



March 2026 Newsletter - Downeast Public Health Council

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Downeast Public Health Council March 2026 Newsletter



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Hospice and Palliative Care



Next Downeast Public Council Meeting Friday, March 20, 2026

10:00 - 12:00 PM

Zoom

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](#).

Palliative care and hospice care focus on the comfort, care and quality of life of individuals with serious illnesses. Both can be offered in home settings or facilities such as nursing home, hospital, palliative care clinics or hospice centers.

Hospice is a specific type of palliative care that is provided in the final weeks or months of life. As a person approaches the end of their life, this type of care focuses on their dignity and quality of life. Hospice is intended for situations when a patient chooses not to receive certain treatments or when its not possible to cure the serious illness. The guiding principle or philosophy of hospice is that patients should be able to spend the remaining time comfortably and fully with their loved ones by managing symptoms rather than treating the illness.

On the other hand, **Palliative care** also known as supportive care, symptom management and comfort care, aims to improve the quality of life for people with serious illnesses and their care partners. It is not limited to older adults but is available to anyone who needs it regardless of their age. Because it is interdisciplinary and involves a variety of healthcare providers, it can be administered alongside treatment, to people who are not in hospice. It is provided by a team that helps manage mental, physical, emotional, social and spiritual issues that may arise.

How are they different?

Both forms of care have special care teams who attend to a person's physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual needs in an effort to provide a better quality of

life and relief from symptoms and side effects. Palliative care and hospice care are not the same thing, even though they are frequently combined:

Downeast Public Health 2026 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

February- August
[ACOG: Critical Access & Rural
Health Learning Collaborative
Series](#)

March 25
[LHO Webinar: Hoarding - local
strategies](#)

March 19 & April 23
[Mass Care Shelter
Identification](#)

April 9
[AWR 209: Working with The
Media: A Course for Rural First
Responders \(Windham\)](#)

Hospice	Palliative
Anyone with a serious illness whose doctors think has a short time to live, often less than 6 months	Anyone with a serious illness
Focuses on managing symptoms and side effects	Can receive treatments or therapies to cure illnesses
Given to people during their last 6 months of life	Given at any time during a serious illness
Hospice team coordinates most of the care during a person's last 6 months of life	Palliative care team works with the person's primary disease care team to manage their symptoms and treatment side effects
Medicare primary payer. Some services covered by Medicaid.	Medicare and Medicaid.

- Find Hospice Care in Maine [here](#).
- Community Health and Counseling Services provide Home Health ([Home Health - CHCS](#)) and Hospice ([Hospice - CHCS](#)).
- Palliative care in the Downeast is provided through [Northern Light Blue Hill & Ellsworth](#) and [MDI Hospital](#).

Advance care planning and end-of-life decisions

When a person is diagnosed with a serious illness, they should prioritize early advance care planning conversations with their family and doctors. Studies have shown that patients who have participated in advance care planning are more likely to be satisfied with their care and have care that is aligned with their wishes.

[PREPARE for Your Care, funded in part by the National Institute on Aging](#), is an interactive online program that helps a person fill out an advance directive and express their wishes in writing. This tool is available in English and Spanish.

Children and Media Use

April 15
[LHO Webinar: Dangerous Buildings \(panel discussion\)](#)

April 16
[Personal & Professional Resilience: An Ethical Framework for Vicarious Stress](#)

More training and exercises:

[PHEP Calendar](#)

[LHO Upcoming Trainings and Resources](#)

News

[OPEGA Report Affirms Strong Payment Performance to Child Care Providers](#)

[Maine CDC Announces Another Four Measles Cases; No New Exposure Locations Identified](#)

[Maine CDC Confirms Case of Measles in Maine](#)

HANs

[Measles Exposure in Maine](#)

[Recommendations for Diagnosing and Treating Neurosyphilis, Ocular Syphilis, and Otic Syphilis](#)



International HPV Awareness Day: March 4

Is a chance to increase awareness about HPV, its



Today, children are growing up in a world where media consumption is highly personalized. Media is everywhere and today's children spend an average of seven hours a day on entertainment media such as TV, computers, phones and other electronic devices.

Why is this important?

In comparison to the 1970's, when children started watching regular TV at the age of 4 years, now children begin interacting with digital media as early as 4 months of age. While there are evidence-based advantages to the use of digital and social media, such as early learning and access to health promotion messages and information, there are also risks such as negative impact on sleep, attention and learning as well as increased incidences of obesity, depression and exposure to inaccurate, inappropriate or unsafe content.

The 5C's of Media Use

Is an approach that can be used to discuss children and screens with parents: Child, Content, Calm, Crowding Out and Communication. This strategy aims to meet children, teenagers and parents where they are, develop insights and communication skills, and encourage healthy behavior change.

- [5Cs guide for clinicians](#)
- [5Cs guide for parents](#)

Parents can develop personalized media use plans for their children taking into account each child's age, health, personality and developmental stage:

associated cancers and prevention. This year the campaign's theme is "[The World's Most Viral Secret](#)" to encourage people to Ask about HPV, Eliminate HPV and learn about Cancer Prevention.

HPV infections are highly prevalent sexually transmitted disease where most infections are asymptomatic and are naturally cleared. However, sometimes HPV infections can lead to several types of devastating cancers like cervical, oropharyngeal and genital cancers.

Data

-Washington County reported 21.7/100,000 HPV-associated cancer new cases, higher than in Hancock County (17.5), Maine (15.4) and nationally (12.5).

The majority of the HPV-associated cancers can be prevented with HPV vaccine, which has been proven both safe and effective. The U.S. CDC recommends 2 doses of HPV vaccine at ages 11-12 years and can be started as early as 9 years old, through 14 years old.

● [About HPV Vaccine](#)

● [STI Screening and Treatment](#)

● [Get Tested](#)



- Create a Family Media Plan [here](#)

Access more information [here](#).

Brain Injury Awareness Month



At least 64 million adults in the U.S report having sustained a traumatic brain injury in their lifetimes. Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) refers to a brain injury that is caused by an outside force such as a forceful bump, blow or shock to the head or body, or an object entering the brain.

Data

- 32.3 cases per 10,000 population of ER discharged with a diagnosis of TBI in Hancock County (2019-2021).
- 47.1 cases per 10,000 population in Washington County which is **significantly higher** than the state rate of 35.7/10,000 (2019-2021).
- However the rate of TBI diagnosis in Washington county dropped from previous years.

Prevention

- Wear a seatbelt
- Wear a helmet when riding a bicycle, skateboarding and playing sports
- Do not driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol

National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day March 10

About 23% of women in the U.S. are living with HIV, and in 2021 women accounted for 20% of new diagnosis, with the highest among women aged 25 to 44 years. In Maine (2021), only 6.7% of HIV cases were in females.

- Knowing your HIV status helps you make decisions to prevent getting or transmitting HIV.
- HIV testing is free in Maine! You can also test at home for free by ordering a kit or over the counter at many retailers for ~\$40.
- More on HIV [here](#).

Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Colorectal cancer is the deadliest cancer in people under 50, the second deadliest overall in the U.S. and the third leading cause of cancer death in Maine.

50% of Americans don't know colorectal cancer screening can be done at home. Current guidelines recommend that **all people at average risk** begin colon and rectal cancer screening at age 45, however people at higher risk may need to be screened earlier.

- [Maine CRC Fact Sheet](#)
- [Screen Maine: CRC](#)
- [Maine Cancer Plan](#)

- Regular physical activity to improve balance and strength
- Install window guards and safety gates for young children
- Improve lighting and removing rugs, clutter and other tripping hazards
- Use nonslip mats and installing grab bars
- Install handrails on stairways

More on Prevention [here](#).

Ground Water and Private Wells Series

Last issue we talked about the types and sources of contaminants that can pollute private wells and their subsequent health impacts. Today we would like to talk about how to ensure well water is safe for drinking.

If the source of tap water is from privately owned well, federal drinking water rules do not apply; this means it is the individual's responsibility to make sure that the well water is safe to drink.

At least once every year:

1. Test well water for coliform bacteria, E. coli, nitrates and nitrites
2. Check the well for mechanical problems and cleanliness
3. Some Maine wells have too much arsenic, uranium, radon or other harmful chemicals, it is recommended that well owners test their water 3-5 years

In 2023, 82% of Maine's well owners had their water tested, but only 53% have tested their well water for arsenic.

How to test your well water:

1. Use the kitchen faucet
2. Remove strainer
3. Disinfect the faucet
4. Do not touch the inside of the test bottles
5. Watch the video below for a step-by-step guide

NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH®

National Nutrition Month® is an opportunity to educate people about making informed food choices and developing healthy eating and physical activity habits.

Preparing and planning before grocery shopping is the first step towards getting nutritious food on a budget. There are several ways to reduce food expenditure.

● Read some of the budget friendly tips for eating right [here](#).



'It's terrible to realize that you don't learn how to live until you're ready to die, and then it's too late.'

Edna Ferber, American novelist and playwright (1885-1968)

Downeast Public Health District an Age-Friendly Public Health System

How To Test Your Well Water



Information:

- Order a water testing kit [here](#)
- Test your well water for Radon [video](#)
- [Accredited Commercial Drinking Water Labs](#)

Next issue- how to read a well water test results & what to do with unsatisfactory results.



Cancer Resource Center

The Beth C. Wright Cancer Resource Center is conducting a survey to learn about how the public finds and use cancer-related information, and to identify any public health needs, gaps or barriers related to cancer data sources.

The survey will take around **5-10 minutes** to complete and all the responses will be kept confidential.

For Community Members, please use this link:

[General Public](#)

For Public Health Professionals, please use this link:

[Public Health](#)

Thank you for your time, your participation and input is highly appreciated!



Sources: U.S.CDC, Maine CDC, AAP, NIH/NIA, ACA, AACI, Hiv.org, Maine DHHS, CRC Alliance, Brain Injury Association, Academy of Nutritionists and Dieticians, Maine Shared Community Needs Assessment Reports (CHNA).

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact [Alfred May](#), District Liaison or [Kawther Mohamed](#), Public Health Educator.