

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH
July 1, 2008 - June 30, 2009

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 community, and addresses those needs by providing environmental and community health services, communicable disease prevention and surveillance, public health nursing services, as well as health promotion initiatives. Other important functions include 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 subsidizes community mental health services, and provides leadership and expert consultation on Town health and human service matters.

BOARD AND STAFF

In FY09, the three-member elected Board of Health was comprised of Shepard Cohen, Chairman; Marcia Testa Simonson, MPH, PhD, Vice Chair; and Lloyd Tarlin, MD, Secretary. The Health Department staff consisted of one full time Director; two full-time Environmental Health Specialists; a full-time Administrator; a part-time Health Communication Specialist, and a part-time Public Health Nursing Supervisor.

COMMUNITY HEALTH

This core local public health service 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 clinics at six rotating sites in Wellesley. The clinics open to all residents, offered blood pressure and glucose monitoring, selected vaccinations, health counseling and referrals. Nurses also made well-being home visits that provided safety-net services to homebound residents, who were either ineligible for, or unable to access services from other health care providers. The Health Department collaborated with town departments, area agencies and families, to ensure that seniors had appropriate services with ongoing follow-up. Home visits also included monitoring of seniors with complex hoarding issues.

Seniors are also at high risk of injuries from falling, often due to medication mismanagement or an unsafe living environment. WHD nurses conducted assessments of seniors living in public housing or private homes, to evaluate their medication management and safety of their living environment. WHD collaborated with the Council on Aging, Wellesley Housing Authority, and families to identify 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. In total, approximately 500 visits were accomplished in FY09.

In FY09, WHD immunized approximately 1963 adults (including the Town workforce) and children. Flu clinics were held for residents at various locations including the Wellesley Hills Congregational Church and public housing sites.

Communicable Disease

WHD Public Health Nurses conducted surveillance of 175 cases of communicable diseases. The Health Department also collaborated with Wellesley school nurses, area college health staff, and daycare providers to identify and monitor cases and contacts. This collaboration became even more vital with the emergence of H1N1 (Swine) flu in the Spring of 2009. Many cases of H1N1 and non-specific flu-like illness were noted throughout the community in all schools and colleges.

Employee Health/Wellness Programs

In FY09, the Health Department continued to encourage Town employees to adopt healthier lifestyles. The Health Department nursing staff provided cardiac and diabetes screenings, blood pressure checks, as well as nutritional and other health-related counseling. The Health Department, in conjunction with the Town's Human Resources Department, continued to offer a walking program for Town employees. The program consisted of a cardiovascular screening and a six-week walking challenge, along with accompanying materials including maps of walking paths from specific town buildings, and essentials including a t-shirt, water, and sunscreen.

The Health Department continued to participate in the Town's annual Right to Know trainings for DPW personnel and all new employees. The state's Right to Know Law provides rights to employees regarding the communication of information on toxic and hazardous substances. These rights include workplace posting of key portions of this law, annual training for employees who work with toxic or hazardous substances, maintenance of a Material Safety Data Sheet, proper labeling of toxic and hazardous substances and non-discrimination against employees for exercising rights under this law. Several years ago, the Health Department was asked to include education on communicable diseases, seasonal illnesses and disease prevention at all Right to Know trainings.

Mental Health

Two local mental health service agencies, The Human Relations Service (HRS) and Charles River Association for Retarded Citizens, received funding subsidization from the Town through the Board of Health, to provide affordable, accessible, quality, mental health and counseling services, and a sheltered workshop for Town residents. Town Meeting approved additional funding to increase the hours of an HRS outreach worker to full time at the high school, and part time at the middle school, starting in the academic year 2008-2009.

A Mental Health Steering Committee was formed in summer 2007 under the auspices of the Health Department. The Committee is composed of representatives

from the Board of Selectmen, School Committee, School administration and guidance departments, Central Council of PTO's, Health Department and Board of Health, Youth Commission, Wellesley Police and Human Relations Service (HRS). The primary focus of the Committee has been to support the community and the schools in continuing efforts to identify and counsel at-risk children, and to support parents by providing resources and programming regarding their children's mental health. In addition, the Director of HRS spoke to parents at PTO meetings throughout the year. The Committee also produced a *Parent Resource Guide* to assist parents in taking initial steps to address concerns about their children, as well as to provide general information about mental health. The guide has been widely distributed and is available on the Health Department website. The Health Department also sponsored a program with the Director of HRS for personnel in the Pre-School community. The group plans to expand their outreach efforts to residents across the age continuum. To that end the committee will seek funding to develop a suicide prevention/mental health resources website, as well as to present "Question, Persuade, Refer" training to key stakeholders in the community.

Senior Services

Health Department staff continued its participation in the "It Takes A Town" Committee, committed to providing education and resources to residents age 50 and older. For many years, the Committee has organized resource fairs and luncheon presentations that addressed the concerns of Wellesley seniors. In keeping with that tradition, in June 2009, the committee hosted a resource and information fair entitled, "Sustain Your Brain" featuring Wellesley resident and Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School Dr. John Ratey. The Health Department Director and professional staff collaborated with the Council on Aging and other senior service agencies to identify elders at risk, and to address seniors' concerns. The Health Department Director and professional staff also served on the Senior Center Study Committee, whose mission is to realize a true stand-alone senior center in Wellesley.

Community Health Programming

In April 2007, the towns of Wellesley and Needham received a grant award from the West Suburban Community Health Network Area 18 (CHNA 18). The goals of the grant were to enhance the efforts of the Eat Well/Be Fit Committee in Needham, and examine whether replication of this model in Wellesley could help the Health Department forge new partnerships with town departments and organizations grappling with childhood, adult and senior overweight/obesity issues, as well as other barriers to achieving a healthy lifestyle. The Healthy Wellesley Committee was formed to assess these concerns, and identify programs, resources and materials available to address them. The WHD Health Communication Specialist and Youth Director coordinated this initiative. Because of the success of their programming, the towns of Needham and Wellesley were awarded additional funding to continue their efforts. Therefore in FY09, the second year of the grant cycle, several programs were either initiated or enhanced including: a Cooking for One or Two class, support of the "Sustain Your Brain" resource and information fair in June 2009, Healthy Wellesley week in May which featured presentations at the Council on Aging, and a

“Tots and Tails on Trails” walk and dog contest during Wellesley’s Wonderful Weekend.

Tobacco Control

In FY09, tobacco permits were issued to 16 tobacco retailers. Three compliance inspections of the 16 retailers were conducted (using a minor) resulting in one sale to a minor. The retailer who sold tobacco products to a minor was fined, and educated about the importance of age verification. In addition, visits to tobacco retailers were conducted twice to check for proper signage.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

This core local public health service 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 and Food Establishments

Health Department Environmental Health Specialists routinely inspected all food establishments in Wellesley, with emphasis on those that presented the highest risk to public health. In FY09 152 food establishment, and 17 temporary food permits were issued. 331 inspections (including re-inspections) were conducted at these facilities. Eighteen complaints were promptly investigated, and appropriate corrective measures taken. Three restaurants had their food establishment permits suspended, due to critical violations of the food code. Twenty-six new licenses were issued. There were 22 plan reviews of new food establishments, or renovations including 27 inspections of construction sites.

Housing

The Health Department staff continued to address the housing sanitation concerns of residents. In FY09, the Health Department received 94 calls related to housing issues. A total of 147 actions, including inspections and re-inspections, were taken to address sanitary code violations. Twenty-six inspections of septic systems were conducted.

Swimming Pools and Beaches

The Health Department’s environmental health staff monitored the town’s swimming water quality (pools and beaches) to ensure compliance with state sanitary codes. In FY09, 16 semi-public pool permits were issued. Ninety-two inspections and 11 re-inspections were conducted, with eight temporary closures. Weekly water samples from Morse’s Pond were taken and analyzed to monitor E-coli levels. There were no closings of the Pond in FY09.

Camps

In FY09, the Health Department licensed 40 camps that provided recreational activities for approximately 7,000 children. 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 seminar to educate camp 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 (DPW) collaborated with the East Middlesex Mosquito Control Project to monitor and control the mosquito population thereby minimizing the risk of mosquito borne illnesses, such as West Nile Virus (WNV). In a seasonal plan to reduce mosquito breeding, DPW placed larvicide packets inside street catch basins throughout the town. In FY09, the MA Dept. of Public Health discontinued the bird testing program however, mosquito trapping and testing remained; none in Wellesley tested positive for WNV. Education on personal protection measures and elimination of mosquito breeding areas remained a primary focus of prevention efforts.

Rabies Control

Health Department staff collaborated with the Wellesley Animal Control Officer on rabies control measures. 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 FY09, 10-day quarantines were issued to 18 dogs that bit people, and four dogs that bit other animals. Longer (45-day) quarantines were issued to four dogs and 11 cats. Six-month quarantines were issued to two dogs, four cats, two bats, and one opossum. In addition, the Health Department issued seven livestock permits in FY09.

Additional Services

The Health Department issued annual licenses to facilities offering tanning services. In FY09, two inspections were conducted. As of December 28, 2007 the Wellesley Health Department no longer issued massage permits to individuals or establishments. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Division of Professional Licensure appointed a Board of Registration of Massage Therapy. This board assumed responsibility for overseeing inspection, enforcement and permitting. The Health Department also monitored lead and asbestos abatement projects.

In FY09, 18 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. Four permits were issued for Title 5 related work, seven for the installation of a new septic system, and seven for repairs to existing systems. Two sets of plans were reviewed and approved for future septic systems. Four permits were issued for private wells; one was drilled for irrigation, and three for geothermal heating and cooling.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLANNING

The Health Department was involved in local, regional and state emergency preparedness and response planning including responses to: all hazards, seasonal, emerging and pandemic flu, and natural and manmade disaster planning. The Health Department Director remained as co-chair of the Local Emergency Planning

Committee (LEPC), which provides emergency preparedness planning for the Town. The Committee met regularly to review the Town's emergency preparedness and response protocols.

The Health Department, through its active participation in Massachusetts Department of Public Health Emergency Preparedness Region 4B (a coalition of 27 communities), focused on regional aspects of emergency preparedness, including collaboration with member communities to pool resources, provide mutual aid, conduct surveillance, and address hospital linkages.

In FY09, the Health Department continued to provide trainings and exercises for the highly vital Wellesley Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). The MRC is a group of approximately 100 residents with clinical or non-clinical skills, who will assist the Health Department and other responders in a local, large-scale public health emergency. Many of these volunteers also assist at regularly scheduled public health events, such as flu clinics. Wellesley is also part of a seven-community emergency preparedness sub-region (Sub-region 3). These communities offer their volunteers opportunities to exercise the training they receive via multi-community drills facilitated and evaluated by the Harvard School of Public Health Center for Emergency Preparedness.

Presentations on family emergency preparedness, as well as seasonal and H1N1 flu are ongoing initiatives offered by the Health Department. General information on preparing for emergencies, as well as Wellesley specific information is regularly updated on the Health Department website: www.wellesleyma.gov/health .

FY09 by the Numbers

Food establishment permits issued: 152

Food establishment inspections (including re-inspections): 331

Housing related calls: 94

Housing related inspections (including re-inspections): 147

Pool permits issued: 16

Pool/ Beach inspections: 103

Camp licenses issued: 40

Public health nursing services: 535 well being, homebound and other visits

Public health nursing services: 1963 immunizations were given

Public health nursing services: Nurses conducted surveillance of 175 cases of communicable diseases