

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH
July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2010

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 on Town health and human service matters.

BOARD AND STAFF

In FY10, the three-member elected Board of Health was composed 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

WHD public health nurses operated Keep Well clinics at six rotating sites in Wellesley. The clinics open to all residents, featured 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. WHD 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.

Communicable Disease

In FY10, WHD conducted a massive effort to immunize residents against H1N1/Seasonal flu. More than 5,500 children and adults received immunizations for influenza. Fifty-two clinics were held in the community including at every public school (twice), at large community clinics at the Wellesley Hills Congregational Church, at area health clubs, public housing sites and at the Health Department.

Employee Health/Wellness Programs

In FY10, 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 Health Department participated in the Town's annual Right to Know trainings for DPW personnel and all new employees. The Health Department presented information on communicable diseases, seasonal illnesses and disease prevention at the 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.

The Health Department received a grant from the Fund for Wellesley in FY10 to develop community based mental health resources addressing depression, substance abuse and suicide. With the help of the Youth Director, WHD developed a suicide prevention website called www.wellesleyacts.org designed to offer visitors resources to help themselves or another in an emotional crisis. The grant allowed 20 community leaders to receive scholarships for *Question, Persuade and Refer* (QPR) training. Those trained in QPR learn how to recognize the warning signs of someone at risk of suicide, and instructs them how to *Question, Persuade and Refer* them to help. Adjunct mental health materials were developed and distributed including a Parent Resource Guide, aimed at helping parents address their child's mental health needs, and a general Mental Health Resource Guide, highlighting information and resources for residents of all ages. These brochures are available on the Health Department's website: www.wellesleyma.gov/health .

Senior Services

Health Department staff continued to serve on the "It Takes a Town" Committee, dedicated to providing education and resources to residents age 50 and older. The Health Department Director and staff collaborated with the Council on Aging and other senior service agencies to identify elders at risk, and to address seniors' concerns.

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. During FY10, the final year of the grant, from the *Cooking for One or Two* classes; *Finding Time for Fitness, Food and Fun...for Busy Parents on the Run*; *Staying Sane - Maintaining a Healthy Brain*, and *Yoga for Planes, Trains, Automobiles...and Oh Yes - Office Chairs* workshops, to the *Tots and Tails on Trails* walk followed by a very popular dog contest, the community participated in health related activities for the young and young at heart!

Tobacco Control

In FY10, tobacco permits were issued to 12 tobacco retailers. One compliance inspection was conducted at the 12 retail locations. No sales to a minor were made.

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

WHD Environmental Health Specialists inspected all food establishments in Wellesley, with emphasis on those that presented the highest risk to the public's health. In FY10 165 food establishments permits, and 20 temporary food permits were issued. 337 inspections (including re-inspections) were conducted at these facilities. Twelve 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. Ten new licenses were issued. There were 15 plan reviews of new food establishments, or renovations including 12 inspections of construction sites.

Housing

WHD continued to address the housing sanitation concerns of residents. In FY10, the Health Department received 86 calls related to housing issues. A total of 138 actions (including inspections and re-inspections) were taken to address sanitary code violations. Twenty-two inspections of septic systems were conducted.

Swimming Pools and Beaches

The Health Department's environmental health staff monitored the town's swimming water quality at pools and beaches to ensure compliance with state sanitary codes. In FY10, 16 semi-public pool permits and one beach permit were issued. Sixty-four inspections and 11 re-inspections were conducted, with three 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 FY10.

Camps

In FY10, WHD licensed 33 camps that provided recreational activities for approximately 6,000 children. A rigorous inspection process was conducted to ensure the safety of the children enrolled in camp activities. 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, in an effort to reduce the spread mosquito borne illnesses. In a seasonal plan to reduce mosquito breeding, DPW placed larvicide packets inside street catch basins throughout town. Education on personal protection measures and elimination of mosquito breeding areas remained a primary focus of prevention efforts.

Rabies Control

The Health Department issued 11 livestock permits. 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 FY10, 10-day quarantines were issued to nine dogs that bit people, five cats that bit people, and four dogs that bit other animals. Longer (45-day) quarantines were issued to four dogs and two cats. A six-month quarantine was issued to one cat. Two raccoons tested positive for rabies, and three dogs were quarantined, which caused three people to take prophylaxis vaccine.

Additional Services

In FY10, two inspections were conducted at facilities offering tanning services. The WHD issued its first permit for an establishment offering body art for permanent cosmetics. The Health Department also monitored lead and asbestos abatement projects.

In FY10, 30 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. Seven permits were issued for Title 5 related work, seven for the installation of a new septic system, and seven for repairs to existing systems. One set of plans was reviewed and approved for a future septic system. Three permits were issued for private wells 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.

Wellesley is also part of a seven-community emergency preparedness sub-region (Sub-region 3). These communities offered their volunteers opportunities to exercise the training they received via multi-community drills facilitated and evaluated by the Harvard School of Public Health Center for Emergency Preparedness.

In FY10, 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 and non-clinical skills, who assist the Health Department at local and regional public health events, such as flu clinics. The Health Department is indebted to the MRC volunteers for their support and participation at all H1N1 clinics during FY10. It was a massive undertaking that could not have been accomplished without their assistance.

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 .