



## January 2026 Newsletter - Downeast Public Health Council

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### Downeast Public Health Council January 2026 Newsletter



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### 2025 Year Recap

- Maine has joined several Northeastern states and New York city in a [regional partnership](#) to share expertise, improve coordination, enhance capacity, strengthen regional readiness and promote and protect evidence-based public health. Maine is actively involved in the direction and governance of the collaborative and contributes to working groups on immunization and public health preparedness and response.

- Many states reported outbreaks in measles and a rise in whooping cough cases, in addition to the emergence of a new subclade of influenza A which [90% of U.S.](#)

Next Downeast Public  
Council Meeting  
Friday, March 20, 2026

10:00 - 12:00 PM

TBD

For Council information,  
please contact [Al May](#)



[Downeast Public Health  
Council Facebook Page](#)

[Maine CDC Downeast District  
Webpage](#)

To become a member of the  
Downeast Public Health  
Council please fill out our  
[Membership Application](#).

[cases](#) belonged to. In Maine, there were no measles cases reported or diagnosed since the multi-jurisdiction outbreak, and Maine CDC reported [96 pertussis cases](#) in 2025, noting a reduction in cases from 120 in 2024.

- Other conditions reported in Maine during 2025:
  - A case of Easter Equine Encephalitis
  - A case of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome
  - A case of Congenital Syphilis
  - Shigellosis Cluster
  - HIV Outbreak in Penobscot County

- The release of the [2025 Student Health Survey Results](#) showing positive trends in mental health and reduced substance use among Maine students.

- Maine was awarded [\\$190 million for Year 1](#) of the Rural Health Transformation Program.

- Maine DHHS, Office of MaineCare Services was selected as one of 15 state Medicaid Program to participate in the [Transforming Maternal Health Model](#).

- Maine Downeast Public Health District has been [recognized](#) as an Age-Friendly Public Health System in September 2025.

- The [Downeast Public Health Council](#) (DEPHC) has successfully conducted six meetings in 2025, two of which were held in-person. The meetings hosted an array of speakers from Maine CDC programs, District Public Health Partners and Older Adults Safety and Mobility Training.

- In an effort to refresh the DEPHC image and broaden its appeal to potential members and partners, the council's executive committee chose to rebrand the Downeast Public Health Council and create a new logo that reflects the uniqueness of the Downeast District and its two counties. Let us know what you think [here](#).



**DOWNEAST PUBLIC  
HEALTH COUNCIL**

## Downeast Public Health 2025 Priority Committees

**Prevention Committee:**  
Angela Fochesato, Chair

**Older Adult Health and  
Safety Committee:** Dante  
Zanoni, Chair

**Emergency Operations and  
Response Committee:**  
Andrew Sankey, Chair

**Mental Health Primary Care  
Education Committee:** Tracy  
Parker, Chair

### 2024 Ongoing Topics

Health Literacy

Palliative Care and Hospice

Maternal and Child Health

### Final 2025 CHNA Reports:

[State of Maine](#)

[Hancock County](#)

[Washington County](#)

### Events/ Trainings

#### Winter Trainings

[HIV/Hep C Rapid Testing  
Training Registration](#)

January 20

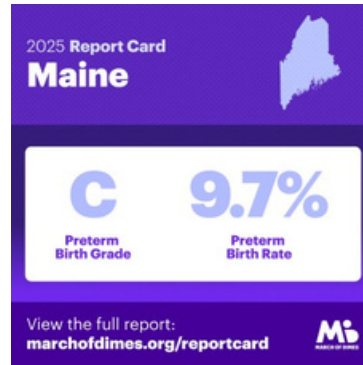
[MGT-452: Physical and  
Cybersecurity for Critical  
Infrastructure](#)

January 28

[LHO Orientation Webinar](#)

March 11

## Maternal Health



In January, Maternal Health Awareness Day is observed to celebrate mothers and shed light on the challenges mothers endure before, during and after pregnancy. Well before pregnancy, women physically and mentally prepare for months in advance if not years and then go through pregnancy and childbirth. Pregnancy and childbirth have been further challenging for women in Maine with the [recent closure](#) of birthing units across the state, that can be attributed to the reduction in fertility rate among women of childbearing age from 49.7 in 2022 to 47.0 in 2023. The state has reported a lower birth rate of 8.3 per 1,000 population compared to the national birth rate of 10.7/1,000, this could be due to the substantial growth between 2020-2023 in older adults age group (65 years+) comprising 23% of Maine's demographic.

### The State of Maternal Health in Maine

The [March of Dimes Report Card](#) provides a comprehensive overview of the health of mothers and babies across the U.S. In 2025, the Report Card was issued with Maine receiving a **Grade C for Preterm Birth**. Preterm birth rate in Maine was **9.7%** in 2024, which was higher than in 2023 with the highest preterm births among Black mothers and those with Medicaid insurance indicating ethnic/racial and insurance coverage disparities.

On the other hand, the infant mortality rate in Maine has decreased in the last decade from 7.1/1,000 live births in 2013 to 6.4/1,000 in 2022 and further reduction was reported in 2023 at 5.7/1,000 live births. However, infant mortality rates among babies born to Black mothers is

[ICS-400: Advanced ICS for Complex Incidents](#)

More training and exercises:  
[PHEP Calendar](#)

[LHO Upcoming Trainings](#)

### News

[Final Day of Open Enrollment on CoverME.gov for 2026 Coverage](#)

[The Maine CDC Works with U.S. and Local Partners to Respond to Penobscot County HIV Outbreak](#)

[Nursing Facility Rate Reform: One Year In, and Building Toward 2026](#)

[Quit Tobacco Services Preparing for January 5 Tobacco Tax Change](#)

[Seasonal Influenza Activity Increasing in Maine](#)

### HANs

[Maine Childhood Immunization Recommendations](#)

[U.S. CDC: First Reported Outbreak Caused by Marburg Virus in Ethiopia](#)

[Recommendations for Hepatitis B Immunization](#)



### National Blood Donor Month

Life-saving blood transfusions are needed every day across the U.S and globally. There are

reported to be twice as much as that of the state's rate. A similar pattern was seen with Adequate Prenatal Care (APC), where Black mothers were three times less likely to receive APC than other ethnicities/races even though 84.6% of expectant mothers received APC in Maine.

#### **What has been done and what needs to be done?**

- Maine has extended Medicaid coverage to include one year postpartum
- Maine has expanded Medicaid coverage to allow greater access for preventative care before, during and after pregnancy
- Maine is in the process of and actively working on reimbursing doula care
- Maine is in the process of requiring employers to provide paid options for families out on parental leave
- Maine has a Maternal, Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Panel to understand causes of death, identify preventive factors and recommend changes to improve care
- Maine does not have yet the funding/policy that requires clinicians to screen Medicaid-insured-women for postpartum depression during well-child visits and reimbursement for screening.

Read the detailed March of Dimes 2025 Report Card for Maine [here](#).

## **Cervical Cancer Awareness**



Cervical cancer can occur in any woman with a cervix, and most commonly in women over the age of 30. The

approximately 7 million blood donors and more than 14 million units of blood transfused annually in the U.S.

But still the need is there; every 2 seconds someone in the U.S. needs blood or platelets. The U.S. healthcare system needs approximately 29,000 units of red blood cells every day and nearly 5,000 units of platelets and 6,500 units of plasma daily.

The [National Blood Donor Month](#) serves as an opportunity to honor the lifesaving contributions of blood donors and raise awareness about the urgent need for donations.

#### **Who can donate?**

- Check the [eligibility requirements](#)

#### **Where to donate?**

- Visit the [American Red Cross Blood Services website](#).



#### **National Healthy Weight Week**

**January 18-24**

About 2 in 5 adults and 1 in 5 children and adolescents in the U.S. are obese and many others are overweight. The Healthy People 2030 focuses on helping people eat healthy and get enough physical activity to reach and maintain a healthy weight.

main cause of cervical cancer is long-lasting infection with certain types of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). HPV is a common virus that is sexually transmitted from one person to the other.

**Data:**

- 47 new cases of cervical cancer were diagnosed in 2022, with an incidence rate 6.3/100,000
- The mortality rate is 1.6 per 100,000
- 47% of cervical cancer cases were diagnosed at a localized stage
- 8 in 10 females 21-65 years old were up to date with their pap test in 2020
- 73.9% of females 21-65 years had a pap smear within 3 years in Hancock County and 78.9% of females had a pap smear in Washington County (2018-2020), both lower than the state average of 81.6%.

Cervical cancer can be prevented by getting screened and getting the HPV vaccine. It is highly treatable and associated with long survival if found early with a 5-year relative survival rate in Maine at 71.2%.

**Prevention**

HPV vaccine is available to protect against types of viruses that most often cause cervical cancer:

1. Preteens 11 to 12 years old
2. Can be given starting at 9
3. Everyone through age 26 who have not been previously vaccinated
4. Quit smoking
5. Lifestyle changes: healthy diet, physical activity, maintain a healthy weight and avoid alcohol.

*Those between 27-45 years who were not already vaccinated are advised to speak to their provider about the risk for new HPV infections and possible benefits of vaccination.*

**Screening**

Even if HPV vaccine was given, women should get screened regularly:

- Screening should start at age 21-29 with Pap tests every 3 years.

Obesity is linked to several serious health conditions including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, some types of cancers and others.

In Washington County, 40% of adults were obese in 2021 and the rate of obesity-associated cancer cases was significantly higher at 171.6/100,000 than the state rate at 138.3/100,000 (*Maine CHNA Report 2025*).

How to achieve optimal health and manage weight as you age:

1. [Healthy eating](#)
2. [Physical activity](#)
3. [Optimal sleep](#)
4. Stress reduction

[Healthy Weight and Growth](#)

[Maine Family Healthy Weight Program](#)



**Radon Awareness Week  
January 26-30**

Radon is an odorless and tasteless gas that can be present at dangerous levels in your home and in your well water. It is the leading cause of lung cancer deaths among non-smokers in America that claims 21,000 lives each year.

**What you can do?**

1. [Test your home](#)
2. [Test your well water](#)

- If between 30-65 years patients have three options:
  1. HPV test only (5 years)
  2. HPV test and Pap test (5 years)
  3. Pap test or smear only (3 years)

*If older than 65 years, screening may not be needed if Pap results were normal for several years or the cervix was removed for non-cancerous conditions.*

Women may qualify for free cervical cancer screenings through the [Maine CDC Breast and Cervical Health Program](#) if they:

1. Live in Maine or New Hampshire within 15 miles of Maine
2. 21 years or older
3. Meet income requirements

Check [eligibility requirements](#).

If eligible enroll [here](#).

⋮

## Ground Water and Private Wells Series

Groundwater is the source of water for all private wells and many public water systems, that is found below the earth's surface spaces, between rocks and soils.

1 in 3 people in the United States (~10% of the population) receive their drinking water from the ground. There are approximately 112,000 known residential wells in the state of Maine, serving about 50% of Maine's residents who use private wells for their household water supply.

Even though private wells are common, they are not regulated under the [Safe Drinking Water Act](#), therefore it is the individual owners of these private wells' responsibility to take precautions and ensure their drinking water is safe for consumption.

There are three types of private drinking water wells depending on their depth, casing, location and construction process:

3. Spread the word and encourage family and friends to test for radon
4. [Buy a radon-resistant home](#)
5. [Learn about the health risks of radon](#)

### [Maine's New Radon Law](#)

requires the testing of rental properties excluding short-term rentals of less than 100 days. If your home tests for radon level of more than 4 pCi/L or your water at 4,000 pCi/L or higher consider reviewing your total radon risk (air and water) and consider installing treatment. More [here](#).

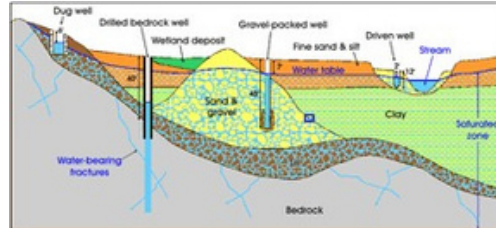
The American Lung Association provides a free [one-hour interactive online learning program](#) designed to help people understand more about radon. Anyone can take this training and it can also equip health professionals, community health workers and public environmental health educators with information to encourage people to protect their health and homes.



**'Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase.'**  
*Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)*

1. Dug/bored wells: holes in the ground dug by shovel or backhoe.
2. Driven wells: constructed by driving pipe into the ground and can be easily contaminated
3. Drilled wells: constructed by percussion or rotary-drilling machines and has a lower risk of contamination

Learn more [here](#).



**Next issue- well water contaminant types, sources and health impacts.**

*Sources: State of Maine, U.S.CDC, Maine CDC, Maine DHHS, OMS, AFPHS, March of Dimes, DAFS, EPA, DACF, Screenmaine.org, NGWA, American Red Cross, ODPHP, Rethink Diabetes, American Lung Association, Maine Shared Community Needs Assessment Reports.*

**Downeast Public Health District an Age-Friendly Public Health System**

