



Newsletter Fall 2011

Here's a quick update on VtPHA happenings. For more timely information check our website: www.vtpha.org or friend us on Facebook: <http://www.vtpha.org/facebook>

Join Us in Updating our Strategic Plan and Setting Our Priorities

We will be meeting on Wednesday, **Sept. 14th at UVM 104 Rowell** to discuss how we can sharpen our focus and activities in the coming year. Central to this discussion is how we increase the value of VtPHA to our members. In preparation, please bring your thoughts and answers to the following questions:

- ***What do you value about your involvement with VtPHA?***
- ***What do you hope to get from your continued involvement?***
- ***What do you hope to contribute to the organization?***

If you cannot join us on the 14th, send your thoughts in advance. VtPHA's strength lies in our members, volunteers, and activists. Your voice and your involvement are necessary to create a healthy Vermont and vibrant organization. Snacks and chat begin at 5:15; the meeting will run from 5:30 – 7:30.

VtPHA to set Public Policy Agenda for 2011-2012

Here's the plan to update our public policy agenda and identify our key issues for this legislative session:

1. Survey members by the end of September to identify public policy priorities.
2. Convene VtPHA subcommittee to draft policy statements to support member priorities.
3. Host a public policy gathering, in January, with our allies and organizational partners

Please let us know if you would like to be part of the public policy subcommittee or like VtPHA to consider additional issues.

VtPHA Continues the Conversation on Health Disparities

VtPHA members gathered in July to share our experiences and thoughts on health disparities. We identified three immediate actions to continue and broaden the conversation about disparities:

1. Draft a policy statement to guide VtPHA work and communicate to others the importance of addressing the root causes of health and health disparities
2. Assist the Vermont Department of Health in broadly disseminating the *Health Disparities in Vermont* report and creating public awareness of disparities
3. Identify opportunities to bring the message to local and state community and economic development partners

VtPHA Welcomes Two New Board Members

Joyce Gallimore, MPH and **Lila Fuller**, RN have joined the Board of Directors and bring great new energy, expertise and ideas to the organization.



2010-2011 Public Policy Issues

Reform Vermont's Health System

VtPHA will monitor the implementation of Vermont's health care reform efforts. VtPHA believes that health insurance coverage should be extended to all Americans. Under a reformed health care system, coverage should be universal, continuous, affordable, effective, efficient, safe, timely, patient-centered and equitable. Changing how we finance medical care is necessary to achieve expanded access to health care services but insufficient if we want to improve the health of Vermonters. VtPHA supports effort to ensure a robust public health infrastructure that focuses on disease prevention and health promotion and informs our approach to health services.

Expanding Access to Dental Care

VtPHA supports access to preventive and therapeutic oral care for all Vermonters. VtPHA supports initiatives that expand access to screening, routine preventive care and appropriate restorative care. Expanding access to dental care could be achieved through a number of different mechanisms: parity for access to dental care as part of the state's health care reform effort; expansion of the Tooth Tutor program; and Dr. Dynasaur dental coverage extended to eligible pregnant and nursing mothers.

Ensure Child Firearm Safety

VtPHA supports the passage of H.737: An Act Related to Negligent Storage of a Firearm—This Act is also known as Aaron's Law. <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/docs/2010/Bills/Intro/H-737.pdf> This bill (named after Aaron in his memory) is similar to [CAP laws](#) (Child Access Prevention from Firearms) that currently exist in 28 states, but not in Vermont. This bill requires gun owners to securely store firearms at home when children are around, and proposes to make it a crime for a gun owner to negligently leave a firearm accessible to a child.

Prevent and Reduce Tobacco Use

Vermont Public Health Association has signed on to a resolution sponsored by the Coalition for a Tobacco Free Vermont to increase the cigarette tax by at least \$1.00 to fund state programs that will advance the health of Vermont citizens and sustain Vermont's Tobacco Control Program.

<http://www.tobaccofreevermont.org/>

Promote Healthy Weight and Fund Obesity Prevention Efforts

VtPHA has joined the Alliance for a Healthier Vermont in support of H. 151 to ask the Vermont Legislature to pass a penny an ounce excise tax on sugar sweetened beverages (SSBs) such as soda, sweetened iced teas, sports drinks, energy drinks, fruit juices or drinks with added sugar, and flavored water. VtPHA urges that the revenue raised be earmarked for evidence-based obesity prevention efforts and their evaluation.



Protect Children from Chemical Exposures

VtPHA supports comprehensive chemical reform beginning with a bill to prioritize the most harmful chemicals, require the use of cost-effective, safer alternatives and honor the consumer's right to know. The bill would establish a statewide system for identifying and regulating the most harmful chemicals in children's products. It would require ANR to identify a list of chemicals of high concern, identify priority chemicals from that list, and target those priority chemicals for the potential phase out of children's products.

VtPHA also supports efforts to reduce children's exposure to chemicals and irritants by ensuring the use of cost effective, less-toxic cleaning products in schools. This bill would require all schools in VT to use 3rd party certified environmentally preferable cleaning products. This would be cost-neutral for schools and is something that our state buildings are already required to do.

Protect Respiratory Health by Preventing Air Pollution

VtPHA supports efforts to eliminate unnecessary idling of vehicles 10,000 pounds or greater. Vermont is the only state in the Northeast that does not restrict unnecessary truck idling. VtPHA is working with the American Lung Association of Vermont on legislation for this session.

Together we can make a difference!

VtPHA is working in close collaboration with a number of other organizations leading the way of a variety of issues affecting the health of Vermonters. We encourage our members to check out the efforts of the following organizations: AARP VT, Alliance for Clean and Healthy Vermont, Alliance for a Healthier Vermont, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, Hunger Free Vermont, Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, and Voices for Vermont's Children