



Harford County Health Department

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Harford County
Health Department**

Russell W. Moy, MD, MPH • Health Officer
Marcy Austin • Deputy Health Officer

County Council of Harford County Board of Health Update October 15, 2019 | 7:00PM

Call to Order

The Harford County Health Officer Update was called to order by County Council President Vincenti, with all members in attendance. The County Council served as the Board of Health for the purposes of the session.

Board of Health Appointments

N/A

Update

Dr. Russell Moy, Harford County Health Department (HCHD) Health Officer, provided an update to the Board of Health.

I. General Update

- A. Board members were provided with packets containing the HCHD FY 19 Annual Report, the HCHD Directory of Services Booklet, and the Harford County LHIC Vaping Position Paper (Draft). They were also informed that the Harford County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) had been updated and posted to the HCHD website, along with the Harford County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).
- B. HCHD has demonstrated its commitment to advancing health throughout Harford County, as evidenced by services provided to the community in Fiscal Year 19 (FY 19). A snapshot of FY 19 services was shared by Dr. Moy. For example, Environmental Health conducted 1,576 food service inspections and 824 animal attack investigations, in addition to reviewing 1,499 building permits in FY 19.
- C. Dr. Moy shared with the Council that health is often examined through life expectancy trends. Life expectancy has steadily declined in the United States for the past 3 consecutive years. This is believed to be due to drug overdoses and suicides. Average life expectancy for Harford County is 79.5 years of age, which is better than the Maryland Average. However, it is important to note that severe disparities in life expectancy persist across Maryland and throughout Harford County. For example, Bel Air has the highest life expectancy of 81.5 years within Harford County, compared to Darlington, which has a life expectancy of 76.3 years. This demonstrates that zip code matters more than genetic code.

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II. Behavioral Health Review

- A. Trends in overdose and suicide mortality have contributed to the downward trend in life expectancy across the United States and within Harford County. Harford County witnessed its first decline (3.2% decline) in overdose deaths in 2018 since the beginning of the opioid crisis and seven consecutive years of increases. For current year 2019 to date, the number of overdose deaths is down by 17% in Harford County compared to 2018. The rate of Substance Exposed Newborn (SEN) births continues to remain higher in Harford County (38.1 per 1,000 live births) than the rate of SEN births for the state of Maryland (31.4 per 1,000 live births).
- B. Efforts to address adverse mental and behavioral health outcomes have involved increasing access to mental and behavioral health services within the community and the opening of the Klein Family Harford Crisis Center. The Crisis Center has received more than 500 visits since its opening in June, 2019. The Crisis Center has seen a much higher volume of serious mental health conditions than they initially anticipated.
- C. Harford County hosted the Maryland Opioid Operational Command Center (OOCC) for a visit assessment May 28, 2019. OOCC's assessment of Harford County's efforts to reduce overdose deaths was favorable, stating "Our overall assessment is that Harford County has exceptional programs in place supported by passionate and dedicated professionals responding to the heroin and opioid epidemic. The county has implemented several exceptional programs that are models for the rest of the state... All relevant departments and offices are represented and fully engaged in the county's Opioid Intervention Team, and everyone involved has a clear understanding of the challenges and strategic issues."
- D. Suicide mortality rates remain higher in Harford County (10.7 per 100,000 population) than the state of Maryland (9.3 per 100,000 population). Suicide is the leading cause of death for those aged 15-29 in Harford County. Young females who are higher income have the most alarming increased rate for suicide deaths over the past ten years. The American Psychological Association believes that the increase in social media use has had an impact on these trends.

III. Tobacco & Vaping

- A. The recent epidemic of severe lung illness and sudden deaths associated with the use of vaping products has brought alarm to the United States and to the state of Maryland as a whole. At least 1,299 hospitalizations due to severe lung illness have occurred as of October 11, 2019 across the United States. 26 deaths have occurred. More than 23 cases have been identified in Maryland, but not deaths have resulted as of this time. In addition to the lung illnesses, there have been poisonings and explosions as a result of e-cigarettes and vaping devices.
- B. Youth vaping is now an epidemic, with 27.5% of high school students reporting vaping use in 2019. Nicotine exposure during youth predisposes users to addiction later in life and can also harm brain development.
- C. Harford County rates of adults tobacco use are higher than the state average.
- D. Maryland became the 13th state in the United States to pass Tobacco 21, which went into effect on October 1, 2019. The law prohibits the sale of tobacco products (including vaping

products and devices) to those under the age of 21, with an exception for active duty military members.

- E. The Harford County Local Health Improvement Coalition's (LHIC) Chronic Disease and Wellness Prevention working group drafted a position paper on vaping. Due to recent illnesses and deaths, the LHIC has aligned their position with that of the CDC and recommend that persons refrain from using vaping products, particularly those containing THC. Although the use of vaping/e-cigarettes is considered a harm reduction technique for current smokers by some groups, the Harford County LHIC working group posits that smoking and vaping are not safe in light of recent events. Councilman Wagner has been involved with the LHIC and the vaping position paper draft. Dr. Moy invited any member of the Council to contribute to the position paper or to sign the paper alongside the working group.
- F. Resources are available to those wishing to cease tobacco use. The Maryland 24/7 Tobacco Quitline can be accessed by calling: 1-800-QUIT-NOW. Information regarding Tobacco 21 can be found at: notobaccosalestominors.com.

IV. Snapshot of Harford County's Health

- A. According to County Health Rankings, Harford County ranks 10th out of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions for health outcomes, and 7th out of 24 for health risk factors.
- B. Harford County is doing better than Maryland in: Infant mortality, teen births, and those uninsured.
- C. Harford County is doing worse than Maryland in: Drug overdose deaths, adult smoking, adult obesity, adults reporting poor physical health days, and adults reporting poor mental health days.
- D. Leading causes of death in Harford County are largely caused by chronic disease. They include (in ranked order): Heart disease, cancer, COPD, stroke, overdose, accidents, diabetes, Alzheimer's, Influenza, and suicide.
- E. Heart disease and stroke rates are improving in Harford County, but they remain an issue. Cancer mortality rates in Harford County (164 deaths per 100,000 population) are significantly worse than they are for the rest of the state (155 deaths per 100,000 population).
- F. Additional mortality and health care access rates of concern for Harford County include, but are not limited to: Alzheimer's mortality, fall-related mortality, children receiving dental care in the past year, child maltreatment rates, domestic violence rates. Each of these rates is worse in Harford County than for the state of Maryland as a whole.
- G. Dr. Moy provided the Council with an update to the Measles outbreak across the U.S. in 2019. January - October, 2019 saw 1,249 Measles cases, which was the highest annual number reported since 1992. Fortunately, it seems that the outbreaks are coming under control. The week of 09/16/2019 was the first week with no new cases in the United States since January, 2019.
- H. Notifiable infectious disease incidence rates are a strong indicator of health for a population. The highest incidences reported in Harford County include: Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Lyme Disease, Salmonellosis, Meningitis, and Campylobacteriosis. It is vital

to have strong clinical and environmental programs in place to monitor for and control the spread of infectious disease in Harford County.

V. Closing Remarks

- A. Dr. Moy thanked Julie Mackert, Director of the Bureau of Environmental Health for her years of dedicated service and leadership within Harford County. Julie will be leaving her role with the health department and John Resline will serve as the Deputy Director of Environmental Health during the transition to new leadership.
- B. Julie Mackert address the Council and stated that she was thankful for her opportunity to grow as a leader and learn during her career with the health department.
- C. John Resline stated that he was hopeful that the transition would be smooth for business as usual and stressed the importance of cultivating and maintaining new talent within the health department.

VI. Questions & Comments

- A. Councilman Shrodes thanked Julie for her service to the county.
- B. Councilman Beulah asked Dr. Moy for his insight as to why cancer mortality incidence is so high in Harford County compared to other counties. Dr. Moy replied that tobacco use is a major contributing factor to cancer incidence and that Harford County also has higher rates of adult smoking than the state of Maryland.
- C. President Vincenti thanked Julie for her service to the county and the Council recognized her, presenting her with a letter of recognition for her exemplary service and leadership.

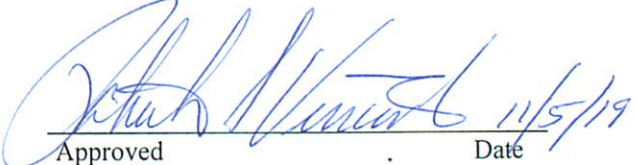
Adjournment

The Health Officer adjourned 7:27PM

Supporting Documentation

The Harford County Health Department supplied the following documentation to the Council:

- The HCHD Annual Report
- The HCHD Directory of Services Booklet
- Harford County Local Health Improvement Coalition Vaping Position Paper (Draft)
- Additional documentation and reports can be found at: HarfordCountyHealth.com


Approved _____ Date 11/5/19