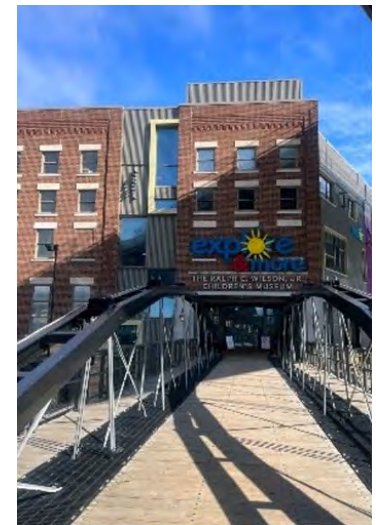


Suzanne Swan, Center for Community Health

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The disease progresses as neurons in the brain are damaged, impairing their ability to communicate. This leads to deteriorations in memory, mood, and behavior, and over time, it affects physical functions (i.e., walking and swallowing). However, there are a few strategies that public health professionals can promote to help reduce the risk of Alzheimer's:

- Engage in **regular exercise** to improve blood flow and the brain's utilization of oxygen and glucose.
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Note from the Deputy Commissioner for Public Health

I was pleased to tune into Commissioner McDonald’s live [webinar](#) on May 22, 2024, for the unveiling of the Department’s new mission, vision and values, and to learn simple definitions of health and health equity. As Dr. McDonald explained, we had many long discussions about these concepts and statements in the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) meeting, stretching over a couple of months. In addition, I brought the “works in progress” to the OPH Leadership Team, comprised of OPH leadership and unit leads, including center and office directors, the directors of the Public Health Infrastructure work and the Bureau of Vital Records, and our Institutional Review Board and Grants Administration leads.

We also discussed these concepts among the leadership in OPH’s immediate office, including myself, Laura Trolio, Eli Rosenberg and Dr. Liza Whalen. I brought all this input back to the ELT for consideration. At the end of the day, with all this input from across DOH and OPH leadership, we arrived at mission and vision statements, department values, and health equity definitions that are clear, simple, motivational, and well aligned with our work.

Importantly, what we ended up with, after all that discussion and back and forth, is much cleaner, clearer, more concise, and more meaningful than where we started, demonstrating the value of including diverse viewpoints and perspectives, and taking the time to get it right. Please reference the new [mission, vision, values and definitions here](#), and be on the lookout for posters across our DOH work places.

- Ursula E. Bauer, PhD, MPH

Equity Update: Gender Neutral Bathrooms

Travis O'Donnell, *Director, Center for Community Health*

I have the privilege of witnessing first-hand how people, across the Center for Community Health, work tirelessly to make NYS a better, healthier, and safer place. This applies to the work we do in the communities we serve throughout the state, and in our own workplace. As we strive to make our workplace a safe and inclusive space for everyone, including those who belong to the Transgender, Gender Non-Conforming and Non-Binary communities, I want to [highlight guidance](#) from the NYS Division of Human Rights (DHR) on Protections From Gender Identity Discrimination Under the New York State Human Rights Law and gender-neutral bathrooms.

On January 25, 2019, the Division of Human Rights updated the New York State Human Rights Law to specifically “include ‘gender identity or expression’ as a protected class in all areas of jurisdiction.” This update is often referred to as the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act, or GENDA. Under this law, it is considered discrimination “to deny the use of restrooms or other facilities consistent with a person’s gender identity.” The [guidelines](#) define gender identity and expression “as a person’s actual or perceived gender-related identity, appearance, behavior, expression, or other gender-related characteristic regardless of the sex assigned to that person at birth, including, but not limited to, the status of being transgender.” This means staff and visitors in our workspaces are allowed to use the bathroom (single or multiple stalls) that aligns with their gender identity.

Examples of Gender-Based Discrimination

- Forcing different appearance standards based on gender.
- Asking a transgender person to use a single-occupancy restroom because of someone else’s concerns.
- Refusing to use an individual’s requested name or pronouns.
- Allegations involving discrimination or sexual harassment are taken seriously and must be reported directly to the Office of Employee Relations Anti-Discrimination Investigation Division (OER ADID) at: <https://antidiscrimination.oer.ny.gov/>.

June is Pride Month



This year marks the 55-year anniversary of the 1969 Stonewall Uprising, a momentous series of events in history. The Uprising started in a bar in Greenwich Village New York and resulted in six days of protests to promote equal rights and protections for members of the LGBTQIA+ community. In observance of these events, which ultimately resulted in the advancement of rights and equality for so many, PRIDE Month is celebrated every year in June throughout New York State and the nation.

Events

In the Capital Region there are [two events](#) the weekend of June 8 and 9. On Saturday, June 8 at Washington Park in Albany is the *In Our Own Voice’s BIPOC Pride Festival* celebrating black, indigenous and people of color in the LGBTQIA+ community. On Sunday, June 9 is the annual *Albany Pride Parade and Festival*, also at Washington Park.



- [Find a local community event](#) to celebrate PRIDE month.
- [Learn more](#) about how to advance LGBTQIA+ rights and equality efforts.
- [Read about](#) New York State Department of Health initiatives to eliminate disparities in health care access for the LGBTQIA+ community.

Strategic Plan Updates

Laura Trolio, Deputy Director, Office of Public Health

The OPH strategic plan is coming to life with the strategic priority working groups getting started over the past two months! All six of the working groups, made up of 195 OPH staff, held their kickoff meetings in April and May. The volunteers participating are becoming familiar with the strategic plan initiatives, actions, tasks, as well as with each other.

All of the working groups have also formed focused subgroups which are starting to meet and make progress on the work within each priority area. This graphic shows the different working groups, subgroups and volunteer leads for each.



Working group volunteers have all agreed to contribute for a one-year term through March 2025. If you are interested in volunteering or contributing resources/ideas for any of the work taking place, please don't hesitate to reach out to one of the working group or subgroup leads. Information about the strategic plan can be found on the [OPH SharePoint site](#).

Inside OPH: Bureau of Cancer Prevention & Control

\$225,000 Awarded to Promote Colorectal Cancer Screening

Dana Shapiro, Director, Communications & Education Unit

The Bureau of Cancer Prevention and Control in the Center for Community Health strives to reduce the burden of cancer in New York State, and works towards cancer-related health equity through programs that address cancer prevention, early detection, treatment, and survivorship. Across New York, nearly one in four adults don't get colorectal cancer screening as recommended.



To address colorectal cancer health inequities, the Bureau developed the Community Outreach to Promote Colorectal Cancer Screening Program. The Bureau supports community-based organizations that are members of and trusted voices in populations that bear a disproportionate burden of cancer, including individuals who are Black, Hispanic/Latino, LGBTQIA+, and/or reside in rural communities.

In September 2023, the Bureau released a competitive procurement with the goal of attracting non-traditional partners firmly based in the communities they serve to implement the Program. Applicants were not required to demonstrate knowledge of cancer; rather, the focus was on recruiting organizations with demonstrated success reaching the Program's priority populations.



For more information about this Program, contact **Dara Shapiro, Director of Communications and Education Unit, Bureau of Cancer Prevention and Control** at dara.shapiro@health.ny.gov.

As a result, the Bureau awarded **12 community organizations with a multiyear contract totaling \$225,000 for the period of March 1, 2024 – June 30, 2028**. The awardees are small, nonprofit, grassroots organizations serving nine counties across the state, all of which are new Bureau partners. Some grantees are receiving Department funding for the first time.

The Bureau is training grantees on colorectal cancer basics and public health implementation strategies. When training is complete, grantees will educate individuals about the importance of screening, link them to screening services, and help address barriers to screening. Grantees will report on the number of individuals educated and number screened for colorectal cancer within a six-month period after participating in education. The data will allow the Bureau to identify successful strategies and evaluate how well the program is doing with accomplishing its goal of reducing colorectal cancer screening disparities.

Geraldine Humbert, Senior Policy Coordinator, Office of Public Health

This year the New York State Legislature passed the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Budget 19 days late! What did we end up with? See below for a non-exhaustive list of the Office of Public Health's FY 2025 Enacted Budget highlights/new initiatives our very own colleagues will be implementing in the next couple of years:

Doula Expansion Grant Program: The Division of Family Health will issue \$250K in grant awards to community-based programs to support recruitment, training, and certification of doulas, helping increase access to doulas throughout NYS.

Reduce Infant Mortality: The Division of Family Health will use \$320K to support the convention of regional groups of stakeholders, including but not limited to community-based organizations and health professionals, to identify interventions in the health care system to reduce infant mortality.

Access and Equity for Children with Asthma: The Public Health Information Group and the Bureau of Community Chronic Disease Prevention will use \$2.1M to help improve asthma-related health outcomes for children and help address racial and ethnic disparities impacting children in New York State.

Support for the New York State Occupational Health Clinic Network: The Legislature included one-time funding of \$5M for the New York State Occupational Health Clinic Network which helps prevent New Yorkers from becoming ill or injured on the job, while also supporting recovery from work-related incidents and New Yorker's safe return to work.

Emerging Contaminants in Small and Disadvantaged Communities Grant: The budget ensures money awarded to the State from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) can be utilized by the Center for Environmental Health to focus on addressing emerging contaminants—including perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), 1, 4-dioxane, cyanotoxin/harmful algal blooms—in public water systems serving small and disadvantaged communities.

Vital Records Modernization: The Budget provides \$700K to support the Bureau of Vital Records' modernization efforts, improving processes and response times so New Yorkers can access their vital records with ease and accuracy.

>>> [Learn more about the FY 2025 Budget](#)

DID YOU KNOW?



[We have an OPH site](#) where you can find information about the OPH Strategic Plan, Strategic Priority Working Groups, [Unit Organizational Charts](#), links to [All Hands Webinar](#) recordings, past [OPH Connects](#) Issues and other OPH communications. The site will continue to be updated and supported by the OPH Communications and Collaboration Working Group.

In Case You Missed It

Staff attend Hospital Acquired Infections Technical Advisory Workgroup (TAW)

Ernest Clement, *Center for Community Health*

The Department recently hosted the *Hospital Acquired Infections Technical Advisory Workgroup (TAW)* at the David Axelrod Institute on May 15th and 16th. In New York State, certain infections are required by law to be reported to the Department. The Department consults with technical advisors with expertise in the prevention and control of hospital acquired infections and infectious diseases. This year, colleagues from the long term care sector were also invited. Department staff from the Bureau of Healthcare Associated Infections, OPH-Healthcare Facility Preparedness, and Wadsworth Center also participated. Topics ranged from antimicrobial resistance surveillance, antimicrobial use and stewardship, and risk adjustment for *Clostridioides difficile* infection reporting to a primer on the use of Enhanced Barrier Precautions in the long-term care setting.



Administrative Professionals Day was celebrated on April 24th!

WE APPRECIATE

all that you do!



OPH recognizes those staff who function as the backbone of every efficient operation and keep the gears turning. Your dedication, organization, and attention to detail truly help drive the success of OPH. Your contributions are invaluable, and your efforts are deeply appreciated!



OPH Staff Celebrate Earth Day

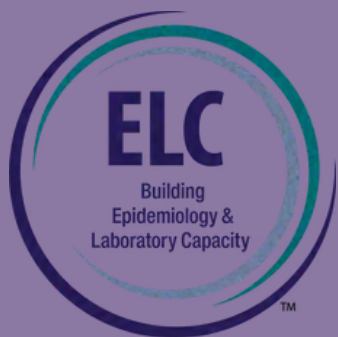
On April 22, Office of Public Health employees took time to celebrate Earth Day. Earth Day is a reminder of our responsibility to the health and well-being of our communities. In honor of this day, staff shared activities they planned on doing with colleagues, friends or family that work to end plastic use and aid in human and planetary health. This work is important and critical to improving public health. For additional Earth Day resources, visit www.earthday.org and join the movement.



Jessica Marble, Health Program Administrator for the Center for Environmental Health, participated in the City of Amsterdam's Earth Day city-wide cleanup.

OPH Receives Five-Year Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) Cooperative Agreement

Abigail Galluci, Associate Director, Division of Epidemiology



The Division of Epidemiology, along with the Center for Environmental Health, Wadsworth Center, the AIDS Institute, and Information Technology Systems (ITS) received a five-year, ELC cooperative agreement which begins August 1, 2024. These centers have become key partners with Epidemiology in public health surveillance. Data from wastewater testing support public health prevention efforts by providing crucial information about the prevalence of disease within a community. The Wadsworth Center provides state of the art testing technology for rapid response to disease outbreaks, and ITS is working on new cross cutting measures across databases to enhance surveillance efforts.

Through this five-year cooperative agreement, new measures have been proposed that will ensure New York State's continued success and coordination of programmatic goals, cross cutting many areas of public health related to communicable diseases.

NYSDOH is the lead agency responsible for protecting and advancing the health of the state's population. The state's public health laws and regulations mandate the reporting of more than 62 communicable diseases. Reportable diseases run from very low-incidence diseases, such as listeriosis, meningococcus, and measles to high-burden diseases, such as influenza, polio, and pertussis. The NYSDOH Division of Epidemiology, along with other NYSDOH divisions such as the newly formed Division of Vaccine Excellence, partners with local health departments across the state to ensure reporting and investigation of reportable diseases.

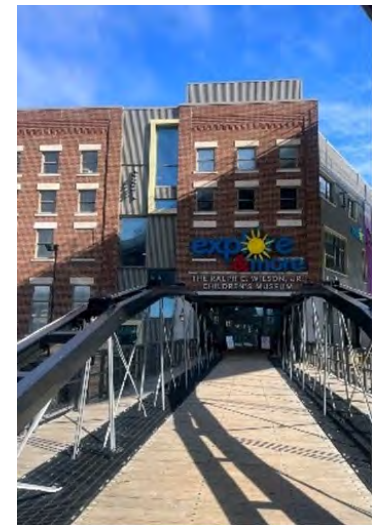
The Division of Epidemiology, funded since the mid-1990s for public health activities by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), administers the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for Prevention and Control of Emerging Infectious Diseases (ELC) Cooperative agreement. Our ELC-funded programs have assisted CDC in collecting data to change national and state policy on public health. For example, CDC's Surveillance for Emerging Threats to Mothers and Babies Network (SET-NET), currently conducts surveillance for hepatitis C, syphilis, and congenital cytomegalovirus (cCMV), infections that can affect pregnant individuals and infants. NYS SET-NET, among the 34 jurisdictions that collected evidence outlining the severe risks of COVID-19 during pregnancy, informed clinical decisions and ultimately public health policy.

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Refresh, Revive, Renew Your Life

Summer is such a magical season. The sun is shining. The streets are filled with exuberant laughter from kids on summer break. Communities are bustling with life, soaking in all that summer has to offer. This is the perfect time to captivate how we can Refresh our spirit, Revive our joy and Renew our energy. Summer is the perfect midpoint to check in with ourselves.

Refresh Your Spirit

When you make changes to a project on your computer and you want to see all those changes in its final format, you refresh the page. Refreshing our lives is a similar experience.

“There are so many ways to refresh one’s spirit and these are highly specific to each individual.

For me, I enjoy gardening, a good book, and a walk with my dog.”

- Dr. Bauer

Walk, Talk and Let Go:



1. **Go for a short walk** to talk to yourself reflecting on the last six months.
2. **Ask yourself three things:** What are you celebrating? What losses are you mourning? What are you letting go of?
3. **Space Matters:** Before you officially refresh your life, audit your physical space. What is stopping you from feeling refreshed daily? Ask yourself three things: What, in this space, is taking my joy, rather than giving me joy? Why haven’t I gotten rid of it or changed it? What “things” move me from surviving to thriving?

Hit REFRESH! You are ready! *“You have taken time to celebrate the wins and reflect on the losses. Refresh your spirit by doing something that encompasses that feeling of overall satisfaction with the hard work you have put into your life. How do I refresh? The ocean.”*

- Jillian Bumpus, Workforce Manager

Best Practices



Commissioner Encourages Staff use of Email Signature Best Practices

In early May, Commissioner McDonald sent all staff guidance on how to format your email signature block, the purpose of which is to upload a brand standard and to let people know who you are and what you do. He reminded all staff to make necessary changes to your email signature using the following guidelines:

12pt. Arial Bold	—	Name, degree (without periods)
11pt. Arial Italics	—	<i>Pronouns: list pronouns here (What’s This?)</i>
11pt. Arial Regular	—	Function
11pt. Arial Bold Purple	—	New York State Department of Health
	—	Address
11pt. Arial Regular	—	Phone
	—	Email Address
	—	Agency Website URL

You can find more details in his email sent on Thursday, May 9, or visit these best practices under Resources on the OPH SharePoint page:

<https://nysemail.sharepoint.com/:u:/r/sites/HealthIntranet/OPH/SitePages/Resources.aspx>

We want to hear from you!

Please share your thoughts for upcoming newsletter issues in this [short survey](#).

