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## March 2025 Newsletter - Downeast Public Health Council

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### Downeast Public Health Council March 2025 Newsletter



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## Partner Highlight: Public Health Nursing (PHN)



### Maine CDC Public Health Nurses

Public Health Nurses are registered professional nurses that work on improving, preserving and protecting the health and quality of life for all Maine citizens. They work with individuals, families and populations in different settings including homes, clinics and community.

Their mission is to strengthen the equality of access to public health services for Maine people with a vision for Maine people to live well and be healthy and safe.

### Services provided:

PHN supports programs within the Maine CDC and provides services related to:

- Maternal and Child Health (MCH)
- Communicable disease control
- Tuberculosis and latent TB infection management
- Immunizations
- Support migrant and refugee health
- Adult services
- Asthma prevention
- Lead poisoning management
- Work with other agencies across the state to strengthen access to care.

### District PHN:

### Next Downeast Public Council Meeting

Friday, March 21, 2025

10:00 - 12:00 PM

Zoom

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



[Downeast Public Health Council  
Facebook Page](#)

[Downeast Public Health Council  
Website](#)

[Maine CDC Downeast District  
Website](#)

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

### Downeast Public Health 2024 Priority Committees

**Prevention Committee:** Angela  
Fochesato, Chair

**Older Adult Health and Safety  
Committee:** Dante Zanon, 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

### Events/ Trainings

March 2025

[Alzheimer's Association  
Education Program](#)

April 26- May 3

The Downeast Public Health District serves the population in Hancock and Washington Counties and staffs four PHNs: one supervisor and three field nurses.

**Downeast PHN:**

The current focus of the Downeast PHN is the MCH home visiting program, which works with birthing families during the prenatal and postpartum phases and beyond. They provide education, emotional support, breastfeeding support, physical assessments, and care coordination.

**Areas for collaborations in the Downeast:**

- 1. Infectious disease
- 2. Adult and older adult services
- 3. Refugee health
- 4. Lead poisoning

**Accessing PHN MCH services:**

- 1. [CradleME Request Form](#)
- 2. [PHN Referral Form](#)

**CradleME** referrals can also give access to other support:

- [Maine WIC](#)
- [Maine Families Home Visiting Program](#): in-person/virtual support and information for families expecting a new baby or with a newborn.
- [Early Intervention for ME \(CDS\)](#)- free developmental screenings and evaluations and coordination of early intervention services.
- [MaineMOM](#)- pregnancy and postpartum healthcare and recovery services.

**Other PHN services:**

- Vaccine clinic.
- Comprehensive assessments for vulnerable individuals with unmet needs and barriers to care.
- Education and training for medical, public health and other support agencies.
- Emergency preparedness and response to public health emergencies.
- Coordination of care with community resources.

For more information contact: [Cynthia Grass, RN, BSN, CLC \(Supervisor\)](#).

**National Nutrition Month®**



Nutrition is defined as “the process of providing or obtaining food necessary for health and growth.” Good nutrition is crucial in order to keep current and future generations healthy across their lifespan.

At birth, breast feeding protects against childhood illnesses such as respiratory infections, asthma, SIDS and ear infections. Early adoption of healthy eating habits during adolescence and adulthood lowers the

[CDP'S 10th Annual Tribal Nations Training Week](#)

To apply [contact](#)

May 13 & 14

[PER 211: Medical Management of Chem, Bio, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive Events](#)

July 16 & 17

[MGT 403: Underserved Populations Preparedness Planning for Rural Responders and Volunteers](#)

August 26 & 27

[MGT-348 Medical Preparedness & Response for Bombing Incidents](#)

[PHEP training and exercise calendar.](#)

**News**

[Seasonal Influenza Activity Remains Elevated in Maine](#)

[Measles outbreak](#)

[Maine DHHS and Maine Child Welfare Action Network Release Five-Year Roadmap for Child Safety and Family Well-Being](#)

**HANs**

[Expanding Measles Outbreak in Texas and New Mexico and Guidance for the Upcoming Travel Season](#)

[Updated Influenza Submission and Reporting Guidance](#)

[Ebola Outbreak Caused by Sudan virus in Uganda](#)

**Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month**

CRC is the second leading cause of cancer death in the U.S. 1.54 million men and women have a history of CRC. The Downeast district has significantly higher rates of CRC new cases and deaths compared to the state rate.

[Screening Saves Lives!](#)

The USPTF recommends that ALL adults aged 45-75 years get screened for CRC. The survival rate for CRC is higher when cancer is detected at an early stage, plus it takes 10-15 years for abnormal cells to grow into a polyp and turn into cancer.

Talk to a healthcare provider today!

**National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day**

March 10

According to [CDC data](#), women accounted for 20% of new diagnoses in 2021 and were

risks of several illnesses such as diabetes, heart diseases and obesity which lengthens life expectancy.

Micronutrients, often known as vitamins and minerals, are essential for normal growth, development, resistance to disease, and overall health. As of 2018 only 12.2% of adults meet the daily fruit intake recommendation and only 9.3% meet the daily vegetable intake recommendation in the U.S. However in Maine the percentage of adults meet the daily fruit intake recommendation is 14.1% and 10.7% of adults meet the daily vegetable intake recommendation.

[The State Indicator Report on Fruits and Vegetables, 2018](#), shows the status of 10 indicators of fruit and vegetable access and production by state. It can be used to:

- Describe how states can support a strong food system and promote fruit and vegetable access
- Highlight state successes
- Identify opportunities for improvement

Take a look at [summary](#) of the CDC's State Indicator Report Data on Fruits and Vegetables for Maine compared to National and neighboring states.

What can organizations do:

1. Promote food service and nutrition guidelines in facilities where food is sold, served and distributed.
2. Coordinate uptake of and expansion of existing voucher incentive and produce prescription programs.
3. Achieve continuity of care for those who are breastfed.
4. Improve nutrition, physical activity and breastfeeding in early care and education settings.

#### **Maine CDC's Physical Activity and Nutrition Program:**

- Promotes changes that make active living and healthy eating the easy choice.
- Ensures people have access to healthy foods at a good price.
- Enables people to get their recommended levels of physical activity.
- Increase access to places for physical activity.
- Support breastfeeding best practices in health care systems, worksite and the community.
  - Breastfeeding Promotion and Support is an effective approach to reducing lifelong risk of chronic disease for babies and breastfeeding parents.
- Assess and improve the built environment and food systems to create more opportunity for all Mainers to eat healthy and be physically active.

The program is currently focused on **Breastfeeding Promotion and Support**.

**For more information:**

[Breastfeeding Promotion and Support](#)

[Maine Action Guide on Fruits and Vegetables](#)

[Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025](#)

**Local WIC clinic for Downeast:**

around 23% of those living with HIV in the United States. Women aged 25 to 44 received the most new diagnoses.

There are more tools than ever available to prevent HIV:

1. Safe sexual interaction.
2. Not sharing needles, syringes or other drug injection equipment.
3. Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis.
4. Testing.

[Maine HIV, STD and Viral Hepatitis Program](#)

[Self-testing](#)

[Maine Family Planning](#)

[Access PrEP in Maine](#)

[Maine Needle Exchange Program](#)



#### **National Drugs and Alcohol Facts Week**

**March 17- 23**

National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week®, or NDAFW, is a health event that encourages discussion about the science behind teen drug use and addiction. It offers a chance for scientists, students, educators, medical professionals, and community partners to collaborate in order to address juvenile drug and alcohol use in communities across the country and to further the science.

[5 Steps to Holding a National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week® \(NDAFW\) Event](#)

[Test Your Knowledge About Drug and Alcohol Usage: Take the National Drug and Alcohol IQ Challenge](#)

**NDAFW**  
National Drug & Alcohol Facts Week

#### **World Oral Health Day**

**March 20**

The goal of World Oral Health Day is to provide people with the information, resources, and self-assurance they need to maintain good oral health.

Oral illnesses have an adverse impact on people's lives and are a serious health concern in many nations. However, the majority of oral health issues are treatable in

## Maine Family Planning

- Ellsworth: 207-667-5304
- Machias: 207-255-8280
- Calais: 207-454-3634

## Save Your Vision



March is Save Your Vision Month, which focuses on evidence-based approaches to prevent vision loss and promote eye health across communities.

About 3 million people aged 40 years and older suffer from visual impairment and 1 million were blind in 2018. Almost 2.1 million children and adults under 40 years old are visually impaired or blind. Maine is the state with the **lowest visual acuity loss**, where 1 in 75 residents suffer vision loss compared to West Virginia with the highest prevalence rate of 1 in 30 residents having visual acuity loss.

Vision problems affect our communities through:

- Reduced independence
- Increased chances of falls
- Barriers to education and employment
- Inequalities in access to eye care
- Financial strain on families and healthcare systems.

Early diagnosis and intervention can often correct vision impairment and slow progression of certain conditions.

### Action Steps

Community level steps:

1. Work with local healthcare providers to increase vision screening accessibility.
2. Partner with schools for children's vision screening programs ([Vision Screening in Maine Schools: Evidence Based Guidelines for Preschool and School-Aged Students](#)).
3. Support mobile eye care services for rural communities ([Optical Academy](#) and [20/20 onsite](#)).

Awareness and Education:

1. Promote workplace eye safety programs ([SafetyWorks! Toolbox Talks](#), [OSHA Eye and Face Protection](#)).
2. Raise awareness about diabetes-related vision problems ([Vision loss and diabetes](#)).
3. Share information about UV protection in all seasons ([Vision Health FAQs](#), [Nine ways to protect your vision](#)).

Access to Care:

1. MaineCare covers **one routine eye exam** for members under 21 and every 3 years and for 21 years and older some exceptions include specific medical diagnoses and certain use of medications.
2. **Find** an ophthalmologist.
3. Free or Low-cost Eye **care**.

their early stages and can be avoided.

Submit an activity: "The global map of activities captures everything taking place around the world. Be as detailed as you can; hopefully people in your local city will be looking to get involved. Outstanding efforts will be recognized through the World Oral Health Day Awards."



### Epi/Infectious Disease Corner

#### Measles outbreak

**Canada:** To date **77 confirmed** cases have been reported in three of Canada's jurisdictions (Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec). 17 of these cases are in Quebec.

**United States:** Measles **cases** reached 222 as of March 6 and 2 confirmed death. Cases have been reported by 12 jurisdictions (Alaska, California, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York City, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas and Washington). There have been 3 outbreaks reported in 2025. Of the 222 cases, 94% were unvaccinated or unknown status.

**Measles** is a highly contagious, potentially fatal rash illness that can linger in the air for up to two hours. It can be contracted by coming into contact with an infected person when they cough or sneeze, or by breathing contaminated air or touching contaminated surfaces and then touching the mouth, nose, or eyes.

The **MMR vaccine** provides protection against measles. **Two MMR shots are 97% effective against measles, whilst one dose is 93% effective.**

In order to prevent further disease, the MMR vaccine can be administered within **72 hours** of measles exposure to provide some protection or a less severe illness.

Nearly everyone who has not received the MMR vaccine will become unwell if they come into contact with those viruses. Most insurance policies cover the vaccine at no cost and the VFC program may be able to provide children with free vaccinations.

Who should get vaccinated?

- Students at post-high school educational institutions
- Healthcare personnel

4. MaineCare covers [Non-Emergency Transportation](#) for eligible members. Access the Transportation Broker List [here](#).

What can healthcare providers do:

- Include vision screening in routine health checks.
- Provide culturally competent care.
- Use clear communication about eye health.
- Make referrals to eye care specialists when needed.

What can organizations do:

- Host vision screening events.
- Share eye health information through trusted community channels.
- Partner with public health organizations for vision initiatives.
- Support policies that improve access to vision care.

**Information and Resources:**

Learn about the 20/20 onsite event in Portland, ME [here](#).

[The Iris Network](#)

[New England Low Vision and Blindness](#)

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**Sources:** *U.S. CDC, NIH, Maine CDC, Maine DHHS, hiv.gov, Maine DOE, American Cancer Society*

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- International travelers
- People of childbearing age before getting pregnant
- Groups at increased risk of mumps during an outbreak

\*Check with a healthcare provider if the vaccine is appropriate for you.

**For more information and resources on Measles visit:**

[Maine CDC](#).

Measles is a reportable disease, access the [List of Reportable Diseases](#)

**Infectious Diseases Data:**

[Infectious Disease Dashboard](#)

[Maine Influenza Surveillance](#)

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**APHA Keep it Moving Challenge**

Engage in a variety of wellness-related activities and have fun competing in a healthy way with your public health community.



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"It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade." Charles Dickens (1812-1870) in *Great Expectations*

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