

WESTCHESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

1999 HIGHLIGHTS

The Westchester County Department of Health has the broad mandate to "promote health, prevent disease and prolong meaningful life" for the residents of Westchester County. The functions of the Westchester County Department of Health range from programs and services in family health, disease control, and health education, to community health assessment and environmental health services.

The Department of Health provides clinical and environmental services through five District Offices in New Rochelle, Rye Brook/Port Chester, White Plains, Yonkers and Mount Kisco. In 1999, the Westchester County Department of Health operated the New Rochelle and Rye Brook/Port Chester Pediatric Treatment Centers. The Department's Certified Home Health Agency brings a variety of health services into the home to prevent illness and maintain and improve the patient's health.

HEALTH EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

Education and Information Services

Health educators develop methods and programs that seek to heighten community awareness of the need for sound health practices and preventive health care. Through extensive publicity in the media and publications developed by the Westchester County Department of Health, residents are encouraged to avail themselves of public health services and clinics. Through multiple community partnerships with community-based organizations and health care facilities, as well as through the Department's website (www.westchestergov.com/health), Department of Health messages are carried to residents.

During 1999, Health Education and Information distributed thousands of bilingual leaflets and brochures to county residents, public and private schools and community agencies in a continuous campaign to publicize information about public health issues. The Bureau continued to develop literature and portable exhibits in culturally relevant formats for display at health fairs, conferences, seminars and libraries.

Video stores participate in a "free overnight loan" program for residents to borrow videos on important public health problems. Public libraries are valuable allies in assisting the Department to publicize various Westchester County Department of Health videos, special events and publications. The effective use of the media in health education continued through feature articles and stories and through the publication of press releases on potential and actual public health emergencies.

West Nile Virus Prevention: Operation S.T.I.N.G. (Stop the Insects' Next Generation)

A major effort for Health Education and Information in 1999 was the part it played in the battle against the West Nile virus. This mosquito-borne outbreak was unexpected, and

communities throughout the tri-state area were challenged about how best to safely contain it. Health Education and Information needed to quickly mobilize all of its resources to mount a massive educational campaign throughout the county to inform residents of this threat and the measures being taken by local, state and federal authorities, and to provide information about the measures individuals could take to protect themselves and assist in preventing the spread of the disease. The Department of Health, together with other County agencies, the New York State Department of Health and other State agencies, and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, were able to contain the outbreak.

The Department continued to maintain a Speakers' Bureau to respond to requests from schools and community agencies for educational programs, and continued to provide consultation, education, and information to community agencies, institutions, organizations and the public.

Complaints and Information

The computerized Complaints & Information Bureau provides continuous public accessibility to the Department of Health by acting as a round-the-clock receiving and referral center for public health concerns. The Department of Health maintains 24-hour coverage and response capability for public health emergencies such as sewage, oil and chemical spills, contact with or bites by rabid animals, and outbreaks of foodborne illness. During 1999, Department of Health staff received and responded to complaints and requests for information related to housing, lack of heat, animal bites, rodents and insects, food service establishments, smoking code violations and other violations of the New York State and Westchester County Sanitary Codes. Round-the-clock telephone coverage for emergency medical problems is also provided to patients of the Department's home health agency.

Tickborne Disease Prevention and Education

Tickborne disease prevention, early identification, and treatment in the early stages of the disease process were major priorities of the Department of Health in 1999. The County remains a leader in developing and supporting public education and information about these potentially serious illnesses. Education, prevention of tick bites, and the recognition and treatment of early signs and symptoms remain the best weapon in the battle against tickborne diseases.

A new vaccine against Lyme Disease was approved in December 1998, and the Department helped develop and provided guidelines to the general public and health care providers in 1999 regarding the use of this vaccine. A relatively new and potentially more deadly tickborne disease, ehrlichiosis, continued to spread in Westchester County in 1999, and efforts were continued to provide education to the public and providers regarding symptoms recognition and prevention.

In 1999, the County Executive declared the week of May 2-8 to be Tickborne Disease Awareness Week, and the Department of Health continued to be a driving force behind this annual educational campaign. WCDH collaborated with national organizations such as the American Lyme Disease Foundation, based in Westchester County, to promote education and prevention of tickborne diseases. The Lower Hudson Valley Regional

Tickborne Disease Advisory Council, of which the Westchester County Department of Health is a member, provides health professionals, community advocates and physicians with quarterly updates on the latest research, treatments and prevention of Lyme Disease, ehrlichiosis, and other tickborne diseases.

Portable tabletop exhibits were used as educational displays at health fairs, seminars, and other functions throughout the county. A video on Lyme Disease targeted to sports enthusiasts, gardeners and outdoor workers was distributed throughout the year. The Department continued to work cooperatively with video stores throughout the county to stock Lyme Disease videos for free loan to the public.

Perinatal Outreach and Education Program

In 1995, the Department was awarded funding through the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) to conduct a Regional Perinatal Education and Outreach Campaign for low-income pregnant women. The program uses culturally sensitive health education materials designed to encourage underserved pregnant women to access early and continuous prenatal care. The women and their families are also encouraged to utilize the free preventive and primary care services available in their communities to secure immunizations, lead screenings, and well-child check-ups for their newborns.

Countywide outreach efforts included placement of cable, radio, and print ads in English and Spanish publicizing a toll-free Healthy Baby Hotline, development of relationships with local community leaders and residents to inform the public of available services, and collaboration with service provider task forces to improve access to care. In addition, a successful supermarket advertising and promotion campaign continued throughout 1999 with bilingual posters displayed on shopping carts in select grocery stores in Yonkers, New Rochelle and Greenburgh. The theme, "Our Moms Made the Call for Us", featured infants of multiple ethnicities, and the ads contained the "Growing Up Healthy" Hotline phone number.

Westchester County AIDS Council

The Westchester AIDS Council was formally established in 1992 to address pertinent issues involving the prevention and spread of AIDS, as well as the compassionate care of individuals with AIDS and HIV infection.

In 1999, the AIDS Council accomplished the following:

- Co-sponsored "End the Silence: Listen, Learn, Live", a full-day conference in recognition of World Aids Day;
- Developed HIV prevention strategies for Westchester youth and continued its focus on the needs of youth for asset-based HIV prevention strategies. Nationally known author and lecturer, Dr. Michael Carrera, presented the keynote address, "Youth: Building Their Assets, Reducing Their Risk", at the annual World Aids Day conference, culminating a year of study and discussion. Workshops emphasized the importance of multi-cultural perspectives and the involvement of parents in the prevention education process;

- Studied and commented on proposed New York State Department of Health regulations for HIV counseling, testing, partner notification, and names reporting; and,
- Restructured the AIDS Youth Advisory Council to address the multiple health-related issues of youth.

Community Partnerships

In keeping with its commitment to develop and operate local coalitions to improve the health of residents, the Westchester County Department of Health initiated Community Partnerships for a Healthy Westchester in 1997 to identify health issues of local importance, recommend strategies to address those issues, and strengthen the community's long term capacity to manage and improve health care. The Department established a countywide Community Partnerships Advisory Council, made up of leaders representing health and social service organizations, hospitals, community based organizations, environmental groups, advocacy groups and elected officials, to oversee the process as Westchester County develops community health priorities. In 1999, Community Partnership members continued to study critical public health issues in the county, develop public health strategies and address the underlying causes that lead to poor health outcomes.

Task Forces of the Community Partnerships initiative continued to be active in 1999:

- The Child Health Task Force, co-chaired by the Department of Health and the Westchester Children's Association, is charged with examining the health status of the county's children, identifying barriers to positive health outcomes, and developing strategies to address those barriers. The first priority established by the Task Force was the development of a coordinated approach to enrolling county children in the State's expanded Child Health Plus program and Medicaid. In 1999, with the support of the Task Force, the Department of Health was able to securing grant funding for a facilitated enrollment initiative to enroll uninsured children in these programs.
- The Health Priorities Task Force, together with the Northern Metropolitan Hospital Association and its eighteen member hospitals, worked to identify and prioritize community health concerns for the people who live and work in the county.
- The Environmental Health Task Force worked to recruit key leaders from local environmental agencies and advocates to identify and address environmental issues of importance to Westchester residents to include watershed protection, pollution, and pesticide use.
- The Tobacco Use Prevention Work Group was formed by the Community Partnership Advisory Council to make recommendations for the development of a tobacco use prevention plan specifically targeted towards youth, in view of anticipated tobacco settlement monies. Comprised of over 20 community based organization representatives, the Work Group began working on plans for a massive media campaign and prevention programs initiated by community based organizations.

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

District Office Services

District Offices serve county residents of all ages - from infants to senior citizens - through the delivery of health care and education in the District Offices and in residents' homes. Services are provided at the White Plains, New Rochelle, Rye Brook/Port Chester and Yonkers District Offices and are offered on a sliding fee scale.

District Offices provided clinical services to include pediatric and adolescent care, childhood immunizations, influenza and pneumococcal immunizations, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases screening, diagnosis and treatment, dental care, lead screening, family planning, and nutritional services including WIC to county residents.

Child Health Services

Childhood is a critical period for the identification, prevention, and correction of many health problems. In 1999, the New Rochelle and Rye Brook/Port Chester Pediatric Treatment Centers provided comprehensive preventive and primary care for well and sick children. Well child services included health appraisals and free immunizations for communicable diseases. Parents were counseled on a broad range of health and nutrition matters. The Department works in close cooperation with Westchester schools to provide immunizations to children during health emergencies.

In recognition of the unique preventive and developmental needs of adolescents, TeenCare was in operation in the New Rochelle and Rye Brook/Port Chester District Offices. Separate clinical sessions for this age group were conducted with an emphasis on preventive counseling and early intervention when risk-taking behavior is identified.

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

Effective and comprehensive case management of children with elevated blood lead levels on the Department's Lead Medical Registry continued in 1999.

The Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program closely monitors the impact of New York State Department of Health lead legislation as private providers across the county comply with the mandate to screen patients for lead poisoning. As Medicaid Managed Care and Child Health Plus play a larger role in the county, the Program continues to expand surveillance.

The Westchester County Department of Health receives lead laboratory reports on children under six years of age residing in the county from the New York State Department of Health. The data are reviewed by staff and entered into an electronic monitoring and surveillance system.

Educational endeavors were developed to expand the "Lead Head the Clown" campaign in high-risk targeted areas in Westchester County. Performances were given at the Department's New Rochelle and Rye Brook/Port Chester District Offices and Yonkers WIC site and at the Greenburgh Health Center.

Immunization Action Plan

The goal of the Immunization Action Plan is to improve the rates of immunization of all children in Westchester County, especially those who are under three years of age. This group of children often does not receive the protection of full immunization, in part because parents do not realize the importance of receiving all scheduled immunizations at this young age.

Intensive efforts were undertaken in District Offices to review child health records and to conduct follow-up activities to ensure that children receiving services were fully immunized.

The Provider-Based Immunization Initiative of the Immunization Action Plan assesses physician practices that immunize children and reports on the immunization levels of one and two year old patients. The program makes recommendations/suggestions to aid providers in improving and sustaining immunization coverage levels and incorporating follow up procedures to ensure that changes have been implemented and improvements have been sustained.

The Immunization Action Plan continues to include the provision of information about the Vaccines for Children Program to private providers to ensure that their patients have access to vaccines. The Program is a State and federally-funded program that provides vaccines at no cost for use in immunizing children up to 19 years of age. Effective October 15, 1998, private physicians and college health services were required to order vaccines directly from the New York State Department of Health. While no longer a vaccine distributor, the Westchester County Department of Health continues to order vaccines for its own use.

Dental Health

The Westchester County Department of Health provides preventive and restorative dental care for children and adolescents who are unable to obtain or afford dental care.

Patients are provided with periodic examinations, home care instruction, cleanings, preventive sealant applications, restorative care, endodontic treatment, and basic oral surgical care. Early intervention for the prevention of potential oral health problems is stressed so that the more costly replacement of teeth lost due to caries/periodontal disease is avoided. Children from five to nine years of age are the primary users of these services.

Home Health Services

The Department's Certified Home Health Agency brings health services into the home to prevent illness and maintain and improve patients' health. Services are provided to county residents by nurses, physical therapists, speech/language therapists, medical social workers, occupational therapists and home health aides.

Preventive home visits include nursing care provided to expectant and new mothers. These visits offer information on how to prepare and care for the newborn and on the importance of regular medical supervision, including the need for immunizations.

In 1999, the Certified Home Health Agency continued to provide Directly Observed Therapy (DOT) and Directly Observed Preventive Therapy (DOPT) to patients and contacts of patients diagnosed with tuberculosis in the county. DOT and DOPT assure completion of the prescribed tuberculosis treatment and reduce the risk of tuberculosis transmission.

The Certified Home Health Agency, in partnership with the Westchester County Department of Social Services Personal Care Program, provides personal care aides to patients who require assistance with the activities of daily living, nutrition and health-related tasks. This service is essential to maintain the patient's health and safety within the home. The Department of Health assures the provision of a nursing assessment, establishes a plan of care, and provides professional nursing supervision to the personal care aides.

Adult Health Services

Adult Health Services include clinical and educational programs for adults and adolescents. In 1999, a Chronic Disease Prevention Workgroup continued to identify and promote programs addressing the prevention of chronic diseases including cancer and asthma. Efforts included the development of a Tobacco Use Prevention Workplan, the initiation of a community-based asthma program, and the promotion of better nutrition and exercise habits.

In the area of cancer prevention and detection, the Breast Health Program offered examinations, mammography and breast self-examination teaching to women with limited access to these services, and focused its outreach efforts to targeted minority populations. Cervical cancer screening was provided in District Offices and the Colorectal Cancer Screening and Prostate Cancer Education Program for men continued in 1999.

The Community Health Worker Program (Healthy Beginnings) is a case management program that targets high-risk pregnant women and parents of infants. Case managers offer assistance with referrals to health care and social service providers, transportation for clients as needed to access these services, and peer counseling parenting groups. In 1999, Healthy Beginnings continued to target the communities of Yonkers, White Plains/Greenburgh and Port Chester.

Family Planning Services continued in the Rye Brook/Port Chester, White Plains and Yonkers District Offices. Services are confidential and include HIV counseling and, if the patient consents, HIV testing.

Community Nutrition Services

The Bureau of Community Nutrition Services continues to be a resource for the public and community agencies. Nutrition information, education and guidance are provided to promote health and reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease. Technical assistance and consultation on nutrition education program development are available to community agencies and organizations. The

Bureau works cooperatively with community agencies to reach nutritionally vulnerable groups.

The goal of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, more commonly known as the WIC Program, is to improve pregnancy outcomes and promote optimal growth and development in infants and preschool children. In order to meet these goals, the WIC Program provides nutritious foods, nutrition education and counseling, breastfeeding guidance, and referrals for health and human services. WIC Offices are located in Department of Health District Offices in Yonkers, White Plains and Rye Brook/Port Chester. In FFY 1999, the Program generated revenues of \$5.9 million into the local economy through the use of WIC checks by program participants to purchase authorized foods in local food markets, many of which are located in low-income areas.

The Farmers Market Nutrition Program is sponsored jointly by the New York State Department of Health, the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets, the New York State Office for the Aging and the United States Department of Agriculture's Food & Consumer Services. Families enrolled in the WIC Program are issued coupon booklets to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at local authorized Farmers Markets to help low-income WIC families increase their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. In addition, it assists New York State farmers by increasing direct retail sale of their produce.

The goal of the Healthy Heart Worksite Wellness Program is to reduce the incidence of heart disease by creating environments that support regular physical activity and healthy eating habits. The Program objective is to increase environmental supports that promote cardiovascular health through policy changes, incentives and increased opportunities for health promotion and education. Westchester County worksites are the target audience for this Program. The Healthy Heart Worksite Wellness Program provides an excellent opportunity for the Department of Health to partner with the business community and to disseminate public health information to a sizable portion of the employed community.

DISEASE CONTROL

The Division of Disease Control is responsible for the development and administration of programs to effectively control and prevent the spread of communicable diseases in Westchester County. Communicable disease control is accomplished through active and passive surveillance programs, epidemiologic analyses, case and outbreak investigations, appropriate screening services, and the development and implementation of measures to reduce the risk of a particular disease.

Tuberculosis

Tuberculosis control is accomplished largely through the early identification and treatment of active cases. Contacts of active cases are also identified, administered a tuberculin skin test, and provided with preventive therapy when indicated. Tuberculin skin testing of contacts is performed in households, chest clinics, work sites, community organizations and schools. Directly Observed Therapy (supervised treatment) is the standard of care and is provided free of charge to all county residents diagnosed with tuberculosis to assure adequate treatment and reduce the emergence of drug-resistant strains of tuberculosis. Comprehensive medical management of tuberculosis is available through

the Department of Health's Tuberculosis/Chest Clinics. Clinic sessions, including evening hours, are held in the Yonkers, Rye Brook/Port Chester, New Rochelle and White Plains District Offices. Consultation to private physicians, Managed Care providers and hospital infection control staff for the management of individual cases is provided. Pilot screening and prevention programs targeted to high-risk populations, e.g., foreign-born, were initiated.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinics are conducted to screen, diagnose and treat individuals for syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and other sexually transmitted diseases. Clinics located in the New Rochelle, White Plains and Yonkers District Offices are free and confidential. Sexually transmitted disease/HIV services at the Westchester County Correctional Facility continue to promote the early identification and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. Follow-up with health care providers to ensure appropriate treatment, and partner identification, notification, and treatment are provided for all identified cases of sexually transmitted disease. Education and consultation regarding the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases are provided by staff to professionals and the public at community-based and health care settings, schools and colleges.

Rabies

Westchester County continues to be threatened by rabies, a major public health emergency that reached epidemic proportions when raccoon rabies reached Westchester County in April 1991. The Department of Health continues to provide services, education and medical consultation to individuals exposed to rabid or potentially rabid animals. Medical consultation also is provided to physicians and hospital emergency room staff in Westchester County for managing such exposures. Services include arranging for the testing of suspect animals, verifying vaccination status, appropriate quarantine, and other follow-up of biting pets and animals. Post-exposure preventive treatment is provided to county residents when indicated. On-going rabies education has resulted in increased public awareness of bat rabies and the measures needed to reduce the likelihood of exposure to rabid animals and bat entry into dwellings.

Animals implicated in possible disease outbreaks, including rabies, are monitored by the Department. All animal bites should be reported to the Department of Health immediately. Documented, confirmed cases of animal rabies have been reported countywide and the problem has spread throughout the more rural northern part of the county and the more populous, southern regions of Westchester. The Department vigorously enforces the dog and cat immunization law and also provides vouchers for low-cost rabies vaccinations for household pets. Owners who have not had their cats and dogs immunized risk serious penalties, including a potential \$1,000 fine if the animal is involved in a biting incident.

Emerging Pathogens

The Department provides surveillance and develops and implements appropriate interventions to prevent the spread of emerging pathogens. Activities include the provision of educational information to health care providers and the general public and treatment recommendations to health care providers. During the past few years there has

been increased surveillance, investigation and control of newly recognized pathogens including West Nile virus, *E. coli* 0157:H7, *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* and *Cyclospora*. Investigations of potential water-borne pathogens such as *Cryptosporidia* and *Giardia* have intensified.

In the fall of 1999, Westchester County, along with New York City and Nassau County, battled an outbreak of human disease due to West Nile virus. West Nile virus, transmitted to humans through infected mosquitoes, had never before been identified in the Western Hemisphere. Department of Health staff worked incessantly to track and control the disease. In collaboration with the New York State Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, surveillance systems and testing methods were established during the outbreak to detect the disease in humans, birds, and mosquitoes and to guide the measures taken to contain the spread of the infection. Nine Westchester County residents were infected with West Nile virus, resulting in one fatality. In response to the outbreak, Westchester County conducted mosquito spraying according to federal and State recommendations. Throughout the outbreak, the Department maintained a West Nile virus Hotline to address public concerns and answer questions. Preparations were made to prepare for the possible re-emergence of the virus in the summer of 2000 consisting of public education, the elimination of mosquito breeding sites, surveillance, and mosquito control using measures such as the eradication of larvae (immature mosquitoes) to try to prevent a future outbreak of human disease and to decrease the need for widespread mosquito spraying.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)

The Division of Disease Control provides community-based HIV prevention activities, works with state and local education committees to incorporate appropriate educational efforts into curriculum, conducts outreach to populations at high risk for infection with HIV, and facilitates access to health care.

Public health staff provide HIV counseling and testing to detect infection with HIV and the AIDS virus and make health and human service referrals for those who are HIV-infected. In collaboration with the Sexually Transmitted Diseases Program, staff provide partner identification and notification services for HIV-infected patients of private physicians and for cases identified through the Department's counseling and testing programs.

The Department provides leadership on HIV/AIDS related issues through participation in the Westchester County AIDS Council, the Ryan White Network, the Mount Vernon AIDS Task Force, the Yonkers Community Planning Council's AIDS Committee and other community-based committees and task forces.

Vector-borne Disease (including Tick-borne Disease)

The Department conducts active and passive surveillance for Lyme Disease and, together with the New York State Department of Health, active surveillance for human ehrlichiosis, a disease that was newly recognized in Westchester County in 1994. Both diseases are transmitted by the deer tick *Ixodes scapularis*. Educational efforts are directed towards physicians and health care providers to prevent, recognize, diagnose, and manage tick-borne diseases, and towards schools, high-risk occupations such as outdoor workers, and

senior citizens. Medical consultation is provided to physicians and other health care providers on the management of tick-borne diseases. The Department collaborated with the Louis Calder Center of Fordham University to address tickborne disease issues in the county, such as non-chemical approaches to reducing the tick population and the initiation of a countywide tick identification program in 2000.

Communicable Diseases

The Department conducts immediate investigations of situations that present significant health risks to the public, such as the vaccine preventable diseases, meningococcal meningitis and hepatitis in food handlers. Public health staff implement appropriate control measures through contact identification, and provide recommendations or arrange for appropriate evaluation, treatment, prophylaxis and immunization.

Bioterrorism and Emergency Preparedness Planning

The Westchester County Department of Health is working with the Department of Emergency Services, the health care community and other relevant organizations to develop a county and regional coordinated surveillance and emergency preparedness response plan for incidents due to the release of a biological agent. These efforts include developing County response guidelines to an announced bioterrorism event, enhancing active and passive surveillance systems for the early detection of an event, educating the medical community, implementing agent testing procedures, participating in regional drills, and assessing hospital capabilities. WCDH was provided funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the New York State Department of Health to electronically link area hospitals with the WCDH and the Office of Emergency Management to facilitate surveillance, reporting, epidemiological investigations, and the dissemination of medical information to physicians during or prior to an event.

Physician Education

Infectious Disease Updates, written by WCDH physicians, provide current information and recommendations on a wide range of infectious diseases to physicians and other health care practitioners in Westchester County several times per year. Physician Grand Rounds, that educate physicians about issues of public health significance and current diagnostic and management recommendations for particular diseases, are provided throughout the year.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Environmental Quality

Increased technology, urbanization, and population shifts have created the potential for adverse effects on natural resources. The Westchester County Department of Health is the lead regulatory agency charged with monitoring the environmental quality of land, air, and waters. Similar to the last several years, 1999 demanded vigilant implementation of the regulatory controls designed to protect these natural resources.

The Department of Health responds to public concerns and inquiries regarding sewage, septic waste, water supply and drinking water quality, refuse disposal, medical and hazardous waste, air quality, water pollution, realty subdivisions, individual sewage disposal systems, and individual water supplies.

The monitoring of sewage treatment plants in Westchester County is conducted to prevent and control water pollution and to improve and maintain water quality. The Department is responsible for plan reviews and for the approval of public sewer extensions and new or modified wastewater treatment plants. Staff respond to complaints of sewage discharges onto the ground surface or into the waters of the county.

The Department performs inspections and surveillance sampling of water treatment plants to assure that high quality drinking water, that meets all State and County codes, is provided to the residents of Westchester County. The Department maintains oversight responsibility for 91 community and 173 non-community public water supplies. Staff work closely with the northern and mid-county suppliers to encourage the best regional solutions for mandatory filtration of surface water users.

The Department seeks to protect ambient air quality through plan reviews and approvals of commercial and industrial sources, inspections, and responses to complaints from county residents regarding ambient air quality and point source emissions.

Engineers make inspections of construction sites and provide construction certifications. They review realty subdivision plans for compliance with State and County Sanitary Codes and design standards to assure safe and adequate water supplies and adequate sanitary sewer systems. The approval of the Westchester County Department of Health is required before the filing of a subdivision map with the County Clerk.

Department engineers review and approve plans and specifications for new public swimming pools as well as modifications to existing public swimming pools.

Inspections are conducted and permits are issued to regulate the management, transportation and disposal of solid waste in accordance with State and County laws and regulations.

In November 1997, the New York City Watershed Agreement was implemented. This has resulted in a cooperative partnership to develop and implement a watershed protection program to maintain and enhance the quality of the New York City drinking water supply system and the economic vitality and social character of the watershed communities. The New York City watershed negotiations involved delegation of plan approval for septic systems on the New York City watershed (more appropriately called subsurface sewage treatment systems) to the Westchester County Department of Health. This serves to avoid duplication of regulatory effort by utilizing the services already performed by the Department.

Public Health Protection

Public health sanitarians enforce the laws, rules, and regulations necessary to maintain and promote community hygiene. They perform routine inspections, investigate complaints from county residents, and strive to educate the public concerning the necessary safeguards to maintain a healthy, safe environment. The appropriate

enforcement authority is exercised when violations are discovered to protect the public from actual or potential health hazards.

The responsibility for the surveillance and protection of food prepared and served to the public rests with the Food Sanitation Program. In 1999, public health sanitarians and environmental health technicians regularly inspected all food service establishments in Westchester County, based upon a risk assessment model. These inspections focus on violations likely to result in foodborne illness. Depending on the type and number of violations found, a food service establishment could be immediately closed, referred for legal action, or reinspected to ensure non-recurrence of the violations. The way food is prepared, stored and marketed is ever changing, as is the microbial environment of food. In the last decade, a host of new foodborne pathogens - *L. monocytogenes*, *E. Coli 0157*, *S. enteriditis*, *Norwalk viruses*, etc. – have been identified. The changes in food preparation and food pathogens require the investigation of all outbreaks of foodborne illness to learn the causes of the outbreak. Only after discovering the causes can measures be put into place to prevent further outbreaks.

All motels, hotels, and institutions are inspected annually with special emphasis on fire safety. During the summer months, sanitarians inspect children's day and overnight camps. Inspections are conducted at migrant labor camps, mobile home parks and campgrounds from spring through fall.

The Westchester County Department of Health provides regulatory and consultative services to day care facilities licensed or registered with the New York State Department of Family Assistance in regards to individual water supplies, food handling, bathing facilities, sewage treatment and lead paint hazards.

Beginning in the spring, outdoor swimming pools and bathing beaches are inspected, sampled and then permitted. During the fall, indoor swimming pools and spa pools are inspected.

Complaints from the public concerning lack of heat, insects and rodents, nuisance and service requests are responded to by sanitarians who ensure that County and State Sanitary Codes are enforced. Staff work closely with municipal and State agencies to resolve many types of housing problems encountered. Staff perform inspections in response to complaints concerning smoking in public places and enforce the County's Sanitary Code. Initiatives continue under the Department's Healthy Neighborhoods Program in the City of Yonkers via door-to-door outreach, home safety inspections, distribution of safety products, and referrals for community health services when indicated.

The Department continues to respond to a variety of environmental incidents including the transportation of hazardous materials, newly listed hazardous waste sites, industrial/commercial accidents, spills, and various other hazardous materials related releases. This can be attributed to the higher level of environmental awareness of county residents and the chemical industry community, and to the implementation of local legislation.

The Department's chemical emergency response capability continues to enable the Westchester County Department of Health to respond on a 24-hour basis to chemical emergencies and hazardous spills with efficiency and a high level of technology. The Department continues to take a lead role in advising the Hazardous Materials Local Emergency Planning Committee, as mandated by the Federal Superfund Amendments

and Reauthorization Act (SARA) Title III. This Act requires the listing of sites containing quantities of potentially hazardous chemicals. The chemical industry community formed a Community Awareness and Emergency Response Group to further assist the Local Emergency Planning Committee in accomplishing its mandated tasks.

Protection of the public from needless radiation exposure is achieved through State-mandated inspections of medical and dental X-ray facilities, surveillance around the Indian Point nuclear power reactors and other facilities utilizing or discharging radioactive materials, and surveys of other sources of potential exposure. Radiological training for public health staff continued in preparation for a federally observed Indian Point Emergency Response Drill.

The Westchester County Department of Health continues to conduct special investigations in conjunction with the Westchester County District Attorney's office, the Westchester County Fire Coordinator's Hazardous Materials Unit, the Westchester County Bomb Squad, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the New York State Department of Health regarding criminal prosecution of individuals and companies involved in environmental criminal acts that jeopardize the health of the community as well as the environment.

Westchester is one of five Petroleum Bulk Storage delegated counties in New York State with the authority to enforce petroleum bulk storage regulations from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The Westchester County Board of Health added Article XXV, Petroleum Bulk Storage Code, to the Westchester County Sanitary Code in December 1996. Department of Health staff issue permits for all petroleum bulk storage tanks greater than 1,100 gallons capacity in conjunction with monitoring and inspections. Staff also provide training and information to owners and operators of petroleum bulk storage facilities that include gasoline stations, fuel oil companies, apartment building complexes, schools, office buildings and private residences.

In the continuing effort to stop the sale of tobacco products to minors, the Westchester County Department of Health performed enforcement checks for compliance with the Adolescent Tobacco Use Prevention Act (ATUPA) at establishments throughout the county. Compliance teams consist of two full-time staff members from the Department and a minor. Third-time offenders are referred to the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance for suspension of their license to sell tobacco products. The Department of Health is committed to aggressive enforcement of the ATUPA law. Each year, tobacco kills more New Yorkers than alcohol, drugs, car accidents, fires, homicide, suicide and AIDS combined.

ADMINISTRATION

Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act Funding

For the ninth year, the Westchester County Department of Health administered Ryan White Title I CARE Act funding to develop services for persons with HIV/AIDS in Westchester, Rockland and Putnam Counties. In 1999, the Tri-County Region received a total of \$4,212,398 in Title I funding. The funding provided for 40 HIV/AIDS service contracts to 18 agencies for primary health care, dental care, support groups, food services, respite care, client advocacy, case management, mental health, housing assistance, transportation and outreach/harm reduction. This program facilitates the Title

I Steering Committee, participates in the Title II Care Network, and continues to support Living Together, an education and advocacy group of persons infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

Major accomplishments for 1999 include the following:

- The establishment of a new “maintenance in primary care services” program providing intensive case management services designed to keep clients engaged in care;
- Sponsorship of two all-day conferences, one regarding PWA participation in the planning process and the other for mental health/substance use HIV providers;
- Initiation of a new project, the Black/Latino Faith-Based Initiative on HIV/AIDS. The goal of this innovative, multi-ethnic capacity-building program is to increase access points by engaging Black and Latino religious institutions in distributing materials about direct services, conducting outreach and referral services, and developing supportive services; and,
- Distribution of the sixth edition of the *HIV/AIDS Resources Directory of Service Providers* and consumer resource cards.

Services for Children with Disabilities

Services for Children with Disabilities continued to expand as more families accessed services under the Early Intervention and 4410 Preschool Education Programs. During 1999, target outreach activities to specific underserved communities were conducted to identify and assist children and their families to access services for children with developmental disabilities and/or delays. In conjunction with the New York State Department of Health, the Physically Handicapped Children’s Program expanded its program scope to identify gaps in services for children with special health care needs and to assist families in accessing available resources in their communities.

A critical initiative implemented in 1999 by the Bureau of Services for Children with Disabilities was the formation of a Quality Assurance Unit. This unit began conducting program audits of Early Intervention providers to assess contract compliance and adherence to Article 25 regulations. The Unit also addressed complaints from both parents and providers in an effort to continue improving overall quality in the delivery of early intervention services. Contract management involved monitoring over 300 contracts with Early Intervention, 4410 Preschool Education and related service providers and agencies.

During 1999, the Westchester County Department of Health continued to hold appointments to the Governor’s statewide Early Intervention Coordinating Council and its respective subcommittees and to the State Education Municipal Advisory Committee on Services to Preschool-aged Children with Disabilities. The Department continued to chair the Downstate Physically Handicapped Children’s Program Regional Group and to host a workgroup of Downstate Early Intervention Officials. To continue collaborative relationships with parents and providers, the Department held quarterly meetings with the local Early Intervention Coordinating Council (LEICC), and its four workgroups continued to be very active: the Services Workgroup finalized a White Paper on Evaluations that included family-centered principles and best practices; the Finance Workgroup developed

a booklet to assist parents with assistive technology issues; the Education and Advocacy Workgroup identified communities to target for outreach activities; and, the Parents Workgroup assisted with parent education sessions at the Greenburgh Library. The Bureau also worked closely with the Early Intervention Provider Coalition to revise the *Early Intervention Protocol Manual* and with the Applied Behavioral Analysis Advisory Committee to develop standards for paraprofessionals.

Managed Care

The Westchester County Department of Health continued to experience the impact of mandatory enrollment of Medicaid recipients in managed care plans during 1999, the program's fourth year of full implementation. Children previously seen by the Department's Pediatric Treatment Centers continued to be assigned to one of five managed care plans serving Westchester County. During 1999, the loss of Medicaid-eligible patients and reductions in fee-for-service Medicaid revenues continued to be experienced.

The Department continues to work with the Westchester County Department of Social Services and the New York State Department of Health on issues of quality assurance, data reporting, delineation of responsibility for health services and protection, and the public health impact of mandatory Medicaid Managed Care and of the expanded Child Health Plus Program.

Grants and Contracts

With the reduction in third-party funding, state aid, and tax levy funding, the Westchester County Department of Health continues to seek to maximize the availability of non-county dollars to support public health activities and the delivery of health care services through the administration of grants and contracts. In 1999, the Division of Administration administered and managed 25 grants totaling \$10.6 million dollars and approximately 375 contracts.

All Kids' Health Care (Facilitated Enrollment)

In 1999, the Department of Health was awarded a grant from the New York State Department of Health to implement facilitated enrollment of children in Child Health Plus A (formerly known as Medicaid) and Child Health Plus B. The Department will coordinate the enrollment process with enrollers, health plans, and the Westchester County Department of Social Services.

The Department is subcontracting with five community based agencies to implement this project: the Westchester Children's Association will coordinate training and the enrollment sites; and, CLUSTER, the Child Care Council of Westchester, the Westchester Community Opportunity Program and the Westchester Hispanic Coalition have hired staff to assist families in completing the Growing Up Health application and will provide access to the human service, religious, educational and business sectors of the county. Enrollment activities are provided during the day, evenings and on weekends and in non-traditional settings.