

PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE STUDY COMMITTEE FINAL REPORT (NOV. 2009)

The Public Health Nurse Study Committee presented its report to ATM 2009, as authorized by vote of the March 29, 2008 ATM. Based on survey data, research into 13 neighboring towns, and the experience of the Committee's representatives from five relevant Lincoln agencies plus five volunteers, the Committee unanimously approved a proposal to expand the current role of Lincoln's public health nurse (filled by the Lincoln School Nurse) from communicable disease prevention, reporting, and control to include health promotion and community emergency planning, in cooperation with other Town agencies, as follows:

1. Provide bi-weekly blood pressure clinics and expand health screening and immunization clinics as needed;
2. Present expanded health and wellness promotion programs and materials, in collaboration with other Lincoln agencies;
3. Provide health counseling, referrals, and serve as liaison to physicians and health care agencies for those who need these services;
4. Conduct home health and safety assessments, if not otherwise covered by insurance;
5. Make occasional home visits to check on homebound chronically ill residents or residents with disabilities; and
6. Participate with other Town representatives in local emergency planning, including recruiting, training, and coordinating both medical and non-medical volunteer emergency responders.

The Committee recommended contracting with a regional health services provider at an estimated additional annual cost to the Town of \$20,000, or roughly \$11.00 per average Lincoln household. Reporting to the Lincoln Board of Health, this dedicated, part-time public health nurse position (10 to 12 hours per week) would supplement the fine private medical services we already enjoy from local doctors and regional hospitals.

The Board of Health approved a two-year pilot of this proposal. While recognizing that the proposal had merit, the Fincom and Board of Selectmen did not prioritize it high enough to fit the estimated \$20,000 cost into the proposed 2010 Town budget, which was tight due to the economic downturn.

The Committee hopes that its proposal will be reconsidered by Town officials when revenues improve and that the CLRP Implementation Committee will add public health to its agenda. Meanwhile, we're pleased that the Fire Department will be training volunteer Citizen Emergency Response Teams (CERTs), under the federal/state program, to assist in neighborhoods in case of future emergencies.

Members of the Committee were: Peggy Schmertzler, M.Ed., and Joanna Hopkins, Ph.D., co-chairs; Diane Haessler, R.N., N.P., Board of Health; Mary Sheldon, M.D., LCOA Board; Maureen Richichi, R.N., School Health Unit; Rob Loud, M.Ed., MLS, Commission on Disabilities; Arthur Cotoni, Fire Chief; Beth Ries, Chair, Friends of the

LCOA; Tricia McGean, R.N.; and Phyllis Mutschler, Ph.D., Serving as advisors were Karen Santucci, Director, LCOA, LSW, MSLS, and Charles Keevil, M.D.