2020 Healthy Ulster Council Annual Report

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The Healthy Ulster Council (HUC) is a coalition of community agencies and organizations that meet bi-monthly to foster communications, awareness, and potential synergies in and among organizations and individuals working on various aspects of community wellness and prevention. The mission of HUC is to strengthen collaboration between organizations working to promote wellness, prevent illness and improve health outcomes through collective action and projects.

2020 was a pivotal year for the Healthy Ulster Council. The January meeting was held as usual, but by March the COVID 19 pandemic began in earnest in New York State. In an abundance of caution, the March 12 meeting was cancelled the day prior. The Governor closed all schools statewide on March 16, and a statewide shutdown began on March 20. Like many community meetings Healthy Ulster transitioned to an online format. The Council meetings, which always have a professional development and networking component, became a conduit for important sharing of relevant information during the pandemic with the many professionals attending meetings. Pertinent information could then be utilized in ones profession, or disseminated with clients and the general public where applicable.

There was an overall increase in attendance at meetings in 2020, with many new agencies and organizations attending meetings. The Zoom format was widely accepted, and seemed to allow for more people to incorporate meetings into their schedules. The timeframe for the meeting was shortened from 2 hours to 1.5 hours to accommodate the online format.

The 2020 Annual Report summarizes the outcomes of Council meetings, networking opportunities, collective action, and communications. It also includes an update on the status of the Inventory for Health. The report is organized into 4 sections: Healthy Ulster Council Meetings, Collective Action, Communications, and the Inventory for Health. In addition, a list of the 2020 participating agencies and organizations as well as meeting photos have been included. There are 3 Appendices to the report, which include 2020 HUC Meeting Attendance, 2020 HUC Constant Contact List Updates, and the 2020 Inventory for Health Assessment Tool.

I. Healthy Ulster Council Meetings

In 2020, in a partnership with the Ulster County Department of Health, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County provided coordination and facilitation for **5 bi-monthly Healthy Ulster Council meetings**. There are typically 6 bi-monthly meetings, however the cancellation of the March 12 meeting due to the pandemic reduced the number of meetings from 6 to 5 this year. **Eighty three professionals from 44 organizations** attended these meetings for the purposes of professional development, networking and collective action (see Appendix A). Overall attendance increased as compared to 2019 where 66 professionals from 33 organizations attended, but was similar when compared to 2018 where 82 professionals from 40 organizations attended. The 2020 average meeting attendance was 27 persons per meeting.

Healthy Ulster Council meetings provided an opportunity for professional development, including presentations sharing important information announcements relevant to the pandemic and the economic crisis affecting many families in Ulster County. Meetings also included break out sessions to share and discuss strategies for outreach and recrutiment for the many educational programs and assitance offered by agencies and organizations that serve the County's residents. Facilitated networking sessions were implemented at meetings to provide an opportunity for sharing services among meeting participants. Healthy Ulster Council meetings generally include healthy snacks as well as movement breaks to demonstrate how to easily incorporate health and wellness in meetings, and within the office, and did so in January. Meetings offered online during the pandemic included movement breaks stressing the importance of taking breaks during long hours online.

A. **Professional Development** at HUC meetings provides the opportunity to share important information and resources with participating agencies and organizations. The Council often serves as an important conduit for sharing information from Ulster County Departments and in 2020 included presentations by the Ulster County Department of Social Services, the Ulster County Department of Health and Mental Health, the Ulster County Office of the Executive, the Ulster County Department of Environment and the Ulster County Office of Employment and Training. This was especially important during a year of pandemic where pertinent information for residents was shared with participating professionals from 44 agencies and organizations. Topics included *Heap and Code Blue*, *Addressing the Ulster County COVID 19 Crisis*, *Ulster County Project Resilience*, *Employment and Training in Ulster County During COVID19*, and *COVID Testing in Ulster County*. Additional professional development was provided by guest presenters from 5 other agencies and organizations that work within Ulster County. Topics included the *Community Energy Engagement Program*, *An Update on the Ulster County Inventory for Health Assessment*, *Hudson Valley Hospice Services*, Get Out the Census, *Cancer Navigation at IFH*, and *The Hudson Valley Center for Reintegration*. All these professional development presentations are listed below in chronological order:

2020 HEALTHY ULSTER COUNCIL PRESENTATIONS

1. **"HEAP and Code Blue"** presented by Michael Iapoce; Commissioner at the Ulster County Department of Social Services

2. **"Community Energy Engagement Program"** presented by Collin Adkins; Environment and Energy Resource Educator at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Dutchess County

3. **"Addressing the Ulster County COVID 19 Crisis"** presented by Vin Martello; Director of Community Health Relations at the Ulster County Department of Health & Mental Health/Director of Opioid Prevention Strategy for the UC Executive's Office

4. **"Ulster County Project Resilience"** presented by Evelyn Wright; Deputy County Executive of Ulster County and Amanda LaValle; Coordinator of the Ulster County Department of the Environment

5. **"Employment and Training in Ulster County During COVID 19"** presented by Tomasine Oliphant; Director of the Ulster County Office of Employment and Training

6. **"Update on the Ulster County Inventory for Health Assessment"** presented by Melinda Herzog, Healthy Communities Program Leader at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County

7. **"Making Every Moment Count-Overview of Hudson Valley Hospice Services",** presented by Sophia Sciacca; Provider Relations Representative at Hudson Valley Hospice

8. **"COVID Testing in Ulster County", presented by** *Hillary Harvey; Ulster County Innovation Team at the Ulster County Office of the Executive*

9. **"Get Out the Census", presented by** *Tara Kleinhans; PR& Development Manager at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County*

10. **"Cancer Navigation at IFH", presented by** *Katie Bierlein; Regional Director of Care Coordination; & Sean Campbell; Cancer Navigator at the Institute for Family Health*

11. **"The Center", presented by** *Kevin Keaveny; Executive Director and Gavin Walters; Program Manager at The Hudson Valley Center for Veteran Reintegration*

B. **Networking** and promoting synergies among health and wellness agencies and organizations is one of the goals of HUC. Opportunities for networking were provided at meetings, via 30 minute facilitated networking sessions where participants shared upcoming programs and events. These sessions were implemented at the January, May, September and November meetings. Additional opportunities for sharing programs and events were provided via the Chat feature of Zoom at the May, July, September and November meetings. Program sharing was captured in the meeting notes for each Council meeting and posted on the www.healthyulstercounty.org website. Agencies and organizations are always encouraged to share flyers, brochures, cards and program materials at each meeting, and to utilize the events page of www.healthyulstercounty.org website and the Healthy Ulster Council Google Group for a greater reach.

C. **Healthy Meeting Behavior** was incorporated into all Healthy Ulster Council meetings and included both healthy snacks and a 5-10 minute physical activity break at the January meeting. With the advent of online HUC meetings, participants were reminded of the purpose of practicing healthy meeting behaviors at each meeting, and consumption of healthy snacks was suggested. Physical activity breaks included youtube videos, as well as exercises and movement games led by Melinda Herzog, the HUC Coordinator, and Healthy Communities Program Leader at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County, and Katie Sheehan-Lopez, the SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County. Movement breaks included:

1. **Brainbreak,** led by Katie Sheehan Lopez

2. **Stretch Breaks**, led by Melinda Herzog

3. **3 Minute Office Yoga** - You Tube

II. Collective Action

Participants at HUC meetings are primarily professionals from municipal departments and non-profits, most of whom provide programs and assistance to Ulster County residents. Outreach for recruitment for programs, whether online or in person was a limiting factor for participation in 2020 due to the pandemic. The online July meeting of the Healthy Ulster Council included a break-out session to collectively discuss and problem solve outreach and recruitment. Twenty-seven attendees were divided into 5 groups to discuss the top 3 concerns that they have regarding outreach and recruitment and 3 ways their agencies and organizations are working to recruit new clients or conduct outreach.

The top concerns generated by the working groups were:

Concerns

- Tech issues
- Lack of access to technology
- Safety/confidentiality
- Lack of motivation of participants to follow through
- Different degrees of comfort with social distancing
- Focus on kids being home and no extra time for personal development

The top ways to recruit new clients and/or conduct outreach generated by the working groups were:

Ways to Recruit New Clients or Conduct Outreach

- Different virtual options, zoom, skype, webinars
- Using social media to advertise
- Using mailings, yard signs
- Incentives and giveaways
- Online groups
- Walking groups
- Meeting outdoors in small groups
- Changing the definition of success
- Text messaging
- Instagram
- Microsoft teams
- Snail mail
- Review zoom options for confidentiality- mute, virtual backgrounds, no video.

III. Communications

CCEUC sent all meeting announcements and communications for the Healthy Ulster Council through Constant Contact and the Healthy Ulster County Google Group. Information was also shared via the Bringing Agencies Together and the Ulster County Human Services listservs. **There are currently 484 contacts listed on the Healthy Ulster Constant Contact listserv**. The list is updated bi-monthly, with **40 new contacts** added in 2020, and 1 **removed** (See Appendix B). New members are added upon attending a Healthy Ulster Council meeting and by request. **There are 143 members in the Healthy Ulster Google Group, with an increase of 88 contacts in 2020.** Use of the healthyulstercounty.org/ website was promoted at Council meetings and on the bi-monthly meeting announcements with reminders to review meeting notes, presenters' power points, and data shared at Council meetings. Members were also encouraged to list their events on the event page of the site.

IV. Inventory for Health

The Inventory for Health is a catalog of local policies and programs addressing the social determinants of health. The Inventory is a living document which requires continual updates. In 2020 the New Assessment Tool for the Inventory for Health developed in 2019 was sent out to the 2020 Healthy Ulster Council meeting attendees, public and private schools, and municipal environmental groups to collect data to update the Ulster County Inventory for Health. The Inventory for Health was designed to align directly with the Robert Wood Johnson "What Works for Health" policies and programs http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health. These strategies are a menu of tools, policies, and programs that can be used locally to improve health outcomes. The new Assessment Tool has likewise been designed to align directly with the language and descriptions included the RWJF What Works for Health Policies and Programs, and has been divided into 12 Health Factor sections. These include:

1. Alcohol and Drug Use
2. Diet and Exercise
3. Sexual Activity
4. Access to Care
5. Quality of Care
6. Social and Economic Factors
7. Education
8. Employment
9. Family and Social support
10. Income
11. Air and Water Quality
12. Housing and Transit

Community agencies, organizations and schools were asked to self identify which health factors are relevant to the policies and programs that they work on in Part 1 of the Assessment. In Part 2 of the Assessment participants were asked to review the section in the Inventory Assessment for each of the relevant health factors which they identified, to determine which policies and programs align with policies and programs they engage in. For each policy or program selected they are asked to list the name of their program.

The new Assessment Tool is a far more accurate instrument in updating the Inventory for Health, as the language used in the Assessment Tool aligns directly with the language in the Inventory for Health. Specific policies and programs are chosen by the participant and do not require any interpretation by the administrator of the instrument.

Although the new Assessment Tool was much improved, the rate of particpation in the Assessment was low for all groups. The reason for the low rate of return is yet unknown, but it has been assumed that schools were too overwhelmed by the transition and maintanence of new education delivery formats as a result of the pandemic to participate. A follow up phone call with identified point persons was made to municipal environmental groups and public and private schools to improve the response rate. Healthy Ulster Council attendees were reminded to complete the tool at the July and November meetings of the Council.

Because the return rate was low, the decision was made to maintain the information collected by other means on the 2019 Inventory for Health update in the 2020 update until more survey instruments are returned. The information collected using the new Assessment Tool was recorded in blue and was bolded on the 2020 update. (See Appendix C).

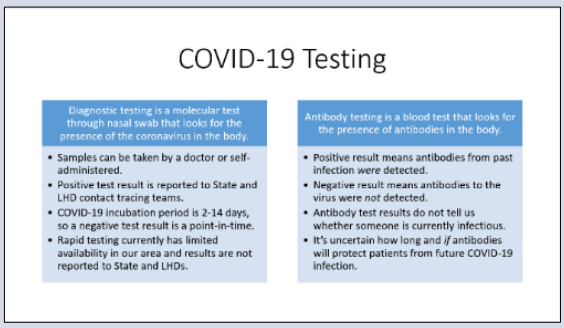
2020 Healthy Ulster Council Participating Organizations

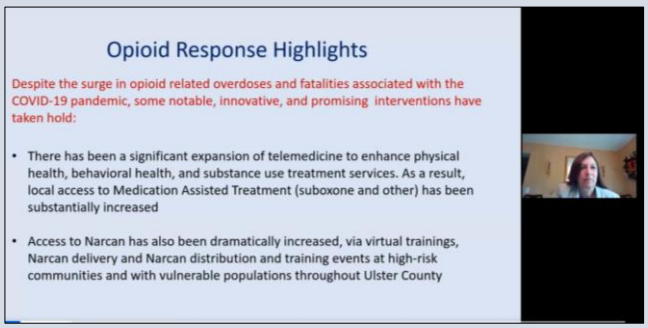
1. Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition
2. American Lung Association
3. ARC Mid-Hudson
4. Bard Center for Civic Engagement
5. City of Kingston Health and Wellness
6. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Dutchess County
7. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County
8. Cornerstone Family Healthcare
9. Ellenville Regional Hospital
10. Family of Woodstock
11. Gateway Hudson Valley
12. Health Alliance of the Hudson Valley
13. Health Insurance NYS Marketplace
14. HealtheConnections
15. Hitch.org/ Breast & Prostate Cancer Education
16. Hudson Valley Hospice
17. Hudson Valley Center for Veteran Reintegration
18. Institute of Family Health
19. JFS
20. LaVoz
21. Maternal Infant Services Network
22. Mental Health Association Ulster County Inc.
23. Mid Hudson Problem Gambling
24. Mountainkeeper
25. New Visions
26. People USA
27. RCAL
28. Rochester Reformed Church
29. Rose Women's Care Service
30. Shop Rite
31. SUNY Ulster Health & Safety
32. TFAC
33. Ulster County Executive's Office
34. Ulster County Community Action
35. Ulster County Department of Environment
36. Ulster County Department of Health and Mental Health
37. Ulster County Department of Social Services
38. Ulster County Innovation Team
39. Ulster County Mental Health Association
40. Ulster County Office of the Aging
41. Ulster County Probation Department
42. Ulster County BOCES Volunteer
43. Ulster Publishing
44. Villa Veritas, Inc

2020 Healthy Ulster Council Photos

Meeting at UCDOH&MH in Kingston

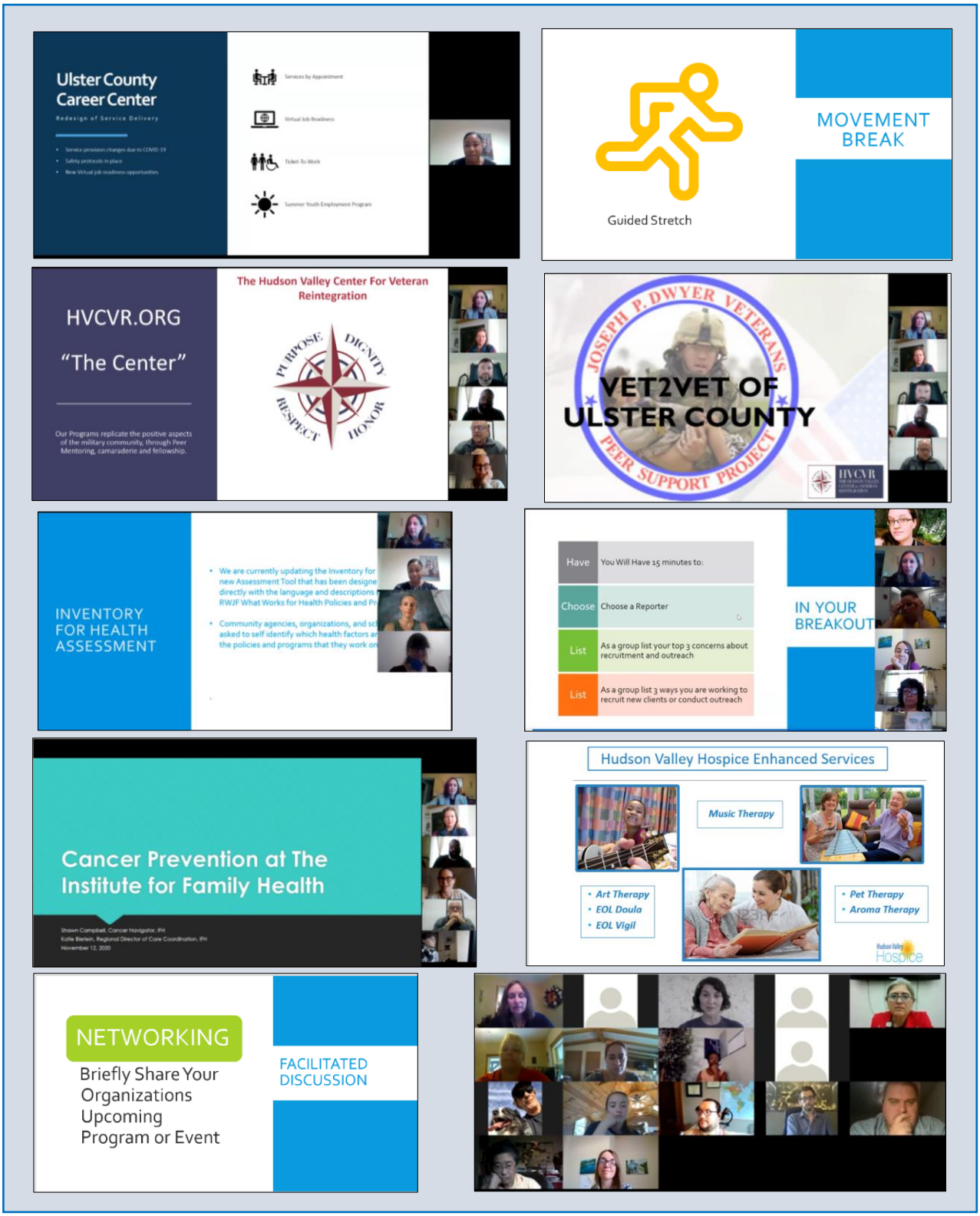
Zoom Meeting & Presentation Photos





Vision: *We envision our county as a place where a strong culture of health supports healthy lifestyles for people of different socioeconomic backgrounds.*

Mission: *The Healthy Ulster Council strengthens collaboration between organizations working to promote wellness, prevent illness, and improve health outcomes through collective action and projects.*



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