

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency to Close Sturgis Site

June 29, 2009

The budget cuts to Michigan Local Health Departments, contained in the May 5th Executive Order, have had a major impact on the operations of the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency, your local health department.

Funding Cuts Received

The funding reductions outlined in the revised 2008/09 State budget resulted in severe reductions to specific programs within the health agency. In addition to specific program cuts, the Health Agency also received a cut of \$34,732 to the Local Public Health Operation funding (LPHO) for the last quarter of the fiscal year ending September 30th 2009. LPHO dollars pay for mandated Public Health programs and are spread over the 7 essential programs that must be provided by public health; Hearing and Vision Screening, Immunizations, Communicable Disease Control, Sexually Transmitted Disease monitoring and testing, Food Service inspections, Septic System monitoring and the private drinking water monitoring program. These programs are critical in protection of the public health and reducing the incidence of disease. A current example of the importance of these funds is the public health response to the H1N1 outbreak and the costs associated with such a response. Without LPHO dollars, such a response would be limited at best.

Specific Cuts include:

Southern Michigan Diabetes Outreach Network (Diabetes Education) - (\$49,000)

AAA (Area Agency on Aging) – (\$32,000)

Healthy Beginnings - Branch & Hillsdale Program – (\$48,000)

Local Public Health Operations (public health required services block grant) (\$34,732)

Because of these funding cuts and the reduction in revenues from the fees that we collect, it has been necessary to lay staff off and reduce the hours of other employees.

Staffing Reductions by Program

Environmental Health Program - will be laying off 1 general EH field inspector. The remaining 5 general EH field inspectors will need to take 5 furlough days by the end of September.

Public Health Nursing Program - will be reducing the hours of 5 staff from full-time to 4 days per week.

Public Health Education - will be laying off 1 full-time staff in the Family Success Branch County program. SODON will be ending operations in August (rather than September 30)

AAA – will be reducing some staff from full-time to 4 days per week. The Single Point of Entry Program was eliminated.

Three Rivers Public Health Dental Clinic - the Medicaid Adult Dental Benefit is one of the main funding sources for the operation of the Three Rivers Public Health Dental Clinic. This

funding is scheduled to will be eliminated July 1st. As a result of this reduction in funding, the dental clinic will continue to operate at reduce staffing and hours.

Facility Reductions

The Community Health Agency currently operates 4 facilities across the 3 county Region; 1 in Hillsdale County, 1 in Branch County and 2 in St. Joseph County. Due to the limited number of services provided in the Sturgis facility and the costs associated in maintaining that facility, it was determined that the Sturgis office would be closed. Great care is being taken in notifying clients of the upcoming shift and clients can access services in either our Three Rivers site or our Coldwater site. Recent changes to the WIC program do not necessitate clients coming to our facilities as often which will lessen the burden on those clients. These changes will not come without some hardship; however, it is necessary to look at the cost and the benefit for all of our clients and how we can best serve the most with the resources that we have available.

Funding for 2009/10

The Community Health Agency has been told that the cuts that were made for the 4th quarter of this fiscal year are likely be applied to each of the 4 quarters of FY2009/10, which will certainly result in either the elimination or severe reduction of current public health programs.