

News & Updates

The Massachusetts Public Health Nurse - Tier I Training Course is OPEN on the TRAIN Learning Network

We are grateful to Amy Tisdell, OLRH, for all her work to launch the course.

Thank you all for your patience!

Public Health Nursing Spotlight

Samantha Piragis, RN BSN

As the Public Health Nurse for the North Quabbin Health Collaborative, I serve five of Massachusetts's rural communities – Orange, New Salem, Petersham, Wendell and Warwick. Here I provide accessible, community-based public health services across the lifespan. My work focuses on meeting people where they are, strengthening prevention and education, and connecting residents with resources and care that otherwise may be difficult to access.



In 2025, I identified a significant gap in postpartum and perinatal support within our region and designed and launched the North Quabbin Postpartum Visiting Program. With additional grant funding, the program now provides free home visits to pregnant and postpartum families through a child's second birthday, offering nursing assessment, infant growth monitoring, screening for PMADs, lactation and feeding support, safe sleep education, infant CPR and first aid education, perinatal health education, and supportive connection during a major transition in families lives. Since its launch, the program has expanded beyond home visits to include community support groups, outreach events, partnerships with local organizations and distribution of practical supplies and educational materials.

Beyond the postpartum program, my public health nursing work focuses on the usuals of infectious disease surveillance and community education, but also Tick Education Workshops, CPR training, Harm Reduction education and supplies distribution, as well as providing flu and hand hygiene education to our younger elementary students. My goal is to make public health nursing accessible, visible and approachable, to bring services directly into the communities I serve in a way that serves them best.

The North Quabbin Health Collaborative receives funding from the Office of Local and Regional Health, Public Health Excellence Grant Program.

A Look Back in Time ...

Rabies [ra'bēz]

From the Latin rabere (to rage), which may have roots in the Sanskrit rabhas (to do violence). Acute progressive fatal encephalomyelitis caused by neurotropic viruses in the genus Lyssavirus—from the Greek lyssa (frenzy or madness). In Greek mythology, Lyssa was the goddess of rage, fury, and rabies, known for driving mad the dogs of the hunter Acteon and causing them to kill their master.

Rabies has been in the news this fall following a [CDC Health Alert in September](#) noting increased human exposure to rabid or presumed rabid mammals, including at least one large scale exposure event, and the unrelated [death of a child in Ontario, Canada](#). While exposure seems to have increased, human cases of rabies remain exceedingly rare. The last case of human rabies acquired in Massachusetts was in 2012 and prior to that was in 1935.

The connection between the bite of a rabid animal (dog) and human death has been recognized for at least 4,000 years. It was not until the late 1880's that Louis Pasteur, building on the work of others, developed a vaccine that proved effective in preventing rabies when given prior to signs of infection. The first human to receive Pasteur's live attenuated vaccine was Joseph Meister a 9 year old boy attacked by a rapid dog. He survived. Ongoing vaccine development over time resulted in safe and effective vaccine and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).



Rabies is a neurotropic virus transmitted primarily through saliva that enters the peripheral nervous system through a bite, scratch or existing wound. The virus attacks the central nervous system causing progressive encephalomyelitis leading to death. In the Massachusetts, bats, raccoons, and skunks are the primary sources of human rabies exposure. Throughout other parts of the world, dogs are often the primary source of human rabies exposure.

Bites or scratches from wild animals should be referred to the 24/7 MDPH Epidemiology Line for rabies risk assessment.
(617) 983-6800

Refer bites or scratches from domestic animals to local Animal Control.

Public Health Nurses work with MDPH State Epidemiologists, local Animal Inspectors, other local public health partners, residents and area clinicians to ensure residents are provided timely and accurate information, thorough risk assessment, and PEP when appropriate.

We encourage all local public health partners to review the MAVEN Training Resources for Local Public Health presented in June 2024.

- [Rabies Overview for Local Health Presentation Slides \(June 2024\)](#)
- [Rabies Overview for Local Health Recording \(June 2024\)](#)

References upon request

We've gotten several excellent questions about the role of the Public Health Nurse in responding to and managing potential exposure to rabies. Stayed tuned as we work on a Grand Rounds presentation to more thoroughly explore this topic!

Upcoming Webinars and Meetings

Communities of Practice & Networking Meetings

Monthly Maternal Child Health Workgroup: open to all local Public Health partners!

Meetings held on the 1st Tuesday of each month from 9:00 - 11:00am

Next meeting: [Tuesday October 6th](#)

New Nurse Network Quarterly Meeting: open to all new Public Health Nurses in Massachusetts.

Meetings held quarterly on the 2nd Tuesday of the month from 10:00 - 11:00 am

Next meeting: [Tuesday December 8th](#)

Monthly Regional SSA PHN Connection Group: a space to network and share resources.

Meetings held on the 2nd Monday of each month from 1:00 - 2:00pm

Next meeting: [Monday, November 9th](#)

Click the **dates** listed above for the meeting link.

For more information about recurring meetings email us at: lphnc-program@umass.edu

2026 Massachusetts Healthcare Summit

Coming together to strengthen rural and community health across the Commonwealth!

Tuesday, November 10th, 8:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Student Union Ballroom, UMass Amherst Campus

Join leaders in healthcare, higher education, government, public health, community health centers, long-term care, and assisted living to address one of the state's most pressing challenges: strengthening the workforce serving rural and medically underserved communities.

INFORMATION & REGISTRATION

The 4th Annual Healthcare Summit is free of charge, open to all, and includes breakfast & lunch.

We'll also see many of you at the MHOA Conference later this month. Registration is open for [Growing a New Heart's Pre-Conference Workshop Advancing Equity: Excellence in Action](#).

Resources and Training Opportunities



MAPHN has a **NEW** postal address! Please send all correspondence to:
68 Harrison Ave., Suite 645 PMB 5019, Boston, Massachusetts, 02111

2026-2027 Respiratory Illness Season Update Wednesday, October 7, 2026, 12:00 PM

[Click HERE for information and webinar registration.](#)

31st Annual MIAP Pediatric Immunization Skills Building Conference

Wednesday, November 4, 2026, 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Visit the [Conference Website](#) for more information and registration

Your Feedback is important to us! If you attended the last Grand Rounds titled ***Hoarding Disorder: A Case Study & the Role of the Public Health Nurse*** and have not yet completed the evaluation to obtain one (1) Nursing Contact Hour, there is still time!

We will close the link after October 7th: [Hoarding Webinar Evaluation and Contact Hour](#)

Massachusetts Public Health Nurse Resource Library (Padlet)

The PHN Resource Library is a dynamic compilation of resources to support Public Health Nurses and their colleagues. Please reach out with feedback or content suggestions. To explore the Library double click [HERE](#).

Not sure who to contact? Email us at: lpnhc-program@umass.edu
If you are not on our email list and would like to be added please fill out this [FORM](#).
[For more information about the LPHNC Program visit our webpage.](#)

Contact us:

Anne Mistivar, DNP, MSN, RN, LNC
Western Consultant
amistivar@umass.edu

Chassea Robinson, MPH, MSN, RN, CPH
Northeastern Consultant
chassearobin@umass.edu

Meg Burch, MS, RN, NCSN
Program Manager
mtburch@umass.edu

Tamara Bedard, BSN, RN
Central & Metro West Consultant
tbedard@umass.edu

Alyssa Kaiser, BSN, RN
Southeastern Consultant
ahkaiser@umass.edu

Ann Becker, RN, DNP, PHNL
Program Director
Annie@umass.edu