

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

July 23, 2015

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BRANCH-HILLSDALE-ST. JOSEPH COMMUNITY HEALTH AGENCY PROTECTS THE TRI-COUNTIES FROM EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS THROUGH NATIONAL “PUBLIC HEALTH READY” RECOGNITION PROGRAM

Coldwater, MI. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency has been recognized by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) for its ability to plan for, respond to, and recover from public health emergencies. The local health department demonstrated these capabilities by meeting the comprehensive preparedness benchmarks required by Project Public Health Ready (PPHR), a unique partnership between NACCHO and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency joins a cohort of more than 400 local health departments across the country that have been distinguished for excellence in preparedness through PPHR, either individually or as part of a region.

“We are proud to have been recognized by Project Public Health Ready for our high level of preparedness,” said Steve Todd, Health Officer for the tri-county health department. “We will continue to improve our ability to quickly and effectively respond to public health crises in Branch, Hillsdale and St. Joseph Counties.”

PPHR recognition confirms that the health department has a thorough and coordinated emergency response plan in place and that staff have the training to protect

the health of the community during an emergency. Local health departments recognized by PPHR undergo a rigorous evaluation by peer review to assess their ability to meet a set of national standards for public health preparedness. These standards align with federal government requirements and other national best practices.

PPHR recognition also requires health departments to collaborate with their state, local, and community partners to develop plans that account for all the constituents in their jurisdictions. According to Jim Cook, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, “Our partners at the state, regional and local level are responsive and enthusiastic to assist and collaborate in order to assure that the community is protected and prepared.”

“When disaster strikes, it affects local communities, and local health departments are a critical part of any first response to disease outbreaks, emergencies, and acts of terrorism,” said Dr. LaMar Hasbrouck, NACCHO Executive Director. “NACCHO commends the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency for being a model of public health emergency preparedness.”

NACCHO, the voice of the 2,800 local health departments across the country, provides resources to help local health department leaders develop public health policies and programs to ensure that communities have access to vital programs and services that people need to keep them protected from disease and disaster. Its mission is to be a leader, partner, catalyst, and voice for local health departments in order to ensure the conditions that promote health and equity, combat disease, and improve the quality and length of all lives.

To learn more about the health department's emergency preparedness programming, visit our website at www.bhsj.org and click on the Emergency Preparedness button located on the left side bar. For more information on Project Public Health Ready, including recognized sites, project tools, and resources, visit <http://www.naccho.org/PPHR>.

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