

HIGHLIGHTS

● INSPIRATION ● ENGAGEMENT ● VIRTUAL CONNECTIONS



Family Home Visiting Family Focus Group Event

On October 12, the Family Home Visiting team hosted its first-ever Family Focus Group Event. The Family Focus Group Event brought together eight caregivers (and their children) who are enrolled in Dakota County's Family Home Visiting program.

The event was a success and participating families reported a strong desire to attend similar events in the future. The purpose of having a Family Focus Group is to represent the voices and experiences of the customers we serve in our program design, direction, and improvement.

Family involvement in program design and decision making is a critical step to increase diversity of opinion (notably the lived experience of program participants), to increase transparency in family health programs, to empower caregivers to become leaders, and to provide caregivers an opportunity to meet other parents in their community.

Using feedback shared by families at the event, the Family Home Visiting Team hopes to make events like this one a more regular occurrence. Family Home Visiting would like to thank all the people who came together to make this event possible. The Focus Group was facilitated by Lia Roberts and many staff volunteered their time to ensure that the event went smoothly.

Thank you, Erin Bloomquist, Lori Lorentz, Melanie Countryman (scribe), Marguedy Worden, Gretchen Marquart, Mackenzie Eyen, Rebeca Manzur-Soda, Olivia Collins, Faduma Ibrahim, and Angela Mathew.



Local Public Health Association (LPHA) Fall Conference and Annual Meeting

In November, several of our Public Health team members attended (and presented at!) the Local Public Health Association 2023 conference. The conference was held in Breezy Point, MN and featured the theme of The Power of Communication in Public Health Leadership.

Melanie Countryman and Olivia Collins presented on the work our department has been doing with resiliency, including the steps to survey staff and create a plan for 2023-2024. Other topics presented at the conference included using storytelling to inform the public, humanizing our language when communicating about substance use, and even a magician who taught "tricks" to better connect with others.

The Dakota County team also participated in voluntary activities in the evenings – taking home 4 of the 10 winning BINGO rounds and second place in the trivia competition!



Eagan City Council Presentation Petition to Prohibit the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products

The Tobacco-Free Society (TFS), a youth group at Eagan High School dedicated to raising awareness about the harms of commercial tobacco, met with the Eagan City Council on November 6 to discuss this important public health issue. During the meeting, TFS highlighted their prevention efforts over the past year, showcasing a petition signed by over 300 Eagan residents. The petition urges the city council to consider a policy that would prohibit the sale of flavored tobacco products in Eagan.

The students underscored the pressing need to address the harms associated with these products, especially flavored nicotine vapes. To drive their point home, the students shared personal anecdotes, recounting instances of witnessing flavored vapes in schools. One student described observing vapes falling out of a classmate's pockets on the way to class. They emphasized that these products continue to be heavily marketed towards young people, with significant harm to their health. The students stressed that ending the sale of flavored tobacco products represents a crucial step in improving the public health of our communities.

The Tobacco-Free Alliance (TFA) leads this student group through its MN Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) funding to address commercial tobacco harm in the county. Kjirsten Anderson, Health Promotion Specialist with Public Health oversees the TFA contract with the county through the MDH's Statewide Health Improvement Partnership funding.



Family Home Visiting Coordinators Presentation to the CHS User Group

In February of 2023, with the support of the Health Informatics team, Dakota County Family Home Visiting transitioned away from Omaha System documentation to documentation using two Assessment Forms that were created in-house.

On October 24, Olivia Collins and Brenna Finley presented Dakota County's Assessment Forms to the Community Health Services (CHS) user group, which includes PH-Doc users from around the state. Olivia discussed the background and reason for the change, the process followed, and the outcomes. Brenna gave a demonstration of the forms in PH-Doc.

Following the presentation, several counties have reached out to express interest in implementing Dakota County's assessment forms at their organization. To date, three metro counties have transitioned to using Dakota County's forms for documentation and nine counties have reached out expressing interest in using the forms. Family Home Visiting nurses report that the Assessment Forms make charting more efficient and streamlined. Time spent charting visits has been reduced significantly (by 30 minutes – 1 hour per visit) for home visitors.



TECH TIPS

Organize your webpages with "Tab groups" in Microsoft Edge or Google Chrome! Group related webpages and customize them with a name and a color, so you can easily navigate and stay focused.

The instructions are posted on the Technical information SharePoint page under [Internet Browser](#).

By the Informatics Team



Health & Wellness

Enhancing Immunity

As we enter cold and flu season, we can help our bodies have a natural defense against illnesses by focusing on maintaining our overall health. Some might know about the 'immune boosting' products such as pills and drinks – according to a pediatric immunologist Joshua Milner, MD, those products have not been shown to enhance immunity or increase your protection against infection. Simple things such as sleeping and eating well can be helpful but sometimes are hard to maintain during the holiday season.

Seven Tips to Enhance Immunity:

1. Eat a Healthful Diet – Eat as many fresh fruit and vegetables as you can, every day. When your body has a sufficient amount of micronutrients, it helps maintain your immune system homeostasis. These micronutrients include:
 - Vitamin B6, found in chicken, salmon, tuna, bananas, green vegetables and potatoes (with the skin)
 - Vitamin C, found in citrus fruit, as well as tomatoes, broccoli and spinach
 - Vitamin E, found in almonds, sunflower and safflower oil, sunflower seeds, peanut butter and spinach
 - Zinc, found in oysters, red meat, poultry, beans, dairy products
 - Magnesium, found in whole wheat products, nuts, seeds
2. Be Active – Physical activity doesn't just help with de-stressing and building muscle, it's a key part of supporting your immune system. The immune system is very responsive to exercise and has anti-inflammatory effects.
3. Prioritize Sleeping – Get a minimum of seven hours of sleep a night. Sleep loss reduces the production of antibodies.
4. Minimize stress – Both psychological and physical stress weaken the immune system.
5. Drink Less Alcohol – Alcohol disrupts immune pathways that can impair the body's ability to defend against infection.
6. Hydrate – Water is needed to circulate immune cells throughout the body.
7. Don't smoke – Smoking reduces immune defenses.

****One supplement that has proven to reduce the severity and duration of symptoms if taken at the beginning of a respiratory infection: Zinc. Consult with a doctor on recommended dosage.**

Sources and Further Reading:

- <https://www.houstonmethodist.org/blog/articles/2020/mar/5-ways-to-boost-your-immune-system/>
- <https://www.cuimc.columbia.edu/news/what-you-really-need-do-boost-your-immunity>
- <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/how-to-boost-your-immune-system>
- <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/fight-off-the-flu-with-nutrients>

The Health and Wellness section is authored by the Health Promotion Team

