

April 2, 2018

FLORIDA HEALTH IN BAY COUNTY CELEBRATES NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK



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Tallahassee, Fla.—The Florida Department of Health in Bay County is celebrating National Public Health Week (NPHW) from April 2-8. This year's theme is "Changing Our Future Together," which highlights the importance of engaging communities and partners in all sectors as public health workers strive to put health within everyone's reach. This week is also a time to celebrate the contributions of the people who are dedicated to public health.

"When people think of the Florida Department of Health in Bay County, they often think about getting immunizations, purchasing birth and death certificates, and receiving family planning services," said Douglas Kent, MPH, DOH-Bay Administrator, "We want them to know that there is so much more to what we do every day to prevent premature death and help Bay County's residents live happy and healthy lives."

Each day of NPHW focuses on a different public health topic that is critical to ensuring healthy communities. Public health workers in DOH-Bay are working to meet the specific needs of our community members guided by our Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). Our CHIP includes strategies that address each crucial health area identified by NPHW.

Monday: Behavioral Health

DOH-Bay is proud to be an intricate part of Bay County's Recovery Oriented Systems of Care, ROSC. ROSC is currently working to target the Bay County Jail population in recovery efforts. This includes workgroups to increase jail diversion, affordable housing, employment opportunities for those with a criminal record, and communication about available resources and to reduce stigma. Mental Health/Substance Use is part of DOH-Bay's Community Health Improvement Plan. The subcommittee is working to improve the United Way's 2-1-1 information line and website to increase access to resources for mental health/substance use. We work very closely with our partners at Big Bend Community Based Care, Life Management Center, and the Bay County Sheriff's Office.

Tuesday: Communicable Diseases

DOH-Bay's HIV/AIDS program has tripled in staff, size, and scope since 2017. The program has a goal of zero new infections beginning in 2020. It may seem like a large goal but there is much progress and movement. This is happening through test and treat which starts persons who test positive for HIV on drugs to reduce their viral loads immediately. This viral suppression helps

them have a better quality of life and is more than 90-percent effective at preventing them from spreading the disease to their partners. This same drug is being used in at-risk populations to prevent them from being infected. In addition, the program is employing re-engagement specialist to seek those who may no longer be receiving medical care. Getting them back into care improves their health and helps to reduce new infections. The program is also working to educate persons about services and reduce stigma through marketing with television, digital, and billboard advertising.

Wednesday: Environmental Health

DOH-Bay's environmental health program, EH, ensures the safety of our environment. The Healthy Beaches program runs March through October annually. Area beach waters are tested bi-weekly for possible bacteria that could make swimmers ill. The results are reported out to the public. EH is also responsible for inspecting all public pools to make sure they are safe to use. DOH-Bay's EH piloted a program for the State to complete reinspection of pools with minor violations through digital photo submissions. This has resulted in thousands of dollars in savings and will be rolled out across the State later this year.

Thursday: Injury and Violence Prevention

DOH-Bay partners with many organizations that focus on preventing violence and injury. These partners include; Healthy Start, Gulf Coast Children's Advocacy Center, Gulf Coast Sexual Assault Response Team, the Bay County Sheriff's Office, Big Bend Community Based Care, Life Management Center, and Bay District Schools to name a few. DOH-Bay closely monitors trends in these areas and shares information with our partnering organizations.

Friday: Ensuring the Right to Health

DOH-Bay prioritizes prevention programs based on our community's needs. From the Community Health Needs Assessment in 2013, DOH-Bay added the Diabetes Services Program, DSP. DSP provides Diabetes Self-Management Education, DSME, and the National Diabetes Prevention Program, NDPP. Both services are a model for State-wide initiatives within DOH and DOH-Bay's staff members help to set these up in other locations and provide training. Our team is also responsible for teaching others a modified version of the NDPP program for persons with disabilities.

DOH-Bay is also working to increase access to care. Our WIC program is expanded to new locations and is now offering breastfeeding classes in Panama City Beach in addition to our main site. WIC is also streamlining process to increase the number of services that can be provided daily. In addition, WIC has a new feature where program participants can complete online education to download benefits.

DOH-Bay's dental program also provides access to care for children ages 3-21. The mobile dental unit visits schools and early education centers to provide both preventative and restorative care benefits. During Spring Break, the mobile medical bus went to a public housing complex to provide services where the children live. They plan to do similar outreach efforts in the future.

To learn how the department is celebrating each day of #NPHW, be sure to follow the department on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and Twitter at [@FLHealthEmerald](#).

To learn more about NPHW and how you can get involved, visit <http://www.nphw.org/>

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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