

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS IN NEW YORK STATE WHAT WE ARE—WHAT WE DO



County Health Officials of New York

Leading the way to healthier communities

Local health departments (LHDs) put the NYS Prevention Agenda into action at the local level. LHDs work within the operating standards developed by the National Association of City and County Health Officials. Below are the 10 standards with explanations of how New York State's LHDs meet them, including specific local examples. Your local health departments (LHDs) at work:

- ➔ **Monitor health status and understand health issues facing the community:** LHDs conduct community health assessments by analyzing community health quality data and convening community stakeholders, such as hospitals, other health care providers, schools, businesses and non-profit organizations to identify and design strategies to address the health and prevention priorities in their communities. *Oneida County's LHD and its Oneida County Health Coalition (OCHC) convene quarterly to develop an Oneida County Quarterly Health Report Card on a selected health topic. Each meeting includes a presentation of quantitative county data findings from state and local sources, followed by a facilitated group discussion to solicit qualitative feedback on underlying causes, trends, gaps in services, vulnerable populations, areas for improvement, and existing community collaborations. The Report Card includes links to evidence-based interventions, and features topics such as Substance Abuse, Obesity and Mental Health.*
- ➔ **Protect people from health problems and hazards:** LHDs investigate communicable disease reports and outbreaks; provide childhood and adult immunizations directly or connect families to providers who offer immunizations; and implement evidence-based programs to address other emerging health hazards. *When harmful algal blooms threatened the public drinking water in the Town of Owasco and City of Auburn, the Cayuga County LHD sampled and tested the water supplies for toxins and provided ongoing reports to the public to assure them of the safety of the drinking water supply.*
- ➔ **Give people information they need to make healthy choices:** LHDs work with schools and other community stakeholders to encourage good nutrition and physical activity; reach out to pregnant women and new moms to encourage breastfeeding; and develop tobacco-free coalitions to connect people with smoking cessation programs. *Oswego County LHD's Healthy Highway program worked with a local school district to educate students about healthy food choices. Students were taught about poor (red), cautionary (yellow) and good (green) food choices. The program also helped students learn about and plan nutritious snacks and lunches and increased engagement in physical activity. The elementary students participating in the program ate 17.8% more vegetables and 29.1% more fruit than students in a similar, neighboring school with no Healthy Highway program.*
- ➔ **Engage the community to identify and solve health problems:** LHDs engage their communities through local events, municipal meetings, surveys and focus groups. *Hamilton County Public Health has partnered with local medical providers to assist their patients diagnosed with COPD. Both Tobacco Cessation Specialists and COPD Rehabilitation Specialists are available for counseling and education by phone, in person either at their office or in the patient's home. Providers were given spacers to assist with Metered Dose Inhaler compliance and peak flow meters for patients to track their COPD status.*

THE COUNTY
HEALTH
OFFICIALS OF NEW
YORK (NYSACHO)
REPRESENTS ALL 58
LOCAL HEALTH
DEPARTMENTS
IN NEW YORK STATE.

OUR MISSION:
TO SUPPORT
LOCAL HEALTH
DEPARTMENTS IN
THEIR WORK TO
PREVENT DISEASE,
DISABILITY AND
INJURY AND
PROMOTE HEALTH
AND WELLNESS
THROUGHOUT
NEW YORK STATE

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- ➔ **Develop public health policies and plans:** LHDs in NYS have been national leaders in creating policies and plans that reduce the burden of chronic diseases. *In 2016, Cattaraugus and Albany Counties joined Suffolk County and New York City in adopting local laws to ban the sale of tobacco products to persons under the age of 21, including products such as e-cigarettes and liquid nicotine.*
- ➔ **Enforce public health laws and regulations:** LHDs inspect restaurants, pools, beaches, hotels and children's camps to ensure they comply with public health laws and regulations. They also monitor public and individual water supply systems and offer rabies clinics to assist pet owners in complying with New York State vaccination laws. *Rockland County's LHD worked collaboratively with local school districts and the NYS Department of Health to assist with and ensure compliance with the newly enacted law and regulations to ensure that all potable water taps in schools were tested for lead and mitigated as necessary to protect students from exposure.*
- ➔ **Help people receive health services:** Where access to medical care is lacking, whether due to inadequate provider capacity, lack of insurance or underinsurance, LHDs provide immunizations, sexually-transmitted disease (STD) treatment, dental care and home health services. LHDs strive to connect individuals with medical homes for routine care and they may coordinate care during public health emergencies. *The Montgomery County Public Health Department released the new, free Healthy Me! App for tablets and smartphones, to offer important resources for children and families with special health care needs. The app provides access to information on counseling services, community programs, financial assistance and other resources.*
- ➔ **Maintain a competent public health workforce:** LHDs work with a variety of academic institutions and other organizations to receive low and no-cost opportunities for both in-person and distance learning for LHD staff. Recruitment, training and staff development are critical to maintaining the public health infrastructure of New York State. *Livingston County's LHD was the first county in New York State to achieve national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board; Clinton County's and Putnam County's LHD s were the second and third. Several other LHDs in New York State are pursuing national accreditation.*
- ➔ **Evaluate and improve programs and interventions:** New York State and New York City measure the effectiveness of public health interventions in improving health outcomes, performance and quality of public health programs. *Erie County's LHD uses HealtheLink, a community-based virtual medical records system that enables physicians, hospitals and insurance organizations to share clinical information in efficient and meaningful ways in order to improve the delivery of care. HealtheLink has helped the LHD improve and expedite its rabies investigations, tracking and monitoring of STDs, and reporting of other high priority health indicators.*
- ➔ **Contribute to and apply the evidence base of public health:** New York State utilizes and contributes to evidence-based and practice-based research. LHDs use research tools such as The Guide to Community Preventive Services to inform their practice. *Steuben County's LHD participated in a three year Sodium Reduction in Communities Project funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This project worked to reduce the sodium content of food served in hospital cafeterias and senior meal sites by addressing three key areas: food purchasing, food preparation and food presentation. SCPH worked with six hospitals and five senior meal programs in five counties (Steuben, Yates, Chemung, Schuyler and Seneca). Through this project, sodium was reduced by 28% in senior meals and by 48% in targeted soups, entrees and side dishes in the hospitals. The collaboration among the LHD's, Offices for Aging, and Hospital administration/staff was a key factor in the success of this project. It has shown that organizational and community-level interventions have the potential to increase the availability and accessibility of lower sodium options in multiple settings (worksites, hospitals, congregate meal programs, early care and education settings).*