



## Message from the Secretary

It was my pleasure and distinct honor to stand with Governor Wolf and others as Senate Bill 3, the Medical Marijuana Act (Act), was signed into law on April 17, 2016. This Act will provide long overdue medical relief to patients and families who could benefit from this treatment. Patients with serious medical conditions — who are residents of the commonwealth and have a physician's certification — will be able to obtain medical marijuana at dispensaries that hold valid permits from the department. Under the Act, there are 17 approved medical conditions that are permitted to be treated with medical marijuana.

We began working to implement the program the day after the law was signed in April.

I would like to share some of the work that has been done to date:

- We have developed a **vision statement, mission, and guiding principles** to lead us in our decision making as we work on implementing this program.
- We have started working on temporary regulations in order to meet the six-month publishing requirement under the statute. These temporary regulations will explain the program's operation, including how applications are to be submitted by growers/processors, dispensaries, caregivers, patients, physicians and laboratories.
  - Work is almost complete on drafting the first temporary regulation, which will allow parents and legal guardians of minors with serious medical conditions, as defined by the Act, to obtain medical marijuana outside of Pennsylvania before it is grown and available in the commonwealth.
  - We also began working on temporary regulations for growers and processors so that these entities can come on line as quickly as possible and begin growing and processing product.
  - We are planning to roll out the remaining temporary regulations sequentially for dispensaries and physicians, followed closely by requirements for the registration of caregivers and patients, then finally laboratories and medical research.
- We would like the public's input to assist us as we work on temporary regulations. A **10-question survey** on the growers/processors temporary regulations will be available on the department's medical marijuana webpage until June 15. We will continue to request public input via surveys each time we announce that work is commencing on various temporary regulations.
- We are also recruiting a program director for the medical marijuana program and anticipate having this individual in place this summer.

Thanks to everyone who supported this initiative and those who will play a critical role in its launch. As we move forward and more information on the Act becomes available, we will share updates on the department's website at [www.health.pa.gov](http://www.health.pa.gov).

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## Pennsylvania Zika Virus Response Plan

The **Pennsylvania Zika Virus Response Plan**, developed by the Pennsylvania departments of Health and Environmental Protection, outlines the phases of education, surveillance and response activities that will occur for various levels of mosquito activity within the commonwealth, as well as triggers based on the presence of Zika disease within our state.

The department will continue to work with our partners on the local, state and federal levels to keep Pennsylvanians safe. The roll-out of this plan is another proactive step in our collaborative strategy to protect our citizens and prevent the spread of the Zika virus.

For more information, visit [www.zika.pa.gov](http://www.zika.pa.gov).



## Naloxone Availability

In the last two months, Physician General Dr. Levine visited a number of Pennsylvania pharmacies to bring attention to the **Standing Order for the General Public** and encourage pharmacists to stock naloxone. Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can reverse the fatal effect of an overdose from a prescription opioid painkiller or heroin.

In 2015, Dr. Levine signed two standing order prescriptions for naloxone. The first gave first responders, like the Pennsylvania State Police and municipal police, the ability to obtain the medication. The second allowed the general public to obtain naloxone for themselves or a friend or family member. The Standing Order for the General Public allows any Pennsylvanian access to a prescription for naloxone from a participating pharmacy. Many pharmacies have the Standing Order on file, and residents can print it from the **DOH website**.



## “Smart Moves” Program Gets Moving in Bradford County School

From Feb. 29 through April 29, Bureau of Community Health Services nursing staff presented the Smart Moves program to the third grade students at the Towanda Elementary School. Smart Moves is a program in which a third grade class is given information on ways to be healthy each day. The instruction includes subjects like nutrition, calorie intake, exercise, fast food, food labels and bone health.

The Bureau of Community Health Systems, through the six health districts, operates a network of state health centers and supports public health programs throughout the commonwealth. Health centers engage in community health assessment and quality assurance activities and provide other public health services, including community integration and outreach programs, to promote healthy behaviors. **Find out more** about this bureau and its outreach.



## New Internal Department Website

The Department of Health launched a new internal website for employees -- a one stop source for department news, activities and resources.

Using employee input through surveys and focus groups, the department designed a site that engages employees, enhances department sense of community, supports employees in their day-to-day work activities and facilitates consistent communication throughout the department. The department will monitor site usage and seek feedback to continue to improve and enhance site features to meet the needs of the employees. Visit [www.healthhub.pa.gov](http://www.healthhub.pa.gov) for more information.





## “Don’t Wait. Vaccinate.” Campaign

The Department of Health (DOH) partnered with the Scranton School District to kick off its 2016 “Don’t Wait. Vaccinate.” campaign. Secretary of Health Dr. Karen Murphy read to kindergarten children at John G. Whittier Elementary School in Scranton and reminded parents to make getting their children’s vaccines a top priority before the end of the current school year.

Secretary Murphy explained that vaccines are not just for children and that immunization is a shared responsibility. Families, health care professionals, public health officials and schools must work together to help protect the entire community.

The department regularly schedules immunization clinics year round across the state. Evening and weekend hours are available at certain clinic locations. Parents whose children meet the immunization requirements must call 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258) to schedule an appointment.

For more information, visit [www.dontwaitvaccinate.pa.gov](http://www.dontwaitvaccinate.pa.gov).

## Pa. Physician General Dr. Rachel Levine Discussed Importance of Non-Discrimination Laws at Philadelphia City Hall

Pennsylvania Physician General Dr. Rachel Levine has been lauding the efforts by Governor Wolf to protect LGBT residents from discrimination. Speaking at various events around the state, Dr. Levine is urging lawmakers to pass legislation to help protect members of the LGBT community.

Governor Tom Wolf recently signed two executive orders that expanded protections from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender expression or identity for state employees and, for the first time, employees of contractors doing business with the commonwealth.



**The first executive order** says that no agency under the governor’s jurisdiction shall discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment on the basis of race, color, religious creed, ancestry, union membership, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, and identity, national origin, AIDS or HIV status, or disability.

**The second executive order** will ensure that all contracting processes of commonwealth agencies will be nondiscriminatory and that all businesses contracting with the commonwealth, as well as all grantees, should use nondiscriminatory practices in subcontracting, hiring, promoting and other labor matters.



## WalkWorks Program

In May, Secretary Karen Murphy joined Keystone State Games, Inc. (KSG) to underscore the importance of the department’s WalkWorks program, an initiative to increase physical activity throughout Pennsylvania by creating a network of fun, fact-filled, community-based walking routes and walking groups across the state.

There are currently more than 35 WalkWorks walking routes throughout Pennsylvania, including one in the Capitol Complex. At a May 17 event, Capitol Complex employees, members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly and community members participated in an approximate 1.5-mile walk on the Capitol Complex walking route.

For more information regarding WalkWorks’ walking routes and maps, visit [www.pawalkworks.com](http://www.pawalkworks.com).





# EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

## DOH Employee of the Month

### Shaun Elliott from the Bureau of Health Statistics and Registries



This month we recognize Shaun Elliot as the department’s Employee of the Month.

Shaun successfully developed a tool that permits users to look up birth and death certificate images by selecting a simple dropdown list. This has eliminated the need for employees to type in extra steps in order to retrieve a record. Now, through the click of a button, the image is brought up immediately. This important development will save steps and employee time. Shaun’s work demonstrates how each employee can align themselves with the department’s priorities. He is a shining example of the role we each play in moving this department forward.

Join us as we thank Shaun for all of his great efforts!

### Director of Health Equity Office



David Saunders recently joined the department as the director of Health Equity.

In addition to 25 years of non-profit management experience, David brings with him extensive knowledge in the fields of education, public health, disparities and youth development. He has collaborated on health disparity reduction initiatives, developed cutting edge programs targeting underserved communities and established state training institutes, collaborating with state, county and local officials.

He has a Bachelor of Science degree from Lincoln University and a Masters in Education from the Pennsylvania State University. He comes to us after serving as school health education consultant with the California Department of Education and having worked for the CMA Foundation/Sacramento and the American Cancer Society/Oakland.

Please take the opportunity to get to know David and extend a warm and sincere welcome to him as he joins our DOH community!

## YOU DID IT – Welcome to Mount Katahdin!

Kudos to all of the DOH teams that participated in the spring Appalachian Trail Challenge. From April 11 to June 5, teams walked/ran a virtual hike from Springer Mountain, Georgia to Mount Katahdin, Maine ... about 2,180 miles!



Congratulations to team “Just Move-DOH” who was the first DOH team to reach Mount Katahdin on Saturday, May 7. Each member, on this team of 11, averaged slightly more than 15,500 steps each day or almost 7.5 miles each day! “Just Move-DOH” enjoyed the challenge so much that they decided to do again. Yes, team members walked more than 4,360 miles (about 9,465,499 steps) in only eight weeks!

While this competition has ended, the DOH encourages everyone to keep moving because it’s good for your health and will help you to stay in shape for the next challenge. All are invited to explore Europe by walking or running the European Expedition in the fall. More details will be provided by the PBETF at a later date.



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## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



### June is Men's Health Month

The purpose of Men's Health Month is to heighten the awareness of preventable health problems and encourage early detection and treatment of disease among men and boys. This month gives health care providers, public policy makers, the media and individuals an opportunity to encourage men and boys to seek regular medical advice and early treatment for disease and injury.

Men should take special care to protect themselves from and educate themselves about **prostate cancer** and **testicular cancer**. Age, family history, race and other factors can greatly influence prostate and testicular cancer risks for men. Visit the department's webpage on **men's health** to learn more.



### May was National Physical Fitness and Sports Month

Regular physical activity is good for everyone's health, and people of all ages and body types can be physically active. National Physical Fitness and Sports Month is a great time to spread the word about the benefits of getting active.

People who are physically inactive are twice as likely as physically active people to develop heart disease. Regular physical activity substantially reduces the risk of dying from coronary heart disease, the nation's leading cause of death, and decreases the risk for stroke, colon cancer, diabetes and high blood pressure. It also helps to control weight; contributes to healthy bones, muscles and joints; reduces falls among older adults; helps to relieve the pain of arthritis; reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression; and is associated with fewer hospitalizations, physician visits and medications. To find out about resources and information the department has to keep you healthy and on the move, visit our **Healthy Living for all Pennsylvanians webpage**.



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## DID YOU KNOW?



### Fun Fact

Did you know that the elderly have proportionately less water in their bodies than the young? An elderly person weighing 150 pounds has about seven liters less water than a young person of the same weight. As temperatures rise in June and into summer, it is important for everyone to stay well hydrated, and drinking water before becoming dehydrated should be a high priority for people over the age of 65.

For tips about how to stay hydrated and cool this season, as well as to find where cooling stations are for older adults, please read the department's [hot weather safety tips](#).



### Department of Health News Available Online

Did you know that copies of all press releases can be found on the department's website? Visit [www.health.pa.gov](http://www.health.pa.gov).



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