

# Harford County Local Health Improvement Coalition

*April, 2014*

## Welcome to the Harford County's Local Health Improvement Coalition (LHIC) Spring Update!

Harford County's Local Health Improvement Coalition (LHIC) workgroups are continuing their work to improve the health of Harford County residents. See an update below of the workgroups' most recent initiatives.



### **Obesity Task Force's Community Engagement Workgroup**

The Healthy Community Planning Board (HCPB) members were confirmed at the County Council meeting in early March. The HCPB is a Board that brings forth public health issues, as well as acts in an advisory capacity to the County Council on issues affecting public health. The HCPB was one of the main recommendations that came out of the Obesity Task Force Final Report presented to County Council in October 2012. Their first meeting will take place this Spring. Click [here](#) to see a list of HCPB members.

**The Tobacco Workgroup** will continue it's work toward implementation of smoke-free multi-unit housing, civil enforcement of illegal tobacco sales to minors as well as raising awareness of tobacco use in the Harford County community. New efforts they will also be focusing on in 2014 include developing a definitive position statement on e-cigarette usage and workplace outreach and interventions regarding tobacco use.



### **The Behavioral Health Workgroup -**

On March 21, 2014, the University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Health hosted a webinar in partnership with the Harford County Health Department and the Harford County Department of Community Services. The webinar provided primary care and mental health providers with the skills and resources needed to employ more effective intervention strategies in dealing with cases of depression where suicide screening is indicated. Sixteen

Primary Care staff were trained in addition to 36 other mental health and human service professionals. Those who took part in the training will have access to a physician liaison

to help with implementation of their programs.

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## Local Health Updates

The 2014 Maryland Health Connection's open enrollment period for qualified health plans ended on March 31, 2014. Medicaid eligibility determination and enrollment is still ongoing and continuing with the assistance of Harford County Health Department Assisters and Caseworkers, as well as with Harford Community Action Agency's Patient Navigators.

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## Data Update

A number of public health data resources are available on the [Harford County Health Department webpage](#).

- [The 2014 County Health Rankings Report](#) was released in March by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. This report measures the health of nearly all counties in the nation and ranks them within states. The report examines health outcomes (such as length and quality of life) and health factors (such as smoking and obesity). Harford County ranks 10th best in health outcomes and 6th best in health factors among the 24 jurisdictions in Maryland.
- [The Harford County Local Health Improvement Process data webpage](#) is a good resource for more detailed county-level public health data. Data for 40 health measures in five focus areas, including healthy beginnings, healthy living, healthy communities, access to health care, and quality preventive care, are provided.
- [Lyme Disease in Harford County](#) is a focused public health update that contains national, state and local data on Lyme Disease incidence, as well as strategies for preventing Lyme Disease.
- [The Maryland Public Health and Emergency Preparedness Bulletins](#) are released weekly and provide summaries of a number of disease surveillance findings, including communicable disease outbreaks, influenza-like illnesses, and over-the-counter sales for respiratory medications.
- Revised versions of the [Harford County Community Health Assessment](#) and the [Harford County Community Health Improvement Plan](#) are now available. These documents are good data resources that reflect the health priorities, strategies, and plans of the County's Local Health Improvement Coalition, a group of stakeholders and partner organizations that have come together to improve the health of County residents.

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## Research Update

The 2014 County Health Rankings show that Harford County continues to lag behind the state when it comes to smoking rates, with 18% of County residents still smoking (compared to 15% of Maryland residents smoking). The Local Health Improvement Coalition's Tobacco Workgroup is working on a number of strategies, including encouraging those who live in multiunit housing, such as apartment buildings, to adopt smoke-free policies.

**"Tobacco-Smoke Exposure in Children Who Live in Multiunit Housing," by Karen Wilson, et al, in the Pediatrics Journal, December 2010**, a journal article published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, makes several interesting points which support the Tobacco Workgroup's efforts (click [here](#) to read the full article):

\*Most children without known secondhand tobacco smoke exposure inside the home in multiunit housing still showed evidence of tobacco smoke exposure, most likely due to smoke seepage through walls or shared ventilation systems. Data show that 89% of low income apartments with no smokers still had detectable air nicotine levels.

\*There is no safe level of secondhand tobacco smoke exposure in children, as it causes illnesses such as asthma and respiratory infections, and has been associated with sudden infant death syndrome, metabolic syndrome, and ear infections.

\*This article concludes that smoke-free multiunit housing can improve health status by reducing nonsmokers' exposure to tobacco smoke in their own units.

### **Stay up to date**

- **Local Health Improvement Coalition** meeting dates and past minutes are available on the Harford County Health Department's [website](#).
- **Healthy Harford** - for the latest information on health and wellness in Harford County, "like" Healthy Harford on [facebook](#), or visit their [website](#).
- **State Health Improvement Process** - stay up to date on health outcome data at the SHIP [website](#).



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