



Harford County Health Department

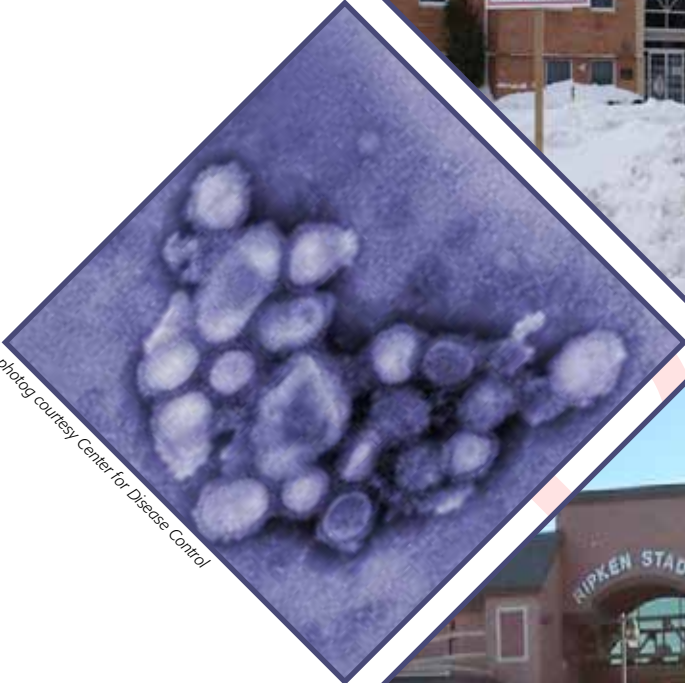


photo courtesy Center for Disease Control



ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2010

HEALTHY PEOPLE IN A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

OUR MISSION

To protect and promote the health, safety and environment of the citizens of Harford County through community assessment, education, collaboration and assurance of services.

Harford County Board of Health

William "Billy" Boniface – Council President

Dion F. Guthrie - District A

Joseph M. Woods - District B

James "Capt'n Jim" McMahan - District C

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Richard Slutzky - District E

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Message From the Health Officer



It has been said that public health is like air; no one gives it much thought, until something goes wrong and we are left gasping for breath. Yet, public health affects all of us, as was very apparent with the outbreak of the H1N1 flu pandemic. At a time of dramatic budget cuts, furloughs, layoffs, and an overall reduction in work force due to tough economic times, staff members from all sectors of the health department were mobilized to mount an effective response to this novel virus, and with the support and cooperation of our community partners, we were able to mitigate the impact in our community.

The last two years have been particularly challenging with reductions in staff and budget, requiring us to consolidate, streamline, and restructure some of our traditional services. Regardless of economic realities, however, we remain steadfast in our commitment to the principles of public health and community well being.

In the last century, the lifespan of people in the United States increased by 30 years, and 80% of that gain was made through advances in public health. In an age of elevated community hygiene, high vaccination rates, and laws governing food preparation, and lead and asbestos use, new public health issues are rising to affect the health of our community. As we continue to collaborate with our community partners to improve the quality of life and the years of healthy living, we have become increasingly alarmed by the statistics for obesity and the resulting health related consequences, particularly for our children. It has been said that childhood obesity is a public health issue today much in the way smoking was 10 years ago, and if this trend continues, this will be the first generation that will have a shorter life expectancy than that of their parents. As part of a community wide effort to combat obesity, the health department is taking an active role in working to improve nutrition and physical activity of all of our residents.

Health care reform will bring many changes to the face of public health over the next decade. Access to health care, prevention efforts, the need for health equity, a shift to population-based interventions, emergency preparedness, and environmental vigilance will all play key roles in keeping our community healthy and safe.

We invite you to learn more about our programs and initiatives. Please visit our website at www.harfordcountyhealth.com. If you have comments on the annual report or questions regarding our programs, please contact us at 410-838-1500 or by e-mail HCHD@dhmh.state.md.us.

Harford County Health Officer

This annual report provides an overview of our activities during the 2010 fiscal year (July 1, 2009- June 30, 2010). It also includes a special section on our retrospective of H1N1 influenza.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

ADDICTION SERVICES

Adult Addictions

The Adult Addiction Program provides methadone maintenance referral, suboxone maintenance and detoxification services, outpatient and intensive outpatient services, and addiction evaluation services. The highly successful HOPE Project, funded by a Maryland Community Health Resources Commission grant, targets dually-diagnosed inmates and links them to substance abuse, mental health, medical, and case management services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Adolescent Addictions

The Adolescent Addiction Program provides substance abuse education and treatment to adolescents and their families. Substance abuse assessments are conducted by adolescent counselors in various schools through the Maryland Student Assistance Program.

Drug Court

The Drug Court Addiction Program provides substance abuse education and treatment services for first time nonviolent substance abuse offenders.

- Admitted 659 clients in FY10 and discharged 441 clients during the same time period, where clients averaged 117 days in treatment.

ADMINISTRATION

In addition to issuing Vital Records (Birth and Death Certificates) to the public, the Office of Administrative Services is responsible for providing support to all other Divisions within the Health Department. These support functions include, but are not limited to: budget management, accounts payable and receivable, procurement and purchasing, personnel services, information technology and fleet management.

- Processed approximately 4,150 birth certificate and 160 death certificate requests.

CARE COORDINATION

Child and Family Unit

The Child and Family Unit provides the following services: health education, care coordination outreach and ombudsman services to Health Choice enrollees, hearing and vision screening to specified grades in state-approved non-public schools, case review of fetal infant and child fatality, and case management services for children with elevated blood lead levels. This Unit provides resource information for high risk newborns and home birth verification by a registered nurse. Respite Care funds are made available to families with children with special health care needs.

Senior and Disability Unit

The Adult Evaluation & Referral Services and Medical Assistance & Personal Care Programs provide evaluation and personal care monitoring to Harford County residents. In addition, through the Hospital and Nursing Facility Outreach Program (Real Choices), Registered Nurses seek out hospitalized individuals 18 years of age and older at risk for long-term institutionalization to provide intensive discharge planning and follow-up in the home setting.

- Distributed respite care funding to 66 families.
- Assisted 2,447 clients with the HealthChoice application process, education about Health/Choice, and navigating the managed health care system.
- Provided monthly case monitoring services to 126 individuals.
- Provided 388 comprehensive evaluations for aged and functionally disabled adults who needed long-term care and were at risk for institutionalization.
- Provided administrative care coordination to 13 lead cases identified by the Maryland Department of Environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Resource Protection

The Resource Protection Unit is responsible for the review and inspection of building permits, septic systems, well permits, soil percolation tests, and water quality sampling. In addition, the Unit issues burning permits, inspects daycare facilities, public pools, and responds to a variety of air pollution and solid waste complaints.

- Approved 1,121 building permits.
- Issued 360 sanitary construction permits and 363 well permits.
- Performed 400 perc tests/soil evaluations.
- Investigated 326 air and solid waste complaints.
- Issued 68 burning permits.
- Issued 22 mobile home parks permits.
- Conducted 183 public pool inspections and issued 94 permits.

Consumer Protection

The Consumer Protection Unit conducts inspections of food service facilities, reviews plans for new and remodeled food service facilities, investigates food borne and zoonotic diseases and nuisance complaints, enforces regulations regarding rabies and vector control, and performs inspections of camps, non-public schools, and adoption/foster care homes.



- Regulated 844 permanent licensed food facilities, including 697 retail establishments, 68 schools and 79 nonprofit facilities.
- Conducted 1,808 inspections of licensed food service facilities.
- Issued 859 permanent food facility licenses and 827 temporary food permits.

- Investigated 169 food service complaints.
- Conducted 38 inspections of youth camps and campgrounds and issued 11 permits.
- Vaccinated 2,416 dogs, cats, and ferrets against rabies at nine scheduled clinics.

HEALTH PROMOTION & DISEASE CONTROL

Women's Wellness

The Women's Wellness Unit provides Family Planning and Colposcopy services to maintain and improve the reproductive health and well-being of women in Harford County. The Unit provides gynecological services, contraceptive education and birth control, testing for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and walk-in pregnancy testing. Clients with abnormal Pap smears are referred to our Colposcopy clinic for evaluation and follow-up.

- Provided services for 2,774 Family Planning clients totaling 4,887 clinic visits.
- Provided 1,196 pregnancy tests and 572 emergency contraceptives to walk-in clients.

Communicable Disease Surveillance and Control Program

The Communicable Disease Unit is responsible for communicable disease surveillance and investigation, outbreak response, sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing and control, tuberculosis (TB) control, immunization services, human rabies control, perinatal hepatitis B case management, and refugee/migrant worker health.



Communicable Disease was also responsible for the planning and implementation of seasonal and H1N1 influenza clinics, including school-based FluMist and injectable vaccination programs.

- Successfully treated a caseload of active tuberculosis nearly four times the usual County average, and prevented its spread to others.

HEALTH SERVICES

Dental Clinic

The Dental Clinic serves children ages 1 – 20 on the Maryland Children's Health Program and pregnant women on the Medical Assistance Program and provides same-day treatment for dental emergencies involving infection and trauma. Hygiene services include x-rays, cleanings, sealants, fluoride treatment, home oral health care instructions and nutrition education. Dental services include restorations (fillings), extractions, root canals, crowns, space maintainers for missing primary (baby) teeth, and the provision of referrals for specialty care when deemed necessary.

- Fiscal year client visits totaled 4,484.
- Provided services for 4,500 patients since the clinic opened in March 2008.

Healthcare for the Homeless

Health Care for the Homeless is a collaboration between Harford County Health Department and Upper Chesapeake HealthLink Primary Care Clinic that provides intensive case management and medical services to individuals who lack a secure place to live. Staff determines the availability of entitlements and benefits, and coordinates medical care, shelter, and referrals for mental health and substance abuse treatment for homeless clients, individuals recently released from incarceration, and those who reside in transitional housing.

- Enrolled 110 new clients.
- Documented 690 total Case Management encounters.

HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS Services Unit provides free, anonymous or confidential HIV antibody testing and educational counseling. In partnership with the Johns Hopkins Hospital Moore Clinic, the Unit provides primary care to HIV positive patients and enhances access to medical care and entitlement resources for HIV/AIDS-affected persons via nursing and social work case management services.

- Performed HIV testing on 1,212 persons; provided group and individual educational counseling to high risk individuals in a variety of outreach settings.
- Provided case management services for an average annual caseload of 140 HIV/AIDS clients, including 24 new clients and 3 clients who re-entered care, many of whom presented challenges with dual and multiple diagnoses.

Infants and Toddlers

This is a multi-agency program providing individualized early intervention services to qualifying children from birth to age 5 and their families who reside in Harford County. Working in collaboration with the Department of Social Services and Harford County Public Schools, the program provides special instruction, speech language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, social work, and service coordination.

- Received approximately 48 new referrals monthly and served an average of 362 children annually

Maryland Children's Health Program

The Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP) provides full health benefits for children up to age 19, and pregnant women of any age who meet income eligibility guidelines. MCHP enrollees obtain care from a variety of Managed Care Organizations through the Maryland HealthChoice Program. The Medical Assistance for Families program provides the same benefits as MCHP but expands eligibility coverage to those parents and/or adults who care for children, as well as for children ages 19 and 20.

- Processed 3,400 new applications and 3,800 renewal applications, approximately 70% of which were for MCHP and 30% were for Medical Assistance for Families.

Medical Assistance Transportation

Medical Assistance Transportation arranges taxicab, wheelchair van and ambulance transportation for those eligible Medical Assistance recipients who are accessing medical care.

- Scheduled approximately 63,000 one-way rides for ambulatory clients.

- Scheduled approximately 3,800 wheelchair and ambulance one-way rides for non-ambulatory clients.

School Based Health Centers

The School Based Health Centers Program provides health care, mental health care, and preventive services to school students in four Title 1 Elementary Schools who may lack access to health care. Licensed Nurse Practitioners examine, diagnose, and prescribe medication for problems such as ear, sinus, or throat infections, asthma, rashes, etc., provide comprehensive physical exams and assist school nurse with vision and hearing screenings. Social workers provide supportive counseling for children and their families, help address behavior issues both at school and at home and assist families in accessing community resources.

- 1,500 children were provided medical and mental health services.

PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATION & CANCER PREVENTION

Public Health Education

The Public Health Education Unit coordinates and provides public health education, public information and communication services that reduce health risk, improve health behaviors, and advocates for public health with educational, faith-based, business and healthcare communities, government and media partners.

- Provided tobacco use cessation training and related cessation services to 113 clients.
- Provided tobacco awareness education to approximately 5,000 Harford County students, parents, and teachers.
- Prepared and disseminated 36 news releases to public information representatives and the media.

Cancer Prevention Services

The Cancer Prevention Services Unit provides education and screening, and links clients to treatment for a variety of targeted cancers. Services provided for colorectal, breast and cervical cancer screening and treatment clients

include determination of client eligibility, physician contracting, billing administration and oversight, client case management, navigation, advocacy and coordination of care.

- Educated 6,399 persons about targeted cancers.
- Coordinated the provision of 282 breast and cervical cancer examinations and 28 colonoscopies for program clients.
- Provided 2 clients with cancer case management and treatment services through the Maryland Cancer Fund.

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

The Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Program collaborates closely with other Harford County agencies and regional health departments to strategically prepare for and respond to natural or man-made emergencies. In concert with all Harford County Health Department employees, staff is available 24 hours a day to react to arising public health emergencies.



- Participated in the H1N1 pandemic response that included organization and implementation of mass vaccination clinics throughout the county, the establishment of a health department call center and partnership with local and state agencies.
- Coordinated a full-scale radiological decontamination drill, supported by Harford County Community Services, Emergency Management HAZMAT and Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service.

TEEN DIVERSION

Teen Diversion is a psychiatric rehabilitation day-program operating in partnership with Harford County Public Schools. Treatment is focused on diverting adolescents, ages thirteen through eighteen, from a more restrictive therapeutic or educational placement and reintegrating them back into the community. Adolescents typically participate in treatment for twelve or more weeks. Teen Diversion provides a wide variety of services, tailored to the individual needs of the adolescent and his or her family. These services include group therapy, individual and family therapy, psychiatric rehabilitation, socialization/recreational therapy, psychiatric evaluations, medication management, case management & transition planning, didactic drug & alcohol group counseling, conflict resolution & communication groups, vocational readiness training, nutrition and other health education. The program also provides crisis intervention with 24-hour support and optional AfterCare programming.

- Provided services to more than 40 teens and their families, including the provision of more than 1,400 total psychiatric rehabilitation services.



WOMEN, INFANTS, & CHILDREN (WIC)

The Harford County Women, Infants and Children Program is a federally funded program serving pregnant women, new mothers, infants and children under age five in Harford and Cecil Counties. The program provides healthy supplemental foods, health referrals, personalized nutrition assessment and participant-centered counseling, health screening on infants and children through regular growth and weight checks, and free breastfeeding support through the Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program. WIC participants receive monthly food checks for healthy foods and receive special Farmer's Market checks each summer for fresh fruits and vegetables.

- Provided services to an average monthly caseload of 3,879 clients, including, on average, 419 pregnant women, 478 post-partum women, 2,040 children, and 942 infants.
- 61% of the infants born in Harford County are enrolled in the program.
- 42% of the post partum women enrolled in the program are breastfeeding.
- 94% of women who participated in the breastfeeding education class initiated breastfeeding and 75% exclusively breastfed.

FISCAL YEAR 2010

Highlights, Challenges & Points of Interest

- The Health Department building erected in 1953 at 119 Hays Street was demolished.
- Hours of operation for the Office of Vital Records were reduced to half-days; implementation of a web-based system expedited the processing of Vital Records requests.
- Severe budget cuts forced staff reductions, furloughs, and service cutbacks throughout the Health Department; some budget cuts were offset by the federal stimulus program.
- The Division of Addictions Services consolidated program services into one location at 120 Hays Street in Bel Air and instituted organizational and procedural changes in service delivery resulting in improved client accessibility and operational efficiency.
- Using grant funding from the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission, the School Based Health Centers Program increased Nurse Practitioner services from two days a week to five days a week in each of the Title 1 Schools served by the program, increased collections through improved billing practices and sponsored three health fairs offering a variety of health screening services and health education to the surrounding community.
- The Harford County Health Department used grant funding, provided to design and implement a successful pilot program, to help inmates suffering from co-occurring mental health and substance abuse issues to quickly access needed services and find a road to recovery upon their release. This program, a partnership between the Harford County Health Department, Core Mental Health Services, and the Harford County Sheriff's Office has significantly reduced the incidence with which former inmates re-offend and return to jail, and is presently being replicated in two additional counties in Maryland.
- As a result of budget reduction measures, on-site hearing and vision services in non-public schools were eliminated; these services continue to be available at the Health Department.
- The Women, Infants, and Children Program began authorizing local farmers to be paid from the fruit and vegetable checks issued to clients, thereby encouraging clients to enjoy fresh whole fruits and vegetables, while supporting local farmers.
- Environmental Health promoted community vector awareness, prevention and protection by providing educational presentations on mosquito control, rabies and Lyme disease at a variety of venues.
- Bay Restoration grant funding was made available to the Health Department to assist property owners with on-site sewage disposal system upgrades.
- In addition to its regularly scheduled pet vaccination clinics, Environmental Health collaborated with community partners in commemoration of World Rabies Day to provide a low cost rabies vaccination clinic for all interested pet owners.
- Public Health Matters program segments, featuring local and state public health and healthcare authorities, were produced for the Harford Cable Network on the subjects of Dental Health, Breast and Cervical Cancer, Suicide Prevention, and an H1N1 Retrospective.
- The Communicable Disease program trained public school nurses and provided them with necessary supplies to conduct seasonal influenza vaccination clinics for more than 2,700 school staff.
- Teen Diversion relocated to the newly renovated Center for Educational Opportunity in Aberdeen, more than tripling serviceable space and allowing more teens to be served in both its daytime and AfterCare programs.
- The Public Health Education and Cancer Prevention Services Division experienced 77% and 24% budget reductions, respectively, to their Cigarette Restitution Fund Tobacco and Cancer Programs, resulting in significant reductions in services.

FISCAL YEAR 2010

Highlights, Challenges & Points of Interest (continued)

- Through federal stimulus grant funding, the Communicable Disease Program received enough vaccine to provide 464 free doses of pneumonia vaccine, as well as 191 free doses of hepatitis A/B vaccine to Health Department clients.
- The Women, Infants and Children Program implemented new food package changes offering foods that are more consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, including fruits and vegetables, whole grain products, and fat-free and low-fat milk products.
- Communicable Disease responded to the H1N1 pandemic by investigating 22 school and daycare outbreaks and assisting in conducting numerous vaccination clinics. The Health Department conducted a total of 207 vaccination clinics resulting in the immunization of over 28,000 Harford County citizens against H1N1 during the pandemic.
- The school-based seasonal FluMist vaccination initiative was suspended at the direction of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in order to focus attention on the H1N1 novel influenza vaccination campaign.
- Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response collaborated with state and local partners to expand upon previous medical surge planning efforts.
- An increase in the number of refugees resettling into Harford County resulted in a proportionate increase of Health Department staff resources to address their public health needs.

Fiscal Year 2010

Annual Report

Harford County Health Department



H1N1 RETROSPECTIVE

OVERVIEW

This section provides a glimpse of the Harford County Health Department's response to the new strain of influenza that emerged in the spring of 2009 and became widespread by the following fall. It was the first pandemic of the 21st century and the first pandemic in more than 40 years. An influenza pandemic is characterized by a new influenza virus to which humans have little to no immunity, and which easily spreads from person to person worldwide. Pandemic refers to the spread of the virus, not the severity of illness, but unlike seasonal influenza, a pandemic affects a higher number of younger, healthy people and causes higher rates of death among this population.

The spread of the H1N1 virus required a robust public health response that demanded an enormous investment of manpower and material resources. At times, the Harford County Health Department suspended normal functions to conduct vaccination clinics and perform H1N1-related tasks; partnering with federal and state public health agencies, state and local government, private health care, faith-based, educational and business communities, and other collaborators, to coordinate prevention and response efforts aimed at reducing the public health impact.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT STATISTICS

- Offered 207 Vaccination Clinics
- Provided 28,000 vaccinations over 7 months
- Administered 1,000 vaccinations, on average, every week
- Provided 41% of all H1N1 vaccinations in the County



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The mass vaccination effort began in October 2009. Due to a limited supply of vaccine, and the fact that children spread disease and illness faster than other populations, a decision was made to initially focus on the schools as vaccination sites. Subsequently, and consistent with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations, the Harford County Health Department began vaccinating other priority groups. These groups included pregnant women, household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, persons from 6 months through 24 years of age, and ages 25 through 64 years who had health conditions associated with higher risks of medical complications from influenza. The largest priority group clinic was conducted at Ripken Stadium where 1,228 persons were vaccinated. From January 2010 through April 2010, when the vaccine supply was no longer limited, vaccination clinics were open to the general public.

It is important to acknowledge community partners for their contributions throughout this public health response. Collaboration between the Harford County Health Department and Harford County Emergency Management resulted in the establishment of a Rumor Control/Call Center in the earliest stages of the pandemic. Emergency Management facilitated effective communication by arranging periodic meetings of the County Pandemic Executive Committee, composed of representatives from key Harford County partners involved in pandemic planning. Harford County Government provided staff that assisted with assembly of syringes for large vaccination clinics, as well as computer support for posting

H1N1 information on the Harford County Health Department website. The cities of Aberdeen and Havre de Grace, the Town of Bel Air, Klein's ShopRite Stores, Harford Mall, Ripken Stadium, public and private schools in Harford County, EMS Foundation, Avondale and Brightview Assisted Living, and Jarrettsville Fire Company allowed the Harford County Health Department to use their facilities to conduct vaccination clinics. The Aegis newspaper collaborated with the Health Department to educate the public about H1N1 influenza and provided Harford County citizens with current, accurate information regarding vaccine availability.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Harford County Health Department began its H1N1 educational campaign with the publication of H1N1 & You, an Aegis insert that provided information on H1N1 symptoms, emergency warning signs, H1N1 transmission, how to create a home influenza toolkit, and a Health Department directory of services. In September 2009, Harford County Health Department and the public school system partnered to begin influenza-like illness surveillance in each public school. School nurses received training on public health influenza clinics, as the Harford County Health Department began ordering influenza vaccination supplies in mass quantities. FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) were developed and updated as new information became available.

The Harford County Health Department used a variety of means, including print, radio and electronic media, the Harford Cable Network, the EOC Connect CTY system, home mailers, and billboard displays to promote vaccination, reduce public concerns regarding vaccine safety and effectiveness, and encourage basic public health measures such as cough and sneeze etiquette and frequent handwashing. At the Harford County Farm Fair Health Department booth, staff focused public attention on the spread of germs, as well as the importance of handwashing and vaccination. The Harford County Health Department is confident that widespread changes in personal behaviors limited the transmission of influenza and prevented more cases of the H1N1 novel virus.

The Health Officer provided updates to the Board

of Health and, in conjunction with National Public Health Week in April 2010, the Harford County Health Department produced an informative Public Health Matters segment on the H1N1 pandemic that was televised on the Harford Cable Network.

CHALLENGES

The Harford County Health Department encountered significant challenges in the course of the public health response. Early on, when H1N1 vaccine was limited, Phase 1 of the nation's vaccination effort focused exclusively on the priority groups identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This period of low supply and high demand, coupled with the public's perception of inconsistencies within priority groups, created a stressful environment as the Harford County Health Department attempted to respond to the concerns of citizens. During this time, the Harford County Health Department's vaccination planning efforts were continually hindered by uncertainties of vaccine delivery, the type of vaccine provided, and the amount of vaccine shipped. In keeping with our commitment to roll out the vaccine as soon as it arrived, the Harford County Health Department had to quickly formulate the best possible "match" between available vaccine and the priority group to target at the vaccination sites.

Another problem unique to the pandemic was the sheer volume of information available about the H1N1 virus and how public health should best respond. Authorities at every level were acquiring and communicating new information as it became available. Because so much of this information was rapidly changing, effective and timely communication with staff, external partners, and the public was a formidable challenge, especially at the height of the pandemic.

SUCCESSES

Although the Harford County Health Department successfully reached out to individuals in every priority group, attention was focused initially on the vaccination of school age children, through whom viruses spread faster than any other segment of the population. As a result of our strong relationships with the Harford County Public Schools and with many of the County's non-public schools, the

Harford County Health Department was able to conduct 97 school-based clinics and provide over 19,000 first and second dose vaccinations to more than 14,000 school age children. FluMist was the vaccine type primarily used in the schools; however, injectable vaccine was also successfully administered for the first time in the school-based clinics during the H1N1 campaign.

Harford County Health Department staff was able to quickly determine where H1N1 outbreaks were occurring in the County from daily reports generated by the school nurses. Once the surveillance information was collected and vaccine supplies were received, Health Department staff devised the vaccination plan for the week based upon the amount and type of vaccine on hand. Vaccination sites were arranged, supplies were organized, and staffing was scheduled, resulting in extremely efficient use of available vaccine.

After receiving a sufficient supply of vaccine, the Harford County Health Department initiated a variety of public clinics to accommodate those outside the priority groups. Walk-in clinics were held for four months at the Health Department's Woodbridge office. The newly developed Call Center at the Harford County Health Department was activated to schedule appointments at five-minute intervals, thus avoiding long lines and lengthy waits experienced in other jurisdictions.

Immediately upon scheduling all vaccination clinics, this information was posted to Harford County Health Department's website, and also conveyed to media outlets and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene for posting to its website of statewide vaccination locations. By sustaining a routine schedule of reporting available vaccine supply and usage to the local newspaper, the Harford County Health Department established a strong and transparent working relationship with them which served the public well throughout the duration of the H1N1 pandemic.

LESSONS LEARNED

Staff was better prepared for the demands of the H1N1 response as a result of the expertise gained over the past five years conducting large scale immunization drills under the Incident Command

Structure. The Health Department's incident command team recognized from the outset the importance of planning and the decision-making process. As is true in every event of this magnitude, logistics played a large part in the Harford County Health Department's response. Particularly, as the tracking of personnel, vaccine and supplies became critical, staff from all divisions were utilized to carry out specific duties related to the H1N1 response. The H1N1 event also demonstrated how the early delegation of duties contributes to the organizational stability required to launch and sustain a strong, multi-faceted response. Likewise, this experience reinforced the value of establishing and maintaining good communication with community partners, internal staff, and the public.

The Health Department also acknowledged the need to improve education, informational outreach and vaccination initiatives targeted to minorities within the county. Likewise, the entire progression of H1N1 influenza activity further reinforced the importance of strengthening relationships with the media for purposes of keeping consumers advised of critical public health messages. Finally, the Harford County Health Department recognized its own limitations with infrastructure and limited staffing, which underscored the importance of collaborative support from all sectors of our community.

Preparations for pandemic influenza had been underway in Harford County, the state of Maryland, and the nation for many years, with the Harford County Health Department staging frequent community vaccination events under an Incident Command structure. The 2009 -2010 H1N1 pandemic provided further opportunity to implement, evaluate and refine the Health Department's public health response plan. The overall pandemic response was effective, and consequences from H1N1 in our county were minimal. However, with every public health emergency response, there is an opportunity to identify areas for improvement. As part of the ongoing emergency response effort, the Harford County Health Department will continue to modify operational plans to better prepare for any danger that may pose a future threat to the health of Harford County citizens.

LOCATIONS & DIRECTORY OF SERVICES

WOODBRIIDGE STATION

1321 Woodbridge Station Way
Edgewood, Maryland 21040
410-612-1779

Services: Cancer Prevention, Communicable Disease, Immunization, Public Health Education, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD), Tobacco Cessation and Women, Infants & Children (WIC)

DENTAL CLINIC

2204 Hanson Road
Edgewood Plaza Shopping Center
Edgewood, Maryland 21040
443-922-7670 • Fax: 443-922-7673

Services: Dental Care for Children and Pregnant Women on the MCHP Program

HEALTH SERVICES

1 North Main Street
Bel Air, Maryland 21014
410-638-3060 • Fax: 410-638-4927

Services: HIV Case Management and Homeless Service Coordination

ABERDEEN COMMUNITY CENTER

34 North Philadelphia Boulevard
Aberdeen, Maryland 21001
410-273-5626 • 410-273-5656 (WIC)

Services: Administrative Care Coordination and Child & Family Services, Adult Evaluation Review Services (AERS), Medical Assistance Personal Care (MAPC), Real Choices, Senior and Disability Services and WIC

THOMAS HAYS BUILDING

120 South Hays Street
Bel Air, Maryland 21014
410-838-1500

Services: Administrative Services, Addiction Services, Emergency Preparedness, Environmental Health, Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP) and Vital Records

CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Teen Diversion
253 Paradise Road
Aberdeen, Maryland 21001
410-273-5681 • Fax: 410-273-5556

Services: Group, Family and Individual Therapy, Medication and Case Management and Day Treatment for Adolescents, Psychiatric Rehabilitation



LOOK FOR OPIE OTTER: MARYLAND'S PUBLIC HEALTH MASCOT



Why is Opie Otter the perfect mascot for Maryland public health? River otters are native to Maryland and its local rivers. They are environmentally sensitive and are adaptable to land and water, characterizing public health's interests in preserving land, air and water quality. They share a common mission with public health as excellent caretakers of their young. Consistent with achieving good physical and mental health, they have an active lifestyle, and are curious and fun-loving. In addition, they are clever and resourceful creatures that emulate the effective practices of public health providers who, in partnership with individuals and the communities they serve, are equally adept at improving the health and well-being of all Marylanders.

