

**REPORT OF THE BOARD OF HEALTH**  
**July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015**

**DEPARTMENT MISSION**

The Board of Health (BOH) provides leadership on Town health and human service matters. The mission of the 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.

**BOARD AND STAFF**

In FY15, 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 was comprised of one full time Director; one full-time and one part-time Environmental Health Specialist; a full-time Administrator; a full-time Community Health Coordinator, a part-time Public Health Nursing Supervisor and a part-time Community Social Worker.

**COMMUNITY HEALTH**

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

**Public Health Nursing Services**

Wellesley Health Department (WHD) public health nurses operated Keep Well Clinics at six rotating sites in Wellesley. The clinics (open to all residents) offered blood pressure screenings, select vaccinations, health counseling and referrals. Nurses also made well-being visits that provided safety-net services to homebound residents who were either ineligible for, or unable to access services from other health care providers. Home visits included monitoring of residents with complex hoarding issues. WHD collaborated with town departments, area agencies and families, to ensure that residents had appropriate services and follow-up.

**Communicable Diseases**

In FY15, 614 children and adults received immunizations for influenza at clinics held at Town departments (for employees), the Wellesley Hills Congregational Church, public housing sites, assisted living, at an area college and at the WHD. There were 66 additional vaccinations / injections administered to residents. Other services included 197 investigations of reportable diseases; this was done in conjunction with the MA Department of Public Health. WHD collaborated with the school health and

nursing departments, as well as long term care facilities to track and assist in the dissemination of information regarding outbreaks of illnesses.

### **Employee Health/Wellness Programs**

In FY15, WHD continued to encourage Town employees to adopt healthier lifestyles. WHD nursing staff provided blood pressure checks, as well as nutritional and health related counseling. WHD in conjunction with the Town's Human Resources Department, continued to offer a walking program for Town employees.

### **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 for Town residents.

WHD hosts a suicide prevention website called [www.wellesleyacts.org](http://www.wellesleyacts.org), designed to offer visitors resources to help themselves or another in an emotional crisis. 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 are distributed annually, before the start of the school year to the schools and the community. These brochures, a confidential, on-line mental health screening, as well as a new Addiction Resources page with resources on opioids, as well as other substances are available on the Health Department's website: [www.wellesleyma.gov/health](http://www.wellesleyma.gov/health).

### **Social Services**

In September 2013, WHD added a part-time Community Social Worker (CSW) to its staff, to provide social services to residents aged 59 and younger (Wellesley Council on Aging provides these services to residents aged 60 and older). Social services include but are not limited to: mental health, housing, public benefits, health insurance and financial assistance. In FY15, 77 home visits and 35 office visits were completed. An additional 33 appointments were scheduled (20 home visits and 13 office) but not completed for a variety of reasons (e.g. client illness, inclement weather, forgotten appointment, etc.). Information and referral was provided over the phone an estimated average of 30 times each month to clients, residents and professionals. CSW collaborated with various town departments, Wellesley Housing Authority (WHA), Wellesley Friendly Aid Association, Wellesley Food Pantry, Salvation Army and Toys for Tots. CSW also coordinated programs at the Community Room at WHA's Barton Road location, including a wellness fair, a car seat checkpoint (car seats were given to those in need) and programming during school vacation weeks.

### **Senior Services**

The Health Department Director and staff collaborated with the Council on Aging, Police, Fire and Animal Control, as well as other senior service agencies to identify elders at risk and to address seniors' concerns. Senior Issues meetings are held regularly throughout the year.

## **Community Health Programming**

Healthy Wellesley is a community wellness initiative. Its mission is to promote a healthy lifestyle, identify the bounty of health, wellness and fitness resources in Wellesley, and present programming to positively affect the health of residents across the age spectrum. In FY15 residents attended Healthy Wellesley events: *Emergency Preparedness Begins at Home, Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) 101, CPR for Volunteers, Pet First Aid/Small Animal Handling, Fire Safety, Fun and Health for Pets and Their 'People' (dog contest), Looking at Your Skin from the Outside In and Tick Tock, it's a Tick Talk.*

The website called HealthyWellesley.org offers residents and visitors the opportunity to set health goals, interact with others, learn about health topics, obtain resources, meet local residents who are involved in health, and hear about Wellesley events.

## **Collaborations**

WHD staff continued to participate in the Community Health Network Area 18 (CHNA 18) coalition. The coalition strives to build healthier communities through community-based planning and programming. CHNA 18 is currently working with SOAR 55 to reimagine their strategic plan.

WHD and its Board of Health members continued to spearhead efforts to enhance their collaboration with Newton Wellesley Hospital leadership and staff on mental health needs, community benefits and community health initiatives.

WHD director and staff continued their participation in the School Wellness Advisory Committee (SWAC). In FY15, the focus was on Mental Health and Wellness and Food in the schools. There was an intersection of collaboration among the SWAC, Wellesley Public Schools administration and faculty, Newton Wellesley Hospital Child and Adolescent Psychiatry director and staff and WHD Board and staff to address mental health needs of children and adolescents in the community.

## **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLANNING**

WHD is involved in local, regional and state emergency preparedness and response planning including: all hazards, seasonal, emerging and pandemic flu and natural and manmade disaster planning. WHD Director and the Assistant Fire Chief are the co-chairs of the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), which provides emergency planning for the Town. In FY15, LEPC received full certification from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). In addition, LEPC members and other community partners participated in a tabletop exercise facilitated by MEMA.

WHD continued its 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. WHD is also part of a seven-community emergency

preparedness sub-region called Norfolk County Seven (NC-7). These communities provide trainings, drills and collaborate on grants. Both Region 4B and NC7 hold regular meetings.

In FY15, WHD continued to provide trainings and exercises for the Wellesley Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). The MRC is a group of approximately 100 residents with medical and non-medical backgrounds, who assist WHD at local and regional public health events, such as flu clinics, emergency preparedness training exercises and Healthy Wellesley activities.

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

## **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

This core 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:

### **Tobacco Control**

In FY15, tobacco permits were issued to thirteen tobacco retailers. As of June 1, 2014, the minimum age to purchase tobacco products and nicotine delivery products was raised from 18 to 21 years of age. In FY15, WHD issued a permit for liquid nicotine non-tobacco license (a.k.a. e-cigarettes).

### **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 FY15, 176 food establishment permits and 24 temporary food permits were issued. 340 inspections (including re-inspections) were conducted at these facilities. 33 complaints were promptly investigated and appropriate corrective measures taken. Five restaurants had their food establishment permits suspended, due to critical violations of the food code. Nine new licenses were issued. There were seven plan reviews of new food establishments or renovations, including seventeen inspections of construction sites.

### **Housing**

WHD continued to address the housing and sanitation concerns of residents. In FY15, the Health Department received 102 calls related to housing issues. A total of 135 actions (including inspections and re-inspections) were taken to address sanitary code violations.

### **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 FY15, 17 semi-public pool permits and one beach permit were issued. Sixty-eight inspections (including re-inspections) were conducted. Weekly water samples from Morse's Pond were taken and analyzed to monitor E-coli levels.

### **Water Issue**

During the week of August 21, 2014 a Boil Water order was issued in response to a (routine) test of the Town's drinking water. The result indicated an elevation of E-Coli bacteria in the water. WHD collaborated with directors and staff of the DPW, Police, Fire, Selectman's Office and the Town's Executive Director to assess and address the situation, provide information and communication, as well as action steps for residents, restaurants, other businesses and organizations. WHD staff provided outreach, FAQ's and guidelines to food services, medical providers and day care centers in the Town.

### **Camps**

In FY15, WHD licensed 34 camps that provided recreational activities for more than 8,500 children. A rigorous inspection process was conducted to ensure the safety of the children enrolled in camp activities. WHD focused on educating camp staff on safe camp operations and compliance with state camp regulations.

### **Mosquito Control**

WHD continued its contract with the East Middlesex Mosquito Control Project, to monitor and control the mosquito population, in an effort to reduce the spread of mosquito borne illnesses. In a seasonal plan to reduce mosquito breeding, Department of Public Works 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**

In FY15, the Health Department issued 15 livestock permits. WHD 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 FY15, 10-day quarantines were issued to 26 dogs that bit people and/or other dogs (10 were dog to dog, 16 were dog bit person) and five cats that bit a person. 45-day quarantines were issued to six dogs and four cats. Six month quarantines were issued to three cats. Seven bats, one deer and one skunk were submitted for rabies testing.

### **Additional Services**

In FY15, two inspections of a tanning facilities were conducted. WHD also monitored lead and asbestos abatement projects. In FY15, 46 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, for repairs to existing systems. One set of plans were reviewed and approved for a future septic system. Twenty-two inspections of septic systems were conducted. Four permits were issued for private wells for geothermal heating and cooling and one permit was issued for irrigation.