

HEALTH DEPARTMENT & BOARD OF HEALTH

Fiscal Year 2014

The mission of the Amherst Board of Health, working through the Health Department, is to promote the health and wellbeing of our community. We fulfill this mission through our core functions: assessment, assurance, promotion, and policy development.

Assurance: ensuring all Amherst residents have the services necessary to maintain or restore good health either by coordinating the delivery of services by other agencies, by policy or regulation development, or by providing services directly.

Assessment: systematically collecting, assembling, analyzing, and making available information regarding the health of the community, including statistics on health status, community health needs, and epidemiological studies of health problems.

Promotion: providing services and educational opportunities that encourage healthy environments and healthy lifestyles.

Policy Development: development and implementation of comprehensive public health policies, regulations and legislation.

The work of the Amherst Health Department is organized into six major areas: Access to Health Care, Infectious Disease Control, Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Environmental Health, Health Policy, and Emergency Planning and Preparedness.

I. Access to Health Care

Ensuring access to health care for all Amherst residents continues to be a priority for the Health Department. Some of the departmental programs helping to address this concern are Hampshire Health Connect and Casa Latina.

Hampshire Health Connect

Hampshire Health Connect (HHC) is a nonprofit organization created by a group of citizens, providers and representatives of local government, businesses, and insurers. HHC aims to link families and individuals who are underinsured or who have no health insurance with insurance programs they may be eligible for, or to medical providers willing to see HHC patients at no charge or on a sliding fee scale. HHC is housed at Cooley Dickinson Hospital.

HHC provides the services of a Latina caseworker, who has been working in the Amherst Health Department offices to enroll all Amherst residents, but especially those whose first language is Spanish, into a health care program. The enactment of Health Care Reform has had a great impact on the work of Hampshire Health Connect. Many who believed they were ineligible for state benefits are now seeking the help of HHC to enroll in the Commonwealth Care Programs. As a result, Amherst residents' participation in HHC, and the number of Latino clients served by HHC continues to rise. During FY 14, 198 Amherst residents accessed HHC services at the Bangs Community Center. In addition, Casa Latina provided service assistance to 104 residents.

II. Infectious Disease Control

Controlling the spread of communicable diseases and food-borne illnesses is an important function of the Health Department.

Infectious Disease Surveillance and Control during FY14 included the following:

- 1 cases of active Tuberculosis (Tb)
- 15 cases of Tb prevention and control
- Two senior flu clinics in conjunction with the Council on Aging: 110 doses of seasonal influenza vaccine administered
- Two influenza clinics for Town employees and their families: 350 doses of vaccine administered
- Four outreach influenza clinics for underserved populations: 58 doses of vaccine administered
- Office hours for Center for New Americans: 12 doses of vaccine
- Monthly immunization clinics

Total: 234

18 yo and <: 188

19 yo and >: 46

The Public Health Nurse provided case management and/or follow up for 115 reportable infectious diseases:

Arbovirus: 1, Campylobacteriosis: 4, Ehrlichiosis: 1, Giardiasis: 1

Group A Strep 1; Haemophilus Influenzae: 1; Hepatitis A: 1, Hepatitis B: 5, Hepatitis C: 5, Human Granulocytic Anaplasmosis: 3, Influenza: 16; Lyme: 55, Measles: 2, Meningococcal Disease: 1, Pertussis: 7, Salmonella: 4; Shiga toxin producing organism; 2, Streptococcus Pneumonia: 1; Varicella: 3, Viral Meningitis; 1.

III. Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Programs aimed at promoting health and preventing disease is another important aspect of the Health Department's work. Programs and interventions are targeted to the general public, as well as specific groups at increased health risk due to their particular demographic group, or the consequences of their own behavior or the behavior of others.

High Risk Groups

The Health Director and Inspectors work together as a team to address the multi-faceted problem of hoarding via joint inspections including mental health assessments and referrals to social services.

Town of Amherst Handicapped Permits are available to residents of Amherst who have a temporary or chronic condition that substantially limits their mobility. This permit allows residents to park in handicapped spaces within the Town of Amherst. This permit WILL NOT extend parking privileges beyond Town limits or the area colleges. A permit may be obtained from the Amherst Health Department. A doctor's certificate stating the condition and the expected duration of the disability is required.

IV. Environmental Issues

The Board of Health is required by state statute to perform many pertinent duties relating to the protection of public health, disease control, and to advocate sanitary living conditions. The Health Department's inspectional staff consists of two Inspectors: one full-time and one part-time. Their responsibility is to regulate the laws, administer permits, and perform inspections of residences and businesses relating to food. This fiscal year, the department successfully conducted 819 inspections and issued 342 Town permits.

Food Safety

The Health Department inspected 520 food handlers during the 2014 fiscal year. We administer permits for all food handlers encompassing: restaurants, recreational camps, bed and breakfast operations, residential kitchens, college institutions, hotels, motels, retail food stores, schools, mobile food units, temporary events, caterers, bakeries, and frozen food establishments.

The department's routine inspections and follow-up are crucial to protecting the public health's welfare. The division enforces Chapter X of the State Sanitary Code: Minimum Standard for Food Establishments, 105 CMR 590.000. These state laws allow the Town of Amherst to conduct inspections, issue orders, and suspend or revoke permits where necessary.

Health Department staff work collaboratively with local restaurants to ensure compliance with the Federal Food Code. The code requires all restaurants to have a person in charge (PIC) who has knowledge of food-borne disease prevention and application of the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles. Inspectors continue to monitor food managers to ensure obtainment of their Food Manager Certification and to develop a food protection program.

Body Art Establishments

There was 1 Body Art Establishment in Amherst this year, with 1 inspection, which included the practitioner's workstation and verification of credentials.

Swimming Pools

No person shall operate or maintain any swimming, wading or special purpose pool without obtaining a permit from the Health Department. The permit shall be subject to the requirements of 105 CMR 435.00 and to any regulations as may be adopted by the Board of Health, provided, however, that said local Board of Health regulations shall not be applicable to a state owned or operated swimming, wading or special purpose pool. The Health Department issued 13 swimming pool permits, and conducted 19 inspections.

Recreational Camps

We continue to perform extensive monitoring and inspections to sustain quality and assurance of compliance. This fiscal year there were 21 recreational camps. The number of recorded inspections conducted for FY 14 recreational camps is 59.

Throughout the year we receive new information from the Community Sanitation Program. The Department makes every effort to forward the new material and information to all of our camp operators in a timely manner and these packets are now made available online.

Housing

The Health Department responds to nuisance and housing complaints and enforces Chapter II of the State Sanitary Code: Minimum Standards of Fitness for Human Habitation, M.G.L. c.111, ss. 127A and 127B: 105 CMR 410.000. Upon request or upon the department's initiative the Health Department can certify violations, issue orders, hold hearings, grant variances, and institute court proceedings if needed to enforce orders. This fiscal year the Inspectors conducted 125 inspections including fraternities, sororities, and voucher program related issues.

M.G.L. c.111, s.122, allows the Health Department to investigate nuisances which in the Board's opinion may be injurious to the public health. The Health Department may destroy, prevent or remove such nuisances and make regulations relative to these issues. There were 66 nuisance complaints mostly involving trash, handled by the health Inspectors and Code Enforcement Officer in Inspection Services. All nuisance complaints were addressed and abated.

Septic System

The Environmental Health Department enforces the State 310 CMR 15.000, Environmental Code, Title 5: Standard requirements for the siting, construction, inspection, upgrade, expansion of on-site sewage treatment, for the transport and disposal of septage. This fiscal year the Inspectors conducted 13 soil evaluations with percolation tests and 15 septic system finals. In FY 14, the Inspectors conducted 24 Title V inspections.

Septage and Garbage

The Health Department enforces Title V of the State Environmental Code; Minimum Requirements for the Subsurface Disposal of Sewage, 310 CMR 15.00. We've issued 9 permits for the removal or transportation of garbage and offal this fiscal year.

V. Emergency Preparedness

The Health Department continues to work with other Town departments, the University of Massachusetts, Amherst College and Hampshire College, as well as the other Boards of Health in Hampshire County to prepare for emergency events and to educate the public.

VI. Health Policy and Planning

During FY14 the Board of Health was comprised of the following members: Chairman David Ahlfeld, Diane Amsterdam, MD, Marco Boscardin, Nancy Gilbert, Julie Marcus, and Maureen O'Leary. Maureen O'Leary resigned from her position mid-year and Marco Boscardin was appointed to fill the vacated seat. The Board of Health, under Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) as well as state and local regulations, is responsible for setting, composing and enforcing policies and regulations which promote and protect the public health of Amherst residents and visitors.

The Board of Health reviewed and approved a new *Town of Amherst Board of Health Regulation Restricting the Sale and Use of Tobacco Products and Nicotine Delivery Products*. The regulation includes policies to restrict the sale of tobacco products and nicotine delivery products, including cigar packaging, ban on sale of blunt wraps, ban on the sale of tobacco in health care institutions (pharmacies), and capping and reducing the number of tobacco permits. This regulation became effective October 1, 2013.

The Board of Health reviewed and approved amendments to the *Town of Amherst Board of Health Regulations for Refuse Collection and Mandatory Recycling* effective July 1, 2014. The regulation intends to provide for the collection of refuse and recyclables and the removal of items that are banned from burial or incineration that can be handled more effectively in other ways. The amended regulation directs any variance requests to be made to the Health Department.

The Board of Health, as a result of community inquiry, began extensive discussions and research to access the current scientific data regarding the public health benefits of Community Water Fluoridation programs. Community residents, local professionals and the Board of Health engaged in conversations to share opinions and insights regarding the continuation of the Amherst Community Water Fluoridation program.

During FY 14, The Board of Health discussed and followed the progression of the Medical Marijuana regulation as developed by the Department of Public Health.

FY14 Board of Health

David Ahlfeld, Chair

Diane Amsterdam, MD

Marco Boscardin (appointed: 12/2013)

Nancy Gilbert

Julie Marcus

Maureen O'Leary (resigned: 9/2013)