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State Department of Health Announces Reorganization and Emphasis On Health Equity, Aging & Emergency Preparedness to Advance Public Health Protections In New York

ALBANY, N.Y. (July 29, 2022) – The New York State Department of Health today announced new efforts to better promote and protect the health of all New Yorkers. A strategic planning effort led by Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett focused on optimizing the Department's talent, workflow and collaboration, the integration of new systems, and increasing diversity as part of its overall mission to build a healthier, more equitable New York. To achieve this goal, the Department has established an Office of Aging & Long Term Care, an Office of Health Equity & Human Rights, a Chief Medical Officer, and established a leadership cabinet. Additionally, Dr. Bassett is prioritizing agencywide data sharing and use to drive policies, and a renewed emphasis on regional offices' engagement with local health departments.

The Department's rebuilding effort landed on five focus areas:

- **Invest in our people**, bring in new and diverse talent, simplify hiring processes, and create a culture of support and appreciation after the significant sacrifices made during COVID response.
- **Shape our organization so that it reflects our focus** on health equity, the needs of older New Yorkers, emergency preparedness and response.
- **Become more proactive** by developing policy coordination and project management capabilities and simplifying critical processes.
- **Align public health, insurance and regulatory tools** across divisions to maximize impact and improve health outcomes.
- **Improve our use of data to advance our mission** of improving public health and health equity.

"Public health touches every facet of our lives," **State Commissioner of Health Dr. Mary T. Bassett said.** "Our new organizational focus and leadership team structure will better position the Department to shape our priorities and delivery systems to improve health access and outcomes for all New Yorkers. The scope of this Department extends beyond traditional public health and comprises a regulatory function for health care delivery institutions and health insurance programs that provide coverage to over one-third of New Yorkers. In my tenure as commissioner, I intend to do my utmost to fulfil our mandate. New Yorkers deserve no less."

Since becoming Health Commissioner, Dr. Bassett has sought to optimize cross-functional collaboration, recruit and retain a more diverse workforce, elevate health equity and the needs of older New Yorkers, foster a culture of inclusivity, and prioritize using data to drive public health decisions. She has also sought out ideas from staff, the backbone of the Department. A staff survey, focus groups and multiple conversations were essential to understanding the challenges the Department faces and how to address them."

The main changes include:

- **Creating a new Office of Health Equity & Human Rights.** This office will address health disparities and work to improve diversity, equity and inclusion within the Department. It will be comprised of the current offices of Minority Health and Health Disparities Prevention and Language Access, the AIDS Institute, and the Office of Gun Violence Prevention. The new Office of Health Equity & Human Rights will be led by Deputy Commissioner Johanne Morne.
- **Creating a new Office of Aging & Long Term Care.** This office will develop policies and programs to meet the needs of older New Yorkers and people with disabilities who require long term care services and support. It will be led by Adam Herbst, Deputy Commissioner on Aging & Long Term Care and work collaboratively with the Office of Health Insurance Programs, the Office of Primary Care and Health Systems Management, and the NYS Office for the Aging to coordinate Department activities related to aging New Yorkers. The Office will be responsible for long-term care functions related to licensure, facility surveys, data collection, and policies and analysis. In addition, it will help develop and execute the State Master Plan on Aging to improve the recruitment, retention, and training of long-term care workers, and improve the quality of long-term care.
- **Establishing a Chief Medical Officer.** Dr. Eugene Heslin will provide medical and clinical expertise to all senior leadership and various Department staff. Dr. Heslin has over 30 years in the field of medicine and is an expert in health care leadership, policy development and operational management centered on improved patient outcomes.
- **Creating a new Commissioner's Cabinet.** It will be comprised of dynamic policy and health experts who will report directly to and serve as advisors to State Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett on important issues as we develop programs and new policies throughout the Department that will protect, improve, and promote the health of New Yorkers. The Executive Cabinet members are: Laura Mascuch, Chief of Staff; Kristin Proud, Acting Executive Deputy Commissioner; Dr. Ursula Bauer, Deputy Commissioner for Public Health; Dr. Eugene Heslin, First Deputy Commissioner and Chief Medical Officer; Sam Miller, Associate Commissioner for External Affairs; Kathy Marks, General Counsel; Amir Bassiri, Deputy Commissioner of the Office of Health Insurance Programs and Acting Medicaid Director; Adam Herbst, Deputy Commissioner Aging & Long Term Care; Dr. John Morley, Deputy Commissioner of Primary Care and Health Systems Management; Johanne Morne, Deputy Commissioner Health Equity and Human Rights; Diane Christensen, Deputy Commissioner Administration; and Danielle Holahan, Executive Director, NY State of Health and Senior Advisors, Megan Baldwin, Paul Francis and Sandra Mullin.
- **Strengthening the Regional Offices.** There will also be a concerted effort to make sure our regional offices are more integrated into public health policy making and that they prioritize the needs of local health departments. Regional Offices will now be a part of the Office of Public Health, which will strengthen the voice of local perspectives in our policy making and streamline local policy and program implementation.

These new focus areas will guide the Department's work over the next 3 years. Our goal is to improve health equity and reduce disparities across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups while leveraging data to inform policies and improve health outcomes. We will work to reduce our chronic disease burden through effective public health programs and new care models. The Department will also continue to use the latest technology and communication platforms to disseminate critical public health information to the public and help protect them from preventable diseases and illnesses.

Additional highlights of the Department rebuild include improving data capabilities and data use that are integral to advancing its mission; increasing communications, policy and data support for chronic disease programs; and establishing a new operating model for the Office of Health Emergency Preparedness. The Department will place more attention on recruiting, hiring and growing our workforce, while also ensuring current employees have the resources and support, they need to effectively protect the health of all New Yorkers.

The Department will continue to provide updates on the next steps of the rebuild process.

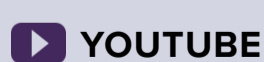
For the latest news from the Department of Health click [here](#).

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Department of Health

General Information	COVID-19 Topics	Current Issues/Info	Help	Language Assistance
Mary T. Bassett, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner	Isolation and Quarantine Guidance	1-866-NY-QUITS - NYS Smokers' Quit Line	Help Increasing the Text Size in Your Web Browser	English
Employment Opportunities	Long Covid	Addressing the Opioid Epidemic in New York State	File Formats Used on this Web Site	Español (Spanish)
Wadsworth Center	COVID-19 Schools & Youth Info & Guidance	Become an Organ Donor - Enroll Today	Disclaimer	中文 (Chinese)
AIDS Institute	Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C)	Drinking Water Response Activities	Privacy Policy	Русский (Russian)
Contact	COVID-19 Treatments	Emergency Preparedness	Accessibility	ইংরেজি (Bengali)
Councils and Boards	COVID-19 Guidance	Ending the Epidemic		Kreyòl Ayisyen (Haitian-Creole)
Grants & Funding Opportunities	COVID-19 Excelsior Pass/Excelsior Pass Plus	Hepatitis C Elimination Plan (PDF)		한국어 (Korean)
Laws & Regulations	Pregnancy & COVID-19	Learn About the Dangers of "Synthetic Marijuana"		Website Language Translations
Press Releases, Reports & Publications	#VaxToSchool	Maternal Mortality & Disparate Racial Outcomes		
Publications and Educational Material	COVID-19 Vaccine Equity Task Force	Medicaid in New York State		
Freedom of Information Law (FOIL)	Latest COVID-19 News	New York State Breast Cancer Programs		
Forms	Sign Up for COVID-19 & Vaccine Updates	New York State Public Health Corps		
Related Sites	Events	NYSOH - The Official Health Plan Marketplace		
Health Topics A to Z	Webcasts	Notice to Medicaid Recipients		
A to Z en Español	Other Events	Office of Cannabis Management		
		Vaping Products and E-cigarettes		

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