

Rockland will give region \$1M health exam

By Jane Lerner

The Journal News • February 12, 2009

RAMAPO - The Rockland County Department of Health has been awarded the largest share of \$13.8 million in state grants for projects designed to make the health-care system more efficient.

The county's share will be a total of \$1 million over two years, said county Commissioner of Health Joan Facelle. Rockland will use the money to do regional planning and look at health issues in a seven-county area, including Westchester, Putnam, Orange, Dutchess, Sullivan and Ulster.

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"We are trying to align the health-care resources that we have with the needs of the community," said Oscar Alleyne, an epidemiologist with Rockland's Department of Health. He will work with the Hudson Valley Regional Health Officer Network, a group of the health commissioners of the seven-county area.

A big part of the project funded with the grant will be creating a regional performance-monitoring tool to gather and track information, he said.

"The regional performance-monitoring tool is designed to motivate continuous and sustainable improvement" in the seven-county region's ability to respond to public health needs, according to the grant application.

Alleyne, who is enrolled in a doctoral program in the School of Public Health at New York Medical College, will coordinate the project with professors at the Valhalla school. Professors Deborah Viola and Peter Arno will serve as principal investigators for the two-year project.

The project will focus on health needs and how services are delivered.

"We want to come up with a process that helps improve outcomes," Viola said.

The project will be done at the same time as counties complete their 2010 Community Health Assessment, which is required by the state. Doing both at the same time will make it easier for researchers to get the data.

"We won't be reinventing the wheel," Viola said.

Alleyne will collect much of the data. The Rockland Department of Health likely will hire a part-time clerical worker to help with the effort. That person's salary will be paid from the grant.

The \$1 million grant is part of the \$13.8 million that Gov. David Paterson announced this week would be award to health departments and agencies throughout New York by the state Department of Health.

The Health Care Efficiency and Affordability Law for New Yorkers is administered by state agencies and the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York.

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