

New Jersey Public Health Association
Advocating for Public Health in the State of New Jersey
Spring 2018 Issue

NJPHA Thanks You – And Needs You
By Paschal Nwako, PhD, MPH, NJPHA President



There is a saying that change is the only constant in life. As the new President of the New Jersey Public Health Association (NJPHA), I want to thank the previous Executive Board for their hard work and give special thanks to immediate past President Kevin McNally for his tireless efforts on behalf of NJPHA.

I also want to thank all of you for being part of NJPHA – and part of the public health community in New Jersey. Our job might not give us a spotlight for the public to realize our role in public health. And we might go through our daily routine not realizing that we touch many lives and many facets of the communities we serve; we might not recognize how vital we are in our community and how much people depend on us for their survival.

But we are public health, so we should acknowledge a job well done: protecting the public by answering the call and preserving the rights of the poor and the underserved; ensuring livable and healthy environments; using health education and intervention to prevent food poisoning, unintentional deaths, and childhood lead poisoning; and, as members of NJPHA, advocating for many more areas of public health. We also should acknowledge the responsibility placed on us as members of the public health community: We are stewards of the basic health needs of populations, and so we avert impending disasters and protect the public.

We are all endowed with abilities that can be utilized in many ways. NJPHA needs your abilities: The Executive Board is actively recruiting NJPHA members for the following standing committees; Advocacy, Awards, Communications, Finance, Membership, Newsletter, and Program. If you are interested in joining a committee, please contact any Executive Board member (the list is on page 2) or email us: newjerseypha@gmail.com.

In conclusion, from me to all of you: THANK YOU. We appreciate your NJPHA membership, and – as always – we look forward to working with you.

NJPHA Executive Board and Committee Chairs: 2018 – 2019



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The Priorities of the Murphy Administration and the Department of Health

By New Jersey Health Commissioner Dr. Shereef Elnahal



I am honored that Governor Murphy has chosen me to lead the Department of Health. It is a tremendous responsibility. But with a new leadership team and a Governor who has already guided the Department to make progress on the state's most pressing health issues, such as restoring women's health funding and significantly expanding access to medicinal marijuana, I am confident that we will be successful on behalf of New Jersey residents.

Since joining the Department in January, I have traveled around the state visiting hospitals and rehabilitation centers to emphasize the need for health care workers—and all members of the public—to get flu shots, and have met with health care leaders, some public health officials, community groups, and other stakeholders.

As we mark National Public Health Week and Minority & Multicultural Health Month, I will also be attending health equity forums and emphasizing that reducing disparities in public health outcomes—including lead, diabetes, black infant and maternal mortality—is a top priority for the Department and the Murphy Administration.

In addition to reforming the medicinal marijuana program and reducing disparities, my other priorities are eradicating the opioid epidemic, enhancing access and quality of

mental health care, improving the state’s psychiatric hospitals, and increasing access to health care by making coverage more affordable in New Jersey.

Governor Murphy has proposed \$100 million in his first state budget to fight the opioid crisis through an organized, coordinated, data-driven, multi-agency approach to eradicate an epidemic that took the lives of more than 2,200 victims in 2016. These funds will help us expand access to community-based outpatient treatment—including Medication-Assisted Treatment, peer recovery support, and supportive housing. The funds will also enhance our data infrastructure, which will help us evaluate the efficacy of our efforts and identify hot-spots of the epidemic that will inform a targeted, public health approach.

Our evidence-based strategy puts the tools of public health to work: an approach that maps the journey of people in New Jersey from their initial exposure to opioids, all the way through to addiction, incarceration, overdose, and death. At each stage of that journey, there are unique efforts that will reduce the number of people who pass through the gates into the next stage, and we will consider all strategies that are effective. Importantly, we will use integrated data across the state government that will allow us to identify, expand, and re-invest in effective programs.

We are also going to promote Medication-Assisted Treatment for addiction in medical education. As an example, Rutgers is currently the only medical school in the nation to ensure that all of its students receive training and certification in this important area before they graduate—we want to see that investment across the state.

Finally, the Department is launching an awareness campaign for pregnant women to get addiction treatment and reduce the risk of neonatal abstinence syndrome.

But we still have much work ahead of us. Getting clearer guidelines on opioid prescription practices to the front lines of health care, expanding the use of the prescription drug monitoring program to outpatient clinics, and building better structures for interoperability and data-sharing between care settings will enable us to make more progress moving forward.

Governor Murphy’s budget will go a long way in helping us tackle these challenges, and much more.

Editor’s Note: For a biography of Dr. Elnahal, go to the “Meet the Commissioner” webpage at <http://www.nj.gov/health/commiss/index.shtml>.

Follow Dr. Elnahal on Twitter: @ShereefElnahal.

Public Health Officials' Liability for Decisions **By Gwyneth M. Eliasson, JD, MPH, Newsletter Editor**

On January 25, 2018, the Network for Public Health Law (NPHL) presented a webinar on “Executive Decision Making and Liability for Public Health Officials.” Moderated by Jason Coates (APHA), this webinar featured three speakers: Lance Gable (Wayne State University Law School), NPHL’s Denise Chrysler, and Matthew Penn (CDC Public Health Law Program).

Professor Gable provided a timeline of the Flint water crisis and discussed laws on emergency managers, appointed (not elected) officials with complete control over financial decisions – and without a requirement to consider non-financial aspects. Public health officials can be held accountable through criticism, sanctions, firing, and civil lawsuits. Although criminal prosecution of public officials is rare, public health officials in Flint have been charged, and these criminal cases have implications for public health practice.

Ms. Chrysler discussed public health decision-making and its three questions: Can I? Must I? And should I? The first question is a legal one: Do I have the authority (power)? The second question also is legal: Does law leave me no choice (Do I have a duty)? But the third question is one of policy: How should I exercise my discretion? NPHL’s Public Health Decision-Making Tool is a resource to work through these questions.

Mr. Penn provided an overview of claims (constitutional and tort), the elements of torts (defined as an act or omission, resulting in injury and thus civil liability), liability (legal responsibility), and lawsuit defenses for government officials, including two types of immunity: absolute (rare) and qualified (more common).

To view/download the slides or view the playback, go to <http://bit.ly/2FvMMUX>. The Public Health Decision-Making Tool is available at <https://bit.ly/2FWXo3E>. Prof. Gable’s article, “Criticized, Fired, Sued, or Prosecuted: Hindsight and Public Health Accountability,” is in *Public Health Reports* (November/December 2017): <https://bit.ly/2FV8eau>.

Career Corner: Resources for Job Seekers **Compiled by Gwyneth M. Eliasson, JD, MPH**

- From *The Washington Post* Jobs: “The Benefits of Tailoring Your Resume to the Job Description” <http://bit.ly/2EUnEXr>
- *The New York Times* on “How To Manage Your Career” <http://nyti.ms/2IMHgoC>
- From *The Washington Post* Jobs: “Questions To Ask At The End Of A Job Interview To Make You Stand Out” <http://bit.ly/2DRwYLJ>



New Jersey Public Health Association

NJPHA's quarterly Newsletter offers you an opportunity to write about public health topics.

Deadline for Summer 2018 Issue: Friday, June 22nd

Articles on ANY public health-related topic are welcome, such as:

- Internship or fieldwork (capstone/practicum) experience
- Work with a public health program or research project
- Public health events or news at your school
- Thoughts on a policy with public health implications
- Commentary on a public health issue
- Public health career advice
- Local, state, or national public health events, projects, or advocacy efforts
- Other news of public health importance

Please include this information:

- Title of article
- Byline with:
 - Your name and degree(s)
 - Your academic institution or employment affiliation
- A head shot or picture of yourself (if available)

Please follow these article submission guidelines:

- In Microsoft Word with 12-point, Times New Roman font
- Single-spaced
- 300-word maximum
- References (if applicable)

For examples of published articles, see past newsletters posted on NJPHA's website:

<http://njpha.org/category/newsletter>

Email your article (or any questions) to the Editor - Gwyneth M. Eliasson, JD, MPH:
gme10467@gmail.com