

MEDIA RELEASE

DATE: April 17, 2017

END DATE: May 9, 2017

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RE: 11th Annual Genesee County Health Department Public Health Conference
“Advancing Policy, Justice, and Community Engagement”

The Genesee County Health Department announces its 11th Annual Public Health Conference to be held on Tuesday, May 9, 2017, from 8am-4:30pm, at the Riverfront Banquet Center, 1 Riverfront Plaza in Flint, Michigan. The conference is entitled, “Advancing Policy, Justice, and Community Engagement”.

Social justice issues, such as mass incarceration, environmental rights, and early childhood suspension and expulsion, are not thought to be connected to the public’s health, when in fact, everything impacts the public’s health. Social justice issues are no exception. Many social injustices seen today are consequences of policies that were likely not viewed through a health equity lens before being implemented. The Genesee County Health Department is focused on applying the Health Equity In All Policies approach in Genesee County to ensure that policy decisions promote health equity and have a neutral or positive impact on the public’s health. This change in how policies are created and implemented also includes involvement and active participation of the community members who are directly impacted by the effects of those policies.

Since last year’s Annual Public Health Conference, which initiated the idea of Health Equity In All Policies for many, the Genesee County Health Department has been very active in implementing the approach in Genesee County. Milestones for 2017, include the passing of a Health Equity In All Policies resolution and Tobacco 21 regulation by the Genesee County Board of Commissioners. The Genesee County Health Department will continue this momentum through inspiring and thought provoking presentations at this year’s conference. Genesee County Health Department Director and Health Officer, Mark Valacak, states, “The built environment—the places where we live, work, play and learn have an effect on health. We must examine through a health equity lens the role of tools like regulations, plans, zoning laws and ensure they work to create and develop healthier communities.”

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Attendees of the conference, health professionals, and political leaders, will examine Health Equity In All Policies, explore the health impacts of social injustices, and learn how to advance community engagement around these very important local and national movements.

The conference will feature keynote speaker Peggy Sheppard, co-founder and executive director of WE ACT For Environmental Justice in New York City. Peggy who will address environmental justice and implementation of Health Equity In All Policies. Opening speaker Alan Walts, Director, Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance, EPA, Region 5, will present the College/Underserved Community Partnership Program being implemented in Flint. Closing speakers Maya Shankar, former White House Policy Advisor, and her colleagues Will Tucker, and Nathaniel Higgins will discuss addressing distrust in communities. Other sessions led by local, state, and national experts will address: Environmental Literacy, The School to Prison Pipeline, Flint ReCAST Grant, A Collective Impact Breastfeeding Project, Food Justice, Tobacco 21 Implementation, Public Health and Mass Incarceration, the Flint Center for Health Equity Solutions, and the Healthy Flint Research Coordinating Center.

Genesee County Health Department's Public Health Conference is an opportunity for local and state public health officials, health care professionals, school officials and students, community members, and community-based organizations to expand their knowledge, discuss current and future issues important to the public's health, and explore strategies that could improve these conditions. By using the concepts of Health Equity In All Policies, everyone from community members to policy makers will be able to to strengthen their roles, and those of their organizations and communities, in improving community and individual health and quality of life.

Many conference speakers will be available for interviews the day of the event. Genesee County Health Department staff members are available for interviews before the event to discuss the conference and its objectives. The conference is free, and registration is now open. Conference meals, materials, and parking are included. **For registration, please visit www.gchd.us. For more information, please contact Brad Snyder – bsnyder@gchd.us.**

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