



November 16, 2021

News Headlines

2021 Rural Health Champions Named

Congratulations to the six [2021 Rural Health Champions](#) who were recognized for their demonstrated leadership and exceptional dedication to community members within the Adirondack Rural Health Network (ARHN) region at the 2021 North Country Leadership Summit.

Be sure to check out [AHI's Facebook page](#) all this week as we honor our champions and other individuals across the region.

Coalition Takes Aim at Diabetes, Chronic Disease Prevention

A new network of health care providers, public health agencies, and nonprofits are working to reduce the prevalence of diabetes and other chronic diseases across the region.

The North Country Chronic Disease Prevention Coalition aims to build a region-wide system that will ultimately have the capacity to provide evidence-based prevention and self-management education to at least 2 percent of the estimated eligible patient population in any given year.

The Heart Network convened the Coalition in order to build on the success of a health systems program that increased identification and treatment of prediabetes in Adirondack Health's primary care clinics. This program — Moving Forward Together to Prevent diabetes — was funded with a three-year grant from Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield and included the addition of health coaches to primary care teams as well as the implementation of multiple standing orders and the establishment of a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recognized diabetes prevention program. Outcomes were so favorable that the Heart Network was able to pursue and secure funding to support the replication and expansion of the program across the North Country.

Using the four domains of the CDC's chronic disease prevention system as a framework — epidemiology and surveillance, environmental interventions, health system interventions, and clinic-community interventions — the Coalition has been busy in 2021. Focuses this year include:

- Developing a plan for data collection and analysis needs.
- Participating with local projects that aim to increase access to healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity.
- Promoting the adoption of policies and/or practices that increase identification and referral to evidence-based programs (EBPs).
- Ensuring availability of EBPs.
- Developing a system to support the referral & enrollment process.

In particular, health care providers play a critical role in treating patients with prediabetes and diabetes and helping them find community-based services to assist them in adopting daily routines and practices to get and stay healthy. To this end, the Coalition launched a referral

system to link prediabetic and diabetic patients with local, evidence-based programs that can help them prevent or better manage their condition. NY Connects — a statewide directory of health, home care, transportation, and other resources — provides follow-ups to patients referred to help them understand community-based program options and get them enrolled.

The North Country Chronic Disease Prevention Coalition understands that people in isolated, rural communities like many of those in our region struggle to control their condition. As a collective, the Coalition believes that steps like the referral system will empower individuals to take control of their own health.

As communities across the country recognize National Diabetes Month and raise awareness about this condition, the Coalition urges people with prediabetes and diabetes to talk to their primary care providers to learn about local, community-based services that can help — and in turn, we hope providers will continue to refer patients to evidence-based programs.

Ann Morgan is executive director of the Heart Network. To learn more about the North Country Chronic Disease Prevention Coalition, email amorgan@heartnetwork.org.



COVID-19 Booster FAQs

*Confused about all the news on boosters? You are not alone. Here are some answers to your questions from **Wouter J. Rietsema, M.D.**, Adirondacks ACO Chief Medical Officer.*

Why is it so confusing?

There are three vaccines that either work differently or are dosed differently. As a strategy to develop vaccines rapidly, this made perfect sense by increasing the chance that at least some vaccines would work. It does add to confusion now as they all have differences in how well and long they protect after “full vaccination.”

I received the Pfizer vaccine (Comirnaty). Do I need a booster, and if so, when?

The FDA and CDC approved a booster six months or more after dose two if:

- You are over 65 or over 50 with a chronic medical condition; you should receive a booster.
- You are over 18, have a chronic medical condition, or either work or live in a high-risk environment you may receive a booster, but you are still VERY well protected without a booster. FYI – Healthcare is considered a high-risk environment.

I received the Moderna vaccine (Spikevax). Do I need a booster, and if so, when?

The FDA and CDC approved a half-dose Moderna booster six months or more after dose two if:

- You are over 65 or over 50 with a chronic medical condition; you should receive a booster.
- You are over 18, have a chronic medical condition, or either work or live in a high-risk environment, you may receive a booster, but you are still VERY well protected without a booster. FYI – Healthcare is considered a high-risk environment.

I received the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. Do I need a booster, and if so, when?

One dose of J&J is not as effective against symptomatic infection as the mRNA vaccines, even as mRNA vaccine immunity has waned over time. The FDA and CDC have recommended a J&J booster to be given two months or more after the original dose. This results in immunity similar to boosted mRNA vaccines.

I am eligible for a booster. Where can I get it?

Go to the federal website. [Find COVID-19 vaccines](#). This will show the many pharmacies and local health departments, which vaccines they have, and how to schedule.

I am fully vaccinated but had a breakthrough infection. Do I need a booster?

There is no data on this yet. It is very likely that asymptomatic breakthrough infection works like a booster. It is probably not necessary to get a booster in that situation, but discuss with your physician if you have questions.

Do I have to get the same vaccine for my booster as I got originally?

The FDA has approved a “Mix and Match” strategy for boosters. This means that a booster dose can be either of the three approved vaccines, regardless of the original vaccine received. This is designed to simplify and streamline boosting – vaccinating providers don’t need to stock all three vaccines for purposes of boosting. This is more in line with all other vaccines where the “brand” of the vaccine is not something any of us pay attention to.

Even though we can “Mix and match,” is there any reason to prefer one over the other for my booster?

All the vaccines are considered safe and effective. But, to truly minimize the risk of some rare known side effects or truly maximize immunity, there are a few things you might consider.

1. Younger women are at the most risk of the rare bleeding complications of the J&J, so that they may prefer an mRNA vaccine (Pfizer, Moderna).
2. Older teens and young adult men are at the most risk for the rare heart inflammation from mRNA vaccines, so they might prefer a J&J booster.
3. Boosting a J&J vaccine with an mRNA vaccine seems to give stronger immunity than two J&J vaccines.

Can we make it simple and just say everyone should get a booster at a certain time, regardless of vaccine?

We are getting there. Pfizer and Moderna boosters are at six months, but not for everyone yet. J&J is at two months for everyone. It is really more like a two-shot vaccine.

Open Door Mission Reducing its Carbon Footprint by Composting all Food Waste

Hundreds of pounds of “waste” will be composted weekly at Adirondack Worm Farm in Washington County

Thanks to a generous donor, The Open Door Mission will begin composting all of its food waste (both kitchen scraps and plate scrapings) from the more than 1,600 meals a month it serves as part of its soup kitchen and shelter program in Glens Falls.

Open Door’s kitchen crew will be able to keep hundreds of pounds of food waste — from peels, skins and rinds of fruits and vegetables, to moldy bread, meat trimmings and bones — out of the waste stream.

“We provide a helping hand to our community members in need, and when we learned there was a way to make our operations more environmentally sustainable, it fit right in with our goals,” said Kim Cook, Open Door’s president and CEO. “Having a local company that can compost our food scraps and create a useful resource for the environment out of what had been considered garbage is a real blessing.”

The cost of the program is being underwritten by Catherine Atherden, a volunteer at The Open Door. “I am excited to be a part of this project. Food waste is a huge problem in our country representing 30 to 40 percent of the entire US food supply, more than any other country in the world. Wasting food has irreversible environmental consequences e.g. waste of water and energy to produce and transport, methane emissions from landfills,” Ms. Atherden noted. “Food spoilage is one of the biggest reasons people throw out food. Composting avoids food going into landfills and burn plants, reduces greenhouse gas emissions which cause global warming, greatly reduces pesticide and water use, many benefits to soil, increases biodiversity, reduces erosion, and more. I hope this project will inspire more businesses and individuals to compost,” said Ms. Atherden.

Adirondack Worm Farm has provided a residential curbside composting service in the Glens Falls region for two years, and has composted more than 11 tons of food waste at its farm in Kingsbury.

“The Open Door does tremendous work, and we’re so pleased to be able to help them reduce their carbon footprint,” said Bill Richmond, the owner and “chief worm wrangler” at Adirondack Worm Farm. “Food creates methane when it rots in landfills, a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Keeping food scraps out of the waste stream is one of the most impactful steps in the battle against climate change.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Kim Cook
The Open Door
518-792-5900 ext. 600

A new edition of the Moreau Community Center newsletter is available!
Click [here](#) to read.

NY Project Hope – Coping with COVID

As New York continues to reopen and new challenges arise due to COVID-19, individuals continue to seek emotional support to help them cope with transitions, stress, and anxiety. [NY Project Hope](#) is available to provide emotional support for all NYS residents.

NY Project Hope has an emotional support helpline, educational materials, trusted referrals, and local provider agencies... all dedicated to helping you manage and cope with changes brought on by COVID-19.

NY Project Hope also provides free virtual presentations and printed materials (including posters) to share additional information about the services they offer. Click [here](#) to submit a request for materials.

Important Information

AHI Career Opportunities

AHI is hiring! AHI is seeking dedicated, motivated, and highly passionate individuals who share our drive and commitment to making a difference by improving the health of our community.

We are hiring for the following positions: **Data Coordinator**, **RCORP Implementation**, **Enrollment Specialist**, and **Regional Care Coordination Specialist**. AHI provides a friendly and challenging work environment and a comprehensive benefits package. For more information or to apply online, visit [AHI Careers](#).

EOE/M/F/V/D.

Health Insurance Enrollment Assistance

AHI's **EASE (Enrollment Assistance Services and Education) program** assists individuals, families and small business owners enroll in health insurance coverage through the NY State of Health Marketplace. We serve eight counties: Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Saratoga, Warren, and Washington.

We don't charge and we're not an insurance company. We help clients look at available insurance plans and find out if they're eligible for financial assistance.

[Request an appointment online](#) or call toll-free, **1.866.872.3740**, to make an appointment with

a certified enrollment specialist. We'll help to review health insurance choices via phone, for free. To learn more, click [here](#).

AHI also provides assistance with helping individuals and families resolve issues in [accessing substance use disorder and mental health services](#), as well as [care management services](#).

Events

National Epilepsy Awareness Month

The Epilepsy Foundation of Northeastern New York is pleased to offer free virtual programs. To learn more, click [here](#)!

Other Information

COVID-19 Resources

For links to various COVID-19 resources for community partners, please visit [AHI's website](#).

Share Your Updates

Please note that AHI will now be publishing the AHInformer mid-month.

AHI partners in Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Saratoga, St. Lawrence, Warren, and Washington counties are encouraged to send news items to communications@ahihealth.org to be considered for inclusion in the AHInformer.

This edition and past issues of the newsletter are available at <https://ahihealth.org/ahi-news/ahinformer/>.

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