-808-1640 phone
845-808-4092 fax

2nd Annual Public Health Summit Convened, *continued from front page*

limited acceptance of Medicaid, as well as cultural competence, health literacy and communications issues. She outlined “best practices” from the neighboring counties that had been identified through HEAL9 data and provided a peek at initiatives continuing beyond HEAL9 funding, under the direction of the Hudson Valley Regional Health Planning Coalition. (See related story on page 4.)

Donna McGregor, President & CEO, Putnam Hospital Center, and Deb Gesner, Manager, Project Development for Health Quest, spoke on behalf of PHC’s new Community Needs Board and its role as hospitals become more invested in chronic disease prevention.

Former Putnam Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD,

now at the Westchester County Health Department, described the pervasive picture of chronic disease that emerges reviewing death certificates in Putnam, as elsewhere. The progress with the access-to-care issues was reported on by Anita Wilenkin, Chief Operating Officer, Open Door Family Medical Center, who discussed the scheduled 2012 opening of the Federally Qualified Health Center in the Village of Brewster.

The final presentation came from Michael J. Piazza, Jr., Putnam County Commissioner of Social Services, Mental Health and the Youth Bureau, who reviewed the complicated situation facing the mental health/substance abuse community in the County, as New York State pushes for consolidation and other cost-savings measures.

Disaster Preparedness Experts,

continued from front page

- What is your agency’s communications plan?
- How will you coordinate with emergency services and public health departments?
- What support can you provide clients, vendors and other stakeholders?

The “take-home” message was that while special needs populations are vulnerable, vulnerability itself is not a fixed characteristic, but rather a predisposition to higher risk. COOP preparation, checklists, training, drills and exercises all play roles in reducing this vulnerability in the face of disaster.

Breastfeeding Assistance Available Free to All New Moms

The worldwide initiative to increase breastfeeding rates has been gaining momentum in Putnam County—thanks to the PCDOH’s maternal child health nurses and WIC peer counselors. All have specialized training as lactation counselors and provide free breastfeeding assistance to new mothers.

Diane Liscia, RN, MS, CLC, and Jean Ralston, RN, MSN, the full-time maternal child health (MCH) nurses at the Health Department, along with Maria Sihuay, RN, a bilingual/bicultural, Spanish-speaking, part-time MCH nurse, typically visit all new moms who are physician- or self-referred within one or two days of hospital discharge. They can also be called at any time post-partum. Latching issues, sore nipples and plugged ducts, mastitis, pumping issues and milk storage, poor or over supply of milk and strong let-downs are just some of the concerns with which they can help. In addition to observing breastfeeding, they bring a scale to weigh newborns before and after feeding to ensure adequate intake. Both first-time moms who lack confidence or experienced mothers with new issues can benefit from the one-on-one support. The nurses return approximately a week later to follow-up and further enhance breastfeeding success.

The WIC program (see story on the right) also promotes breastfeeding to clients through a dedicated, grant-funded program led by breastfeeding peer counselors Tamara Casablanca, CLC, and Dennise Sisalima, CLC, both bilingual Certified Lactation Counselors. An advantage to the WIC program is that Ms. Casablanca and Ms. Sisalima have prenatal contact with the moms and can encourage the idea of breastfeeding during pregnancy and provide basic information both before and after the baby is born. WIC breastfeeding rates are more easily available than county rates and are 81 percent in the first month post-partum—above both the Healthy People 2010 health objective of 75 percent and the New York State rate, which was 61 percent in 2009, according to NYS WIC data.

Extending the breastfeeding period is another goal of the PCDOH’s program as Putnam rates drop to 36 percent at six months, compared to 30 percent statewide. Both the American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization recommendations call for exclusive breastfeeding for a minimum of six months to provide infants with the best nourishment possible.

For referrals to the breastfeeding program

Diane Liscia, RN, MS, CLC
Jean Ralston, RN, MSN
Maria Sihuay, RN

845-808-1335 phone
845-808-1336 fax

For referrals to the WIC breastfeeding program

Lorry Loughman, RD, CLC
Kim Roberts, DTR, CLC

845-808-1337 phone
845-278-6026 fax

Working and Unemployed Families—Both May Qualify for WIC

In times of high unemployment, the number of people eligible for WIC services rises. This unfortunate fact is true here in Putnam County as it is elsewhere around the country. As a supplemental food program for women, infants and children, WIC provides much-needed assistance for those who live in New York State and meet certain federal income standards, or are receiving various forms of government aid.

Nutrition education and breastfeeding support (see story at left), as well as vouchers for nutritious foods, are provided by a highly trained and knowledgeable staff. The nine-member team includes two Registered Dietitians (RD), a Public Health Nurse (PHN) with a Master’s Degree in Nursing and other advanced practice degrees, a nutritionist and a nutritionist assistant/phlebotomist, two breastfeeding peer counselors and two clerks. Five individuals are bilingual, including a nutritionist. Clients are assisted individually and via group sessions. Pregnant and nursing moms and children under the age of five may all be eligible.

Four convenient Putnam locations make accessing services easier for families. The main site is located at the Health Department, 1 Geneva Road and Route 312 in Brewster, with a second WIC Office at 121 Main Street in the Village of Brewster.

Two other satellite clinics are located in Mahopac and Cold Spring. WIC clients in New York State can obtain services at any New York office.

For referrals to WIC

Lorraine Ciaiola, MS, RD, CLC

845-808-1416 phone
Village of Brewster Office

Barbara Simone, RN, MSN, FNP

845-808-1337 phone
845-278-6026 fax
Health Department Office

Food Day Celebrated in Putnam

National Food Day held on October 24 this year received the support of the Live Healthy Putnam (LHP) Coalition and many other local organizations. The idea behind the new national observance, officially proclaimed in Putnam by the County Legislature, is to encourage Americans to “eat real” in simplest terms, by incorporating more fresh, unprocessed foods into their diet. These goals are part of what the LHP Coalition is all about—preventing chronic diseases and improving the health of residents. The group, founded and led by the



Putnam County Department of Health, is made up of various organizations throughout the County including school districts, hospital and other health-related organizations, nonprofit and government agencies, restaurants and supermarkets—even small businesses, faith-based groups and libraries—all with the common interest of reducing the burden of chronic disease.

Food Day was created by the nonprofit Center for Science in the Public Interest to change the way Americans
(continued on back cover)



Putnam County Department of Health
 1 Geneva Road
 Brewster, NY 10509
 Phone: (845) 808-1390
 Fax: (845) 278-7921

Inside this issue ...

Early Intervention Program Guidelines	2
Influenza Immunization 2011/2012 Recap	2
Free Breastfeeding Support Available	3
Working and Unemployed Families May Qualify for WIC	3
Food Day Celebrated	3

Find us online ...

@www.putnamcountyny.com
 or follow us on FaceBook

Putnam County Administration

MaryEllen Odell, County Executive
 Rebecca Wittenberg, Public Health Director
 Robert Morris, PE, Director, Environmental Health

Editorial Board

Susan Hoffner, Health Educator
 Barbara Ilardi, MPA, CDN, Supervising Public Health Educator
 Kathy Percacciolo, RN, BSN, Supervising Public Health Nurse

Layout and Design

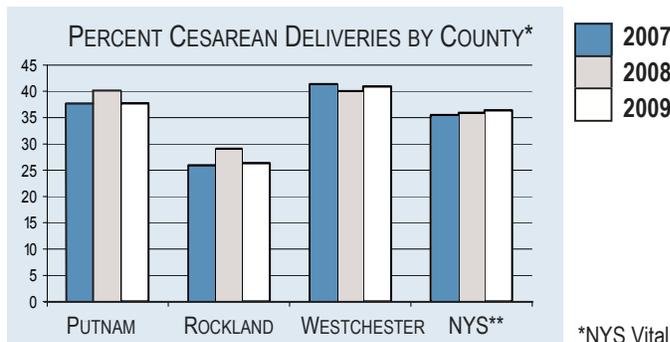
Susan Hoffner, Health Educator

Regional Initiative Aims to Reduce C-Sections, Improve Infant Outcomes

Reducing cesarean-section procedures is at the heart of a new educational program being designed by the Hudson Valley Regional Health Planning Coalition. Giving babies more time for in utero development reduces costly complications after birth. Evidence from the NYSDOH and Regional Perinatal Centers across the state sheds light on the best way to accomplish this.

Supported by the NYS Obstetric and Neonatal Quality Collaborative, a physician-led team surveyed the 18 Regional Perinatal Center hospitals to identify existing programs. The team instituted a data collection and management strategy, and utilized a “scheduled delivery form” for physicians to check off reasons for performing C-sections, making them easier to track. In the first six months, simply by heightening awareness of the issue, scheduled deliveries were reduced by 31 percent, while

C-section rates decreased by 33 percent. The Hudson Valley Regional Planning Coalition, composed of health



departments from Putnam, Ulster, Dutchess, Sullivan, Orange, Rockland, and Westchester Counties, has further identified a local “best practice” program at Suffern’s Good Samaritan Hospital. There they practice zero tolerance for pre-planned and elective C-sections. It is not as unusual as it may sound, but part of a growing national trend following the highest rise in C-section rates ever reported in the U.S., from 1991 to 2007.

*NYS Vital Statistics **NYS without New York City

Food Day Celebrated in Putnam, continued from page 3

eat and think about food. Food Day activities in Putnam included a “What’s on My Plate?” movie screening at the Freight House Café in Mahopac, a farm tour and cooking demonstration hosted at Ryder Farm in Brewster, a farm tour and film screening at Cascade Farms, a lecture “From Garden to Table” at the Southeast Museum, and a movie screening of “Food Inc.” at the Kent Library. As part of their annual Teddy Bear Pajama Party, Putnam Hospital Center offered healthy snacks and smoothies and entertainment by FoodPlay Productions. Five school districts—Carmel, Mahopac, Haldane, Brewster and Garrison—also planned various activities related to Food Day.