



PUTNAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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www.putnamcountyny.gov/health

A PHAB-ACCREDITED HEALTH DEPARTMENT

MaryEllen Odell

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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INTERIM COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Preparedness Month Observed for Fifteenth Year;

Helping Children Recover Remains Priority in Putnam

BREWSTER, NY —The tornadoes that touched down in Putnam County this past May are just one example of how unexpected, disastrous events can occur. Preparing for these types of occurrences is what National Preparedness Month is all about. This year, the 15th annual September observance once again serves as a call-to-action, and the theme, “Disasters Happen, Plan Now, Learn How,” is good advice for everyone. It is also at the heart of the continuing work of the Putnam County Community Resilience Coalition (CRC). This group of agencies from the public, private and non-profit sectors has been working year-round, building a strong foundation to ensure the safety and well-being of children before, during and after disasters. Putnam is one of only two counties in the U.S. working to develop a plan that will help build resilient communities nationwide.

“Planning for emergencies is a challenge, for individuals and communities alike,” says County Executive MaryEllen Odell. “But the safety of our residents has always been, and continues to be, our county’s top priority. Many county agencies work together to make us better prepared. The health department conducts yearly drills, partnering with the Bureau of Emergency Services and our emergency responders, as well as law enforcement and the departments of highway and facilities, social services and transportation. Protecting our children, the most vulnerable members of our community, is paramount. We do everything we can to ensure their safety, protection and resilience.”

For the past three years, Putnam County’s Community Resilience Coalition has taught young children about emergency preparedness through fun, engaging activities, while laying a foundation among community groups to build a mental health infrastructure that can more fully support children affected by disasters.

“Our work with the Community Resilience Coalition has brought a new and essential focus to our emergency preparation and plans,” says interim Health Commissioner Michael J.

Nesheiwat, MD. “Children have of course been incorporated in previous plans. However, they were not singled out and so their needs were addressed to a lesser degree. This work has totally shifted that thinking.”

Dr. Nesheiwat went on to encourage all individuals in the county to take personal steps as well. “It doesn’t have to be complicated,” he said. “Create a list of emergency contacts and share them among family members and close friends. Adding to, or updating your emergency supplies at home, is another easy step. These are simple things nearly everyone can do.”

“Getting accurate information during an event is also important,” says Commissioner Ken Clair, of the Bureau of Emergency Services, “You can sign up for free local and state emergency messages from NY Alert.” Real-time information about current issues or threats can be sent to a cell phone. You pick the alerts you want and can choose delivery by email or text. You can also cancel or change at any time. Your personal information is completely protected and never shared. Sign up at www.nyalert.gov.

“Residents who would like to do more should consider joining the Medical Reserve Corps,” says Dr. Nesheiwat. “We still need all types of volunteers, both non-medical and medical. During an event, help is always needed with logistical support or administrative tasks to support the county’s work.” Interested residents can find out more information by visiting the Putnam County website or calling the health department at 845-808-1390.

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The mission of the **PUTNAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (PCDOH)** 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 or visit the social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

The **COMMUNITY RESILIENCE COALITION (CRC)** is a community-based partnership of public, private and not-for-profit stakeholder groups working together to assess and strengthen community resilience to support the protection and recovery of children in the event of an emergency. It is part of the Resilient Children, Resilient Communities initiative, led by the National Center for Disaster Preparedness (NCDP) at Columbia University’s Earth Institute in partnership with Save the Children, funded by a grant from the biopharmaceutical healthcare company, GSK. For more information, visit www.putnamcountyny.com/health/community-resilience-coalition or www.ncdp.columbia.edu/rcrc.

The **BUREAU OF EMERGENCY SERVICES OF PUTNAM COUNTY** keeps county residents safe from harm, by providing services to all fire, EMS and related emergency management initiatives. This includes training and equipping special teams for fire investigation, fire police response and hazardous materials mitigation, and a credible assessment team (CAT). Additionally the BES maintains a countywide communications system and continually seeks ways to improve response to both natural and manmade disasters. For more information, please visit the Bureau of Emergency Services website at www.putnamcountyny.com/pcbes/.

The **PUTNAM COUNTY MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS (MRC)** recruits and trains volunteers to support and strengthen the county’s existing response system. Its mission is to engage volunteers to strengthen public health, emergency response and community resiliency. Local community-based MRCs mobilize volunteers who donate their time and expertise, not only to prepare for and respond to emergencies, but also to promote healthy living throughout the year. For further information, please visit the MRC at www.putnamcountyny.com/health/mrc/.

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