

GOVERNOR'S PRESS OFFICE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Governor Unveils Maine's Public Health Infrastructure

A key achievement of Dirigo Health Reform

AUGUSTA – Governor John E. Baldacci today announced details about the emerging Maine public health system. Joined by Healthy Maine Partnerships members and the Public Health Work Group, the Governor said that the evolving system will lead to more efficient and effective delivery of health care statewide.

"The public health system is an integral part of Dirigo Health Reform, with the goal of making Maine the healthiest state in the nation," said Governor Baldacci. "We are maximizing resources and building collaborations that will yield better health for our citizens."

The Governor said health services will be better organized and delivered. Among the improvements, the Maine Centers for Disease Control is creating eight Public Health Units within Department of Health and Human Services regional offices. Health Inspectors, Public Health Nurses, and other staff will be located together in these health districts and will be able to be a better resource to the public.

Dr. Dora Mills, Director of the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said, "A statewide system of comprehensive community health coalitions now exists, funded by five combined sources of Federal and Tobacco Settlement funds. A true coordination between public health, disease prevention, mental health, substance abuse treatment, services to children and the elderly and others will be possible with the new public health infrastructure. The coalitions are working closely with school health programs in 41 school districts."

Another benefit of the emerging public health system is the maximizing of resources, stretching critical funding to meet the benefit of all Mainers. "With current consolidation efforts going on throughout government at all levels, I'm pleased to see that our public health community has worked hard to stretch

dollars to do more and cover more," said Governor Baldacci. "We've consolidated more than 100 grants and contracts that did not provide statewide coverage, to 28 statewide Healthy Maine Partnerships that will."

The Governor presented apple tree saplings to the Healthy Maine Partnerships present at the event today, symbolizing the foundation of a system with strong and seamless connections from local, regional, and state levels. "An apple a day is the symbol of good preventive health, but these saplings - like our emerging public health system - need to be nourished through the hard work of the people here today and the Healthy Maine Partnerships," said Governor Baldacci.

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