

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH

July 1, 2005-June 30, 2006

DEPARTMENT MISSION

The mission of the Wellesley Board of Health (BOH) is to protect and improve the health and quality of life of the Town's residents and workforce. Under the supervision and guidance of the elected Board of Health, the Health Department's professional staff assesses the public health needs of the Wellesley community and addresses those needs by providing communicable disease surveillance and prevention, health promotion initiatives and public health nursing services. Other important functions include promulgating and enforcing local and state sanitary regulations, providing emergency preparedness and response planning, reducing environmental health hazards and providing community health education. The Board of Health provides essential and complementary public health services, and leadership on Town health and human service matters.

STAFF

In FY06, the three-member elected Board of Health was comprised of Shepard Cohen, Chairman; Linda Perlmutter, Vice Chair; and Marcia Testa Simonson, Secretary. The Health Department staff consisted of one full time director, two full time environmental health specialists, a full time administrative assistant, a part time health communication specialist and three part time nurses.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLANNING

The Health Department is involved in local, regional and state bioterrorism and emergency preparedness and response planning. In May of 2006, the Health Department, in collaboration with seven regional partners, (Canton, Dedham, Milton, Needham, Norwood, Wellesley and Westwood) received a grant award of \$118,000 to develop and implement a local Volunteer Reserve/Medical Corps (VMC or VRC) in each of their respective communities. The VMC or VRC's were comprised of residents with medical and non-medical skills. The individual community VMC or VRC's have also been linked as a regional volunteer coalition. Corps members attended trainings on key emergency preparedness topics in the Spring of 2006. Trainings and drills are planned for the local and regional corps.

The Health Department Director remained as a co-chair of the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), which assesses and addresses emergency preparedness in the Town. The group met regularly to review the Town's emergency preparedness plans and response protocols, as well as to identify areas for additional training. In May/June of 2006, the LEPC utilized grant funds obtained by the Health Department to hold a series of three special population lunches that brought together civic leaders and community advocates working with children, disabled adults and the elderly, to discuss the coordination of emergency planning groups among the stakeholders. Additionally, the business community, with the assistance of the Wellesley Chamber of Commerce, came together to discuss their role in emergency planning efforts for the Town.

The Health Department through its active participation in Massachusetts Department of Public Health Region 4B Preparedness Committee focused on regional aspects of emergency preparedness including, collaborating with member communities to pool resources, provide

mutual aid, conduct surveillance, and address hospital linkages. The Region 4B partners developed a regional Memorandum of Understanding voted on at the 2006 Wellesley Town Meeting and adopted in all Region 4B (27) member communities. Members of the BOH and staff continued to participate in state working groups focusing on critical capacities such as, risk communication, the strategic national stockpile and education and training working groups.

In FY06, the Health Department continued to update its Biological and Chemical Emergency Planning and Response Plan which includes updated guidelines for mass-dispensing as part of pandemic planning. The updated plan is now an annex to the Wellesley Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. Both plans are stored at key town departments.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

This program area encompasses risk assessment, protection from potential and actual hazards, prevention of disease and injury, and the promulgation and enforcement of regulations. Priority areas include:

Food Sanitation

The environmental health specialists focus on inspecting all food establishments in Wellesley, with emphasis on those that present the highest risk to public health. In FY06, 154 food establishment permits were issued. 352 inspections (including re-inspections) were conducted at these facilities. 17 complaints were registered and promptly investigated; appropriate measures were taken. Eight restaurants had their food establishment permits temporarily suspended, due to critical violations of the food code. Nine new licenses and 12 temporary permits were issued.

Housing

The Health Department staff continued to address the housing needs and concerns of residents. In FY06, the Health Department received 56 calls related to housing issues. A total of 111 actions including inspections and re-inspections were taken to address issues related to the calls.

Swimming Pools and Beaches

The Health Department monitors the Town's swimming water quality and ensures compliance with State sanitary code pursuant to local pools and beaches. In FY06 16 semi-public pool permits were issued. 69 inspections were conducted. There were two complaints registered and investigated and appropriate measures were taken. Weekly water samples from Morse's Pond were taken and analyzed to monitor E-coli levels. The beach at Morse's Pond was temporarily closed during the last week of June 2006 due to elevated bacteria levels. The beach reopened later that same week when bacteria levels returned to normal.

Camps

In FY05, the Health Department licensed 32 camps that provided recreational activities for 5820 children. At the time of this report FY06 camp numbers were not yet available. A rigorous inspection process was conducted to ensure the safety of the children enrolled in

camp activities. All camps were inspected at least twice. The Health Department held a free seminar to educate camp operators and staff on safe camp operations and compliance with State camp regulations.

Mosquito Control and West Nile Virus

The Health Department and the Department of Public Works collaborated with the East Middlesex Mosquito Control Project to monitor and control the mosquito population and minimize the risk of mosquito borne illnesses such as West Nile Virus (WNV) and Eastern Equine Encephalitis Virus (EEEV). In a seasonal plan to reduce mosquito breeding, algacide packets were placed in catch basins throughout Town. In FY 06, two birds tested positive for WNV, however no mosquito pools tested positive. Education on personal protection measures and elimination of mosquito breeding areas remained a primary focus of public education.

Rabies Control

The Health Department continued to coordinate rabies control measures with the Wellesley Animal Control Officer. By statute, any pet or farm animal that may have had contact with an animal suspected of carrying the rabies virus must be ordered confined by the animal inspector. In FY06, 10-day quarantines were issued to 18 dogs that bit people, 2 cats that bit people and 7 dogs and 2 cats that bit other animals. 45-day quarantines were issued to 10 dogs and 9 cats. Six-month quarantines were issued to 8 cats. 4 bats and 5 cat specimens were submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Virology Laboratory for rabies testing; 2 bats were positive.

Additional Services

The Health Department issues annual licenses to facilities offering tanning and massage therapy. 42 individual and establishment massage therapy permits were issued in FY06. The Health Department also monitored lead and asbestos abatement projects.

In FY06, 36 rodent inspections were performed as part of the Building Department's requirements for the demolition of an existing structure. Several of these inspections involved the abandonment of existing subsurface sewage disposal systems thereby decreasing the number of systems in town.

COMMUNITY HEALTH

This program area encompasses the assessment, development and implementation of policies, programs and services that address community public health needs. Priority areas include:

Public Health Nursing Services

The Wellesley Health Department public health nurses operated *Keep Well* sessions at five rotating sites around Wellesley on a monthly schedule during FY06. Nurses also made "well-being" home visits to provide "safety net" services to homebound and other residents who were either ineligible for or unable to access services from other health care providers. Collaborating with other town departments and families, WHD nurses ensured that elders at risk had applicable services put in place with ongoing follow-up. Home visits also included frequent monitoring of several seniors with complex hoarding issues. In total, approximately 780 visits were accomplished.

The Health Department continues to manage a vaccine depot for residents and an expanding number of healthcare providers. An inventory of vaccines valued at more than \$500,000 is processed annually and dispensed to area practices, as well as residents. In FY06, the WHD immunized 1790 adults (including town employees) and children. Flu shots comprised 1671 of the total 1790 immunizations.

Communicable Disease

WHD nurses conducted surveillance of 74 cases of communicable disease. This included collaboration with Wellesley public school nurses and daycare providers in the management of nine cases of (break-through) varicella and four cases of pertussis. One active case of tuberculosis was monitored. An outbreak in March 2006 of 31 cases of influenza like illness (ILI) in an immunized population in an extended health care facility was monitored.

Fall Prevention Program

Seniors are at high risk of injuries from falling, often due to medication mismanagement and/or an unsafe living environment. The Wellesley Health Department was awarded a two-year grant from Springwell, a senior social service agency. The grant entitled, “ The Wellesley Health Department Medication and Fall Prevention Assessment Project” ended on September 30, 2005. During FY06, the remaining three months of the grant, WHD nurses conducted assessments of 20 seniors living in public housing or private homes to evaluate their medication management and safety of their living environment. The WHD collaborated with the Council on Aging, Wellesley Housing Authority and families for referral of at-risk seniors. Modifications were made to reduce the risk of falling, including adjustment of self-medication scheduling, installation of grab bars and railings, improved lighting and reduction of clutter. Since the completion of the grant, the WHD has brought the Fall Prevention Program “in house” and continues to evaluate seniors for fall risk.

Employee Health/Wellness Programs

In FY06, The Health Department actively encouraged Town employees to adopt healthier lifestyle habits. They provided cardiac and diabetes screenings, blood pressure checks, nutritional and other health related counseling. Referrals were made when necessary.

In FY06, the Health and Human Resources departments continued to offer a walking program for Town of Wellesley employees. The program offered employees a cardiovascular screening and a 30-day walking challenge, along with accompanying collateral materials, walking paths from specific town buildings and a “goody pack” including water, sunscreen, lip balm with SPF and insect repellent. The next phase offered in fall 2005 featured a 90-day walking program along with a nutrition component.

The Health Department continued to participate in the Town’s annual “Right to Know” training for DPW and new employees. The Health Director and staff provided information on communicable diseases, seasonal illnesses and disease prevention.

Mental Health

Two local mental health service agencies, The Human Relations Service, and the Charles River Association for Retarded Citizens received funding subsidization by the Town through

the Board of Health, to provide affordable, quality, mental health and counseling services for all Town residents. The high school outreach worker position was included in services provided by Human Relations Service. The Wellesley Housing Authority continued to supervise the Resident Services Coordinator (who is also partially funded by the Board of Health). The Health Department in collaboration with the WHA developed programs and initiatives to address health related issues of residents in public housing.

Senior Services

Health Department staff continued its participation in a steering committee committed to providing education and resources to seniors in the community. For the last several years, the committee convened “It Takes a Town” resource fairs and luncheon presentations that addressed the concerns of Wellesley seniors. In FY06, the committee focused on updating and editing the Wellesley Elder Resource Guide. The Guide lists and describes services and resources available to all seniors in the community. The Guide is useful to relatives and caregivers as well.

Wellesley Youth

In FY06, staff from the Health Department continued to co-facilitate the “Thinking About Drinking” course designed to reduce high risk underage drinking. The course was incorporated into the 10th grade curriculum and is now a required course for sophomores at the High School. The course is a successful collaboration between the Health Department, Youth Commission and the High School.

Tobacco Control

In FY06 compliance inspections of all 19 tobacco retailers were conducted (using a minor). A total of 36 attempts to purchase tobacco were made and one sale to a minor occurred. A fine was issued to the retailer that sold and they subsequently (and voluntarily) relinquished their permit to sell tobacco.

FY06 By the Numbers

Food establishment permits issued: 154

Food establishment inspections (including re-inspections): 352

Housing related calls: 56

Housing related inspections (including re-inspections): 111

Pool permits issued: 16

Pool/ Beach inspections: 69

Camp licenses issued: 32* (*FY05 figures only, FY06 data not available at the time of the report)

Public health nursing services: Well-being, homebound and other visits: 780

Public health nursing services: 1790 immunizations (including 1671 flu shots) were given

Public health nursing services: Nurses conducted surveillance of 74 cases of communicable diseases

Public health nursing services: 20 assessments of seniors to evaluate medication management and safety of their living environment