



Tom A. DeGise
County
Executive

Hudson County Department of Health and Human Services

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SPRING 2022 NEWSLETTER

Issue 8

A Message from the Director, Darice Toon



I am excited to release the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) quarterly newsletter after two (2) very challenging years. Despite these challenges HHS has been laser focused addressing the needs of Hudson County residents. In addition to ensuring that interruptions to funded services were minimized, HHS staff launched new programs and expanded services to keep residents safe. This would not have been possible without the support from County Executive Tom DeGise and the Board of Commissioners. Some of the new initiatives are highlighted in this newsletter.

The pandemic put the spotlight on food insecurity. In response, the Department established new partnerships and launched services to ensure that one of our most basic needs was met for vulnerable populations. We partnered with the Community Food Bank of New Jersey (CFBNJ) to obtain food resources for distribution to residents. Also, we partnered with non-profits to have prepared meals and groceries delivered to those in need of such assistance. According to a white paper prepared by the CFBNJ, Hudson County is one (1) of six (6) counties in New Jersey projected to experience the highest increase in the number of food insecure residents.

To mitigate the potential impact on residents, the County Executive created a Food Security Task Force which is charged with developing and implementing a sustainable plan that helps to assure that the long-term food needs of residents are met. You will learn more about the Task Force below.



SPOTLIGHT



In early 2021, the Department of Health and Human Services established the **Hudson County Food Security Task Force** to address the hunger crisis worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of the Task Force is to develop and implement a sustainable plan that will ensure long-term food needs of Hudson County residents are met. After surveying more than 10,000 county residents, the Task Force has identified key objectives aimed at improving access to healthy food and information about resources offered by the County. Action items include increasing the number of food pantries and mobile food pantry units within the County, creating community gardens and year-round fresh markets, developing strategies to maximize use of existing food assistance programs such as SNAP and WIC, creating a resource guide outlining social services available to residents, strategically placing kiosks throughout the County to provide access to information and applications for benefit programs, and establishing grassroots efforts to further disseminate information on available support. The Department of Health and Human Services has also hired a Food Security Navigator to support the development and implementation of the Task Force's strategic plan and to serve as a centralized hub for information on food security resources and benefit applications.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Division of Aging



The Division of Aging Services has funded a new educational program through Act Now Foundation. The Alzheimer's Prevention Education Project is a group awareness and educational program that addresses three (3) categories of individuals closest to the Alzheimer's epidemic including seniors, caregivers, and individuals who have been diagnosed with dementia. Act Now's program will provide educational support services to patients and families affected by Alzheimer's disease and related dementias for effective long-term management of this chronic progressive disease.

Additionally, the Division of Aging Services has been awarded a new grant from the NJ Division of Aging Services to expand the abilities of Adult Protective Services (APS). Specifically, funding will be utilized to investigate allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation of seniors. APS will work to enhance the response from the local network and improve coordination across local agencies interacting with APS clients who have experienced maltreatment.



Office of Veterans Affairs

The Office of Veterans Affairs partnered with the Veterans Administration, Catholic Charities and Jersey City Veterans Affairs to work on the development of a strategic plan to combat veteran suicide. Additional stakeholders that participated in the working group included veteran post commanders, veteran service providers, college officials and mental health providers and experts. A four-step plan of action was devised at the meeting. Step one includes facilitation of three suicide prevention trainings at posts in Jersey City, Kearny, and North Bergen. Step two involves working with the Police to develop a resource cheat sheet, so officers have information at their fingertips when they encounter veterans in need. Step three involves working with St. Peter's University to develop a flyer that will be distributed in welcome packages that outlines resources for help for veterans during a crisis. These flyers will be shared with NJCU and HCCC. Step four involves distributing gun locks to the two-gun shops in Hudson County as well as the municipalities. These locks will be given free of charge to any veteran who requests it. The Office will advertise gun safety through flyers and emphasize child safety to destigmatize the issue at hand.



Office of Specialized Health Services

The Office of Specialized Health Services adopted the 2019 United States Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration operational plan called Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE): A Plan for America. The Plan is focused on ending the HIV epidemic by 2030. To support this endeavor, the County implemented the following programs: Rapid Start Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) protocol to link persons living with HIV (PLWH) in Hudson County rapidly and efficiently; Peer Housing Navigator program designed to foster stable housing through rental and utility assistance for persons living with HIV who are newly diagnosed or diagnosed but not engaged in care; multi-prong Marketing Campaign to promote HIV testing and awareness. Also, the County created an Ending the HIV Epidemic Task Force designed to promote collaboration with key stakeholders and community partners to assist in implementing activities that enhance the current HIV services available in Hudson County, improve HIV-related health outcomes and prevent new HIV transmissions. The goal of the Task Force is to identify opportunities in Hudson County that will increase the number of people who are aware of their HIV status and to engage people with HIV who are newly diagnosed, HIV diagnosed and out of care, HIV diagnosed but never in HIV care and those who are not virally suppressed. Our membership consists of organizations including but not limited to Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), local Colleges and Universities, Faith-based organizations and Ryan White funded medical and social services providers. We encourage you to join in the mission to end HIV transmission in Hudson County by 90% by the year 2030. You are invited to participate in the Hudson County's Ending the HIV Epidemic Task Force. Visit our website at <https://endhiv.hcnj.us/> to learn more.

Office of Inclusion and Accessibility (OIA)



The County of Hudson is one (1) of eighteen (18) organizations that was awarded an Inclusive Healthy Communities (IHC) grant from the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Disability Services. The IHC grant program was created to help communities across the state develop and/or implement inclusive initiatives that support the health and well-being of individuals with disabilities where they live, work, learn and play. Administered through the Office of Inclusion and Accessibility, this funding was used to prepare a strategic comprehensive plan that will address disparities and needs of individuals with disabilities in collaboration with multiple County agencies and various disability-related service providers. Seventeen (17) in-person and virtual focus groups were conducted countywide as well as an online survey to receive feedback from individuals with disabilities and their families, caregivers and disability leaders and advocates. The final plan identified needs that the County will prioritize and use to implement future projects and programming.

The Office of Inclusion and Accessibility is the recipient of the United States Department of Justice's (DOJ) Reducing Injury and Death of Missing Individuals with Dementia and Developmental Disabilities grant funds. The purpose of this grant is to support local jurisdictions' efforts to reduce the number of deaths and injuries of individuals with forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer's Disease, or developmental disabilities, such as autism, who due to their condition wander from safe environments. This funding will support the purchase of tracking technology designed to locate and recover individuals in the event they wander from safe environments. This initiative will support the development of holistic approaches designed to prevent and respond effectively to the wandering of individuals through trainings provided to local law enforcement personnel and first responders, families and caregivers of individuals who are prone to wander. This initiative will expand upon the current Roam and Detect (RAD) program, administered by the office, which was created to save the lives and reduce the potential injury of adults with Alzheimer's or dementia and children with autism or other related conditions or disorders.

Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services

The Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services created several new programs and initiatives during the last two years. They include the Diversion Pilot Program which is a partnership between the Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program (COSSAP) staff and the Hoboken, Union City and North Bergen Police Departments. The program helps residents who are struggling with substance abuse and/or mental health challenges connect to resources and treatment as needed. The second initiative, the Overdose Fatality Review Team (OFRT) began in January of 2021 and conducts social autopsies on Hudson County residents who have died by overdose by bringing together system partners and stakeholders with the joint purpose of identifying best practices and improving outcomes for those struggling with substance use challenges. The Division has also distributed 1,048 Narcan kits to various community entities and community partners since May of 2021 to attempt to help decrease drug overdose deaths. Lastly, the Division has funded several new programs which include case management and harm reduction services, programs to promote mental health wellness for individuals, families and couples and providing brief screening and support to pre-determined residences/shelter locations within Hudson County to address behavioral health needs.



DIVISION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES

STOP School Violence Mental Health Training Program

In 2021, the Hudson County STOP School Violence Mental Health Training Program conducted 46 school violence prevention workshops and/or assessments with 1,258 individuals through trainings on social and emotional learning, youth violence, conflict resolution and communication, peer/youth mediation and leadership, self-care and resilience. The STOP program will continue through September 30, 2022, with a focus on assisting schools to improve school climate and culture.

American Recue Plan

Beginning in the summer of 2021, the Division has utilized funding from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to mitigate some of the public health impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Funded programs focus on assisting domestic violence survivors, mental health services for families and mental health wellness and resiliency services for young people. To date, the Division has contracted with 11 agencies for 12 programs that have served over 1,200 youth and families since August 16, 2021.

Juvenile Detention

During late 2021, the Division assumed oversight of three Juvenile Detention Center contracts with Bergen, Essex and Morris Counties. The Division also created a new position and hired a Community Detention Liaison. The Liaison meets with detained youth weekly to ensure efficient communication with, and the wellbeing of, Hudson County's young people in detention.

Credible Messenger Program

In 2021 the County piloted the nationally recognized Credible Messenger Program by contracting with Guazabara Insights, LLC to address the needs of hard-to-reach justice involved youth in Hudson County. The initiative links these youth with individuals from similar backgrounds, especially men and women who were themselves justice-involved and engages youth and their families in structured and intentional relationships that help them change their attitudes, beliefs and actions.



RUTGERS EXTENSION 4-H PROGRAM



Hudson County 4-H is delighted to serve youth and families as a new partnership between Rutgers Cooperative Extension and the Hudson County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Children and Youth Services. We provide educational outreach programming for youth in grades K-13 (one year out of high school) through short and long-term 4-H clubs, special interest programs, camps and much more. Regardless of the subject matter—whether it be science, healthy living or citizenship, or urban agriculture, **4-H uses a learn-by-doing approach** to help youth learn responsibility, and become competent, caring citizens of the world. Since relaunching in 2021, Hudson County 4-H has provided environmental, urban agriculture, leadership, and STEM-based programs for youth throughout Hudson County. One of the Hudson County 4-H signature programs is Youth Urban Farm Club, a summer program serving youth in Hudson County ages 12-18 at community garden and small urban farm sites led by adult volunteers from the community. Youth developed new skills in horticulture, urban agriculture, herbalism and animal husbandry, and served their community by supporting the maintenance of these sites. We look forward to offering this program and so many more in 2022! For more information, please contact Claudia Urdanivia at cru1@njaes.rutgers.edu.



Hudson County Executive Tom DeGise
Hudson County Board of Commissioners



Hudson County Department of Health & Human Services
and Act Now Foundation Presents:

BRAIN HEALTH & COMMUNITY RESOURCE FAIR

1 Lincoln Park, JC, NJ (West Side Avenue Entrance)

June 11 2022
10am-2pm
RAIN DATE June 12th

- Workshops & Services: Mental Health, Healthy Eating
- Free Health Screenings
- 75+ Health & Human Services Vendors
- Giveaways
- Free COVID-19 Vaccines
- Recreation Activities
- Substance Abuse Information
- Brain Games
- Music
- Children Activities

For More Information Contact
Act Now Foundation - Kristine Allen | 201-721-6721 | kallen@ActNowFoundation.org
Hudson County - Evelyn Robles | 201- 369-5280 Ext. 4232 | erobles@hcnj.us



Darice Toon, Director, Department of Health & Human Services
Kristine Allen, President & Co - Founder, Act Now Foundation

Please see below for a listing of 2022 Department Meetings.
Please email the contacts provided to confirm meeting details.

MEETING	WHEN	WHERE
Children’s Interagency Coordinating Council (CIACC)	The fourth Wednesday of the month at 9:30 am (with the exception of August).	Via Zoom. Contact smoore@hcnj.us
Human Services Advisory Council (HSAC)	The second Thursday of the month at 10:00 am (with the exception of August).	Via Zoom. Contact smoore@hcnj.us
Local Advisory Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (LACADA)	January 21 st , March 18 th , May 20 th , September 16 th , November 18 th . All meetings begin at 10:00am. December 1 st meeting begins at 1:00 pm.	Via Zoom. Contact rjames@hcnj.us
Mental Health Advisory Board	March 17 th . Meetings begin at 4:30pm.	Via Zoom. Contact khanley@hcnj.us
Municipal Alliance	January 20 th , May 4 th , September 28 th . All meetings begin at 10:00 am. December 7 th meeting begins at 1:00 pm.	Via Zoom. Contact dpalmer@hcnj.us
Office on Aging Advisory Board	TBD	Contact bpoffel@hcnj.us
Office of Disability Services	TBD	Via Zoom. Contact eross@hcnj.us
Office of Veterans Affairs Stakeholder Meetings	June 1 st , September 13 th and December 14 th at 1:30 pm.	TBD. Contact jnorthgrave@hcnj.us
Professional Advisory Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (PACADA)	March 23 rd . All meetings begin at 1:00pm.	Via Zoom. Contact rjames@hcnj.us
Youth Services Commission Meetings	April 21 st , June 16 th , August 18 th , October 20 th and December 15 th . All meetings begin at 9:15am.	Via Zoom. Contact hcapps@hcnj.us