

## **GREATER SULLIVAN COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH NETWORK FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **SULLIVAN COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH NETWORK ENGINEERING A REVOLUTIONARY, GRASSROOTS STRATEGY TO MORE EFFICIENTLY ADDRESS HOME HEALTH ISSUES**

UNITY, NH —The Greater Sullivan County Public Health Network (PHN) announced the official launch of its Healthy Homes “*One-Touch*” program, a coordinated approach to safety that enhances home visits made by public and private workers. One-Touch connects groups involved in health and welfare with those who make various types of home visits so that they may advise one another on potential hazards and threats to families, particularly children and the elderly. The program seeks to correct lead paint poisoning hazards and more before they affect our health.

“There are so many people who could serve as an extra pair of eyes for local groups concerned with health and welfare,” said Jessica McAuliff, regional coordinator of the Greater Sullivan County Public Health Network. “Currently, if people such as visiting nurses go into homes to take care of clients, they may not be aware of home hazards that could be affecting the other people in the home, especially children.”

McAuliff hopes to change this with One-Touch. “Everyone from lead paint experts to carpet installers needs to be involved.”

The goal of One-Touch is to have experts on home health and safety educate home visitors so the visitors have the resources to make referrals when they see potential threats. Eventually we’ll have a standardized One-Touch form with simple questions. For example, a nurse who is there to take blood pressure could recognize dangerous peeling lead paint and connect that family with someone who could have it removed and replaced at little or no cost. That could mean a child’s life spared. They could refer people to subsidized weatherization programs, get them batteries for their smoke detectors... the list goes on and on.

Thomas de Masi oversees the launch of the Healthy Homes One-Touch program in Greater Sullivan County. The region extends into Merrimack County through Wilmot. “It’s profoundly innovative and efficient,” he said. “It’s a state-sponsored program, but it allows private citizens and not-for-profit groups to collaborate and determine what threats exist to local families and how to solve them based on their own findings. One-Touch is 100 percent voluntary. The taxpayers who fund the New Hampshire health system and the families who benefit from it all have something to be very happy about.”

New Hampshire’s program is the first statewide initiative of its kind in the country. The Greater Sullivan County PHN was awarded a \$60,000 grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and The NH State Department of Health and Human Services Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention

Program. The three-year grant is a significant leap in the progress of expanding Public Health activities in the Sullivan County area. It funds One-Touch.

The City of Manchester implemented their One-Touch program in 2010. In its first year, the Manchester One-Touch questionnaire was administered in 117 homes, all of which were given some sort of referral to public and private groups. Those administering the questionnaire found that the extra 15 minutes it added to their home visits were trivial.

“We’re meeting again soon and want to get everyone involved,” de Masi added. He stressed that anyone who visits a home, or could use the information of someone who visits a home to better the community through their organization, should contact the Sullivan County Public Health Network at 603-542-9511 ext. 326, or email [healthyhomes@sullivancountynh.gov](mailto:healthyhomes@sullivancountynh.gov). The next strategic planning meeting will be held from 5-7 p.m., Thursday, May 17, at the Newport Library Arts Center at 55 N. Main Street in Newport.