



Newsletter

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Winter 2021

Dear Fellow Board of Health Members,

Happy New Year! I hope that your Holiday Season was joyous. Many of us have lost loved ones and friends during this COVID-19 pandemic and I extend sympathy and condolences. To our many health care workers and those providing vital services, you have worked tirelessly during this time. Thank you for your service and personal sacrifice, as you provide treatment, comfort, and sustenance to others.



Last year, 2020, was especially difficult with social distancing, isolation and wearing protective facial masks. It has challenged us all to adapt to change. An example of this is the rapid paced research, development, and approval of COVID-19 vaccines, first delivered by Pfizer and Moderna pharmaceutical companies, and the mass manufacturing of personal protective devices, etc. This is a testament to leadership, cooperation, innovation and industrial ingenuity, responding to an emergent situation.

The logistics of dispensing the vaccine across New Jersey is daunting. The rollout phase to authorized sites will be the responsibility of local and county health departments. As the focal point of the community, they continue to educate on maintaining mitigation strategies, encouraging testing, allaying fears and hesitancy in taking the vaccine, and the new challenges of setting up, supervising, monitoring, and administering vaccines at designated sites and in mobile clinics.

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Currently, vaccine availability is limited, and health departments must encourage patience, emphasizing that the vaccinations will be given as the supply becomes available. Not an easy message to deliver during this time of increasing frustration and dwindling patience. But, it signals the beginnings of healing and recovery.

During the year, the Association updated the *Board of Health Orientation Manual*, on our website. The updates include guidance on conducting successful virtual/remote meetings, how to create ordinances and the revised 10 Essential Public Health Services. The bylaws were updated, and the specifics are included in the 2021 Executive Committee Ballot nomination submitted to all NJBOH. Following review by board members and ratification, the updated bylaws will be added to our website.

As a member of PHACE, the Association advocated for public health funding and to improve public health infrastructure.

The Association continues to participate in developing a *Gold Standard in Health with Sustainable Jersey*; advocate for public health policy; continue partnership with the legislature; and maintain a close association with the DOH Commissioner Persichilli and OLPH Director Semple.

Your membership and participation in your State Association is important and needed. **Join** NJLBHA. Become an active member or select members from your Boards of Health to represent your concerns at the executive level. All are welcome. Visit our website at www.njlbha.org

Christine Harris, BA, MPA, CBHM
President



LEGAL CORNER 1/2021

Michael Richmond, Esq., NJLBHA Legal Counsel

It feels so good to type in 2021 as the date of this Legal Corner. I had high hopes that COVID-19 would be gone when I wrote this date. But COVID-19 is not gone and it will not be for many more months, even if we do everything right.

Doing everything right is becoming more difficult as time goes by and people become increasingly frustrated with being restrained and masked. Even with vaccines being administered, people must continue to wear masks and social distance. Why?

First, because not everyone has been vaccinated. Second, it appears that even once vaccinated, a people can shed the COVID-19 virus, giving the disease to others. Further, the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two inoculations. It is not known how long the immunity will last. It is possible that the immunity will only last a year. If COVAID -19 or any of its variants is still around a new program of vaccination will be required.

We must always remember we are dealing with a NOVEL virus and experimental vaccines. We are learning as we go along.

How does all this belong in the Legal Corner? In the last several months I have been receiving inquiries from local boards about disputes they are having with their municipalities about the powers and duties of the local board. This often involves the appointment of a Health Officer or the supervision of a Health Department.

Every municipality is required to have a local board of health, unless the form of government places certain functions of the local board of health with another agency. NJS 26:3-1 this latter provision applies to municipalities organized under the Faulkner or Walsh Acts or the Municipal Manager Act of 1923. For information on how each type of municipality must constitute its local board please refer to the Orientation Manual on the Association website.

What is important, now and in calmer times, are the 10 essential public health services set forth in NJAC 8:52-3.2.:

1. Monitor health status to identify community health problems
2. Diagnose and investigate health problems in the community
3. Inform, educate, and empower people regarding health issues
4. Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems
5. Develop policies and plans which support individual and community health efforts
6. Enforce the laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety
7. Link people to needed personal health services and assure health care when it is otherwise unavailable
8. Ensure a competent local public health system and assure a competent personal health care workforce
9. Evaluate the effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services
10. Research for innovative solutions to health problems

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Local boards of health and municipal governing bodies must co-operate, working together but letting each entity perform the tasks they are charged with doing under applicable law. Grandstanding or attempting to score political points will not result in the best outcome for the residents of the community, because it causes tension and disruption between the governing body and the local board.

Maintaining a public conversation between the governing body and the local board, on at least a quarterly basis, will go a long way toward facilitating the necessary working relationship. It will also let the public see when one body may be overstepping its role.

When this pandemic is over and before the next one strikes, the local public health system in New Jersey is going to need a review. To begin, all of the parties, including the public, need to actually understand what the system is now. Then we need to look at what we want the system to provide. This pandemic does not allow for power plays and vote getting, and mistakes cause people to die! Assets that are misdirected cause people to die. This is a get with the program moment! We want people to live. We have lost over 18,000 people to COVID-19 in New Jersey. That is the equivalent to the population of over one half of New Jersey municipalities.

Nature has proved to be enough of a challenge, let's not let our institutions add to the carnage. Let them help us meet the challenge.





NJ Department of Health Call Center Opens to Help with Vaccine Questions, Pre-Registration and Scheduling

Donna Leusner
Director of Communications, NJ Department of Health

A vaccine call center to help individuals with the vaccination process is being finalized to open the week of January 25. The call center – available at **855-568-0545** – will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week.

Over 250 trained individuals will staff the call center initially with plans to add additional agents to meet call volumes. The call center will be staffed with a mix of English and Spanish-speaking agents as well as an interpretation service to support Chinese, Portuguese, Tagalog, Italian and other languages prevalent in New Jersey.

With the expansion of eligibility into more categories, there are now many more people who are eligible to get vaccinated but vaccine supply is still very limited.

Staff will be available to answer questions regarding the registration and scheduling process and can provide information on where to get the vaccine.

Agents can pre-register anyone who lives, works or studies in New Jersey for the vaccine and will be able to assist in scheduling appointments in the [New Jersey Vaccine Scheduling System](#) when appointments are available.





New Jersey Poison Control Center Sees Large Increase in Children with Edible Marijuana Exposure: Poison Center Cautions About Candy Look-Alikes

This week, a pre-teen was admitted to a NJ hospital experiencing adverse health effects after ingesting a large quantity of candy containing marijuana. The candy ([Medicated Sour Skittles](#)) was packaged almost identically to the popular and widely sold name brand candy. A month before this incident, a similar case occurred, but in a young child. In this case, the 3-year-old needed to be admitted to the ICU, after eating a cannabis candy which looked identical to a Nerds Rope, another favorite to candy consumers.

Although New Jersey is on the brink of a large-scale rollout of recreational marijuana products for adults, it is important to remember that marijuana can and does have toxic effects on children. As witnessed in other states with recreational marijuana programs, pediatric exposures to these products increase as edibles become widely available. Poison Control Centers around the country have seen a significant increase in calls regarding children who have accidentally eaten/swallowed products containing THC. Further complicating matters are candy look-alike products, such as gummy bears or the products mentioned above, which are very enticing to kids.

In 2020, the New Jersey Poison Control Center assisted in the medical treatment of more than 55 children under the age of 5, and more than 30 children between the ages of 6 and 12 who consumed edible products containing THC – more than double those assisted in the previous year (2019) and 6 times as much as in 2018.

The New Jersey Poison Control Center is warning the public to keep marijuana edibles in a secure/locked place in their homes. Children who ingest edibles are at high risk for marijuana overdose, which can lead to severe health effects.

“It is difficult for anyone, especially children, to distinguish an edible marijuana product from food when the packaging is almost identical to common everyday products,” says Diane Calello, executive and medical director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Department of Emergency Medicine](#). “For this reason, it’s important to safely store these products in the home. It’s also time to say – does that edible product really need to look that much like a favorite candy? Is it worth the risk?”

“Since edibles may be highly concentrated, limit the number of edibles you have at home if you live with young and school-aged children,” says Lewis Nelson, chair of Emergency Medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. Many edible products look and taste like store-bought treats and other food products, making it difficult for children to know the difference. Although edibles like brownies, gummies, and lollipops can be fun and/or therapeutic for adults, high levels of THC (the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana), can lead to dangerous overdose symptoms in small children.”

Unlike in adults, marijuana exposure in children can lead to dangerous side including trouble breathing, loss of coordination, drowsiness, and seizures. In severe cases, children may need to be admitted to an intensive care unit and even need a ventilator.

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When using or storing marijuana products in the home remember the following tips to prevent accidental exposure:

- Store edible products in a secure/locked place in the home, out of sight and reach of children and pets.
- Marijuana products can also cause severe health effects in pets.
- Limit the amount/number of edible products you have in the house at one time.
- Be aware of the potency (concentration of tetrahydrocannabinol/THC) of the edibles you have at home.
- The effects of edible marijuana may be delayed and more severe hours later.

If you suspect a poisoning involving a marijuana product, call your local poison control center immediately at [1-800-222-1222](tel:1-800-222-1222) for medical treatment advice. Poison Control Centers are staffed by healthcare professionals 24/7. If someone is unconscious, not breathing, hard to wake up, or having a seizure, immediately call 9-1-1.

New Jersey residents can reach their poison control center: Call ([1-800-222-1222](tel:1-800-222-1222)); Text ([973-339-0702](tel:973-339-0702)); Chat via [website](#).





NJPHA Annual Conference: A success in going virtual and partnering with PHACE

By Parvin Ahmadkhanlou, Ph.D, Chair, NJPHA Program Committee

On October 14, 2020, the **New Jersey Public Health Association (NJPHA)**, partnering with **PHACE** (Public Health Associations Collaborative Effort), a collective of public health leadership organizations based in New Jersey, and the New Jersey Health Initiative hosted a two-hour live webinar entitled “Recovery and Resilience during COVID-19 in NJ”. This webinar was designed to look at the Pandemic and learn from local leaders across the state about their experience, responsibility and response; and using the lessons learned from people on the front lines to prepare public health for a better path moving forward.

The vast and valuable experience of each speaker was uniquely related to activities they carried in their respective localities. As expected, and in line with the diversity of New Jersey communities, the experiences shared were diverse and their responses to the pandemic were closely associated to the specific needs of the communities they served, as well as the priority of the social determinants of health pertaining to the needs of each community served.

The President of the NJPHA, Donald Weinbaum presided over the session and made opening remarks to over 350 attendees. The speakers from public health, long term care, health care, and public safety organizations addressed what obstacles and limitations they experienced while performing their duties; how they created response teams; types of public and private support received by their organizations and evaluation methods used in their response process.

In addition, speakers representing housing, mental health, public schools, community development and non-profit sectors discussed their roles and responsibilities during the pandemic and discussed how they were able to effectively collaborate with various organizations on addressing social determinants of health; what worked and what they might do differently in a future event; and considering social determinants of health, how they evaluated the level of their organizations and communities resilience. Alejandra Murillo and Jasmine Chong, public health students, were afforded the opportunities to moderate different sessions of the webinar as well as the question and answer sessions.

The conference was a great success, and NJPHA attributes the success of the webinar to all participants, members of the planning committee and support of the collaborating organizations. A recording is available at <http://conference2020.njpha.org>



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New Jersey Local Boards of Health Association invites member boards of health to join us at the regularly scheduled meeting on Saturday, March 6, 2021 from 11 am – 12:30 PM.

Please pre-register [HERE](#)

We will hold our monthly meeting and discuss: Current issues related to COVID 19 pandemic, Public health collaborative efforts, Policy and legal issues, Treasurers report (your member dues at work), and more!

Questions? Please email Laura O'Reilly Stanzilis, VP Communications at: njlbanews@gmail.com



Yes, count me (us) in as a part of the Association!

Yes, count me (us) in as a part of the Association that gives New Jersey's Boards of Health and their members a voice in Trenton, a way to communicate among ourselves, a force for progress in public health and more knowledge for board members.

Full Board, Regular Membership \$95

Board membership is open to municipal, county and regional Boards of Health. All board members are included for the calendar year.

Individual, Regular Membership \$20

Individual membership is open to current members of municipal, county or regional boards of health whose full board is not a member.

Individual, Associate Membership \$20

Associate membership is open to past Board of Health members, students, or other individuals interested in public health. This is a non-voting membership.

Institutional Membership \$95

Institutional membership is open to organizations, including environmental groups, planning boards, or other municipal or county agencies, committees, commissions, or councils. This is a non-voting membership.

Name: _____

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- Our board of health is an autonomous board
- Our board of health is an advisory board
- The governing body of our town is the board of health

Please send your check or purchase order to : New Jersey Local Boards of Health

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