



# Strategic Plan 2016-2018

Edwin J. Day  
County Executive

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Commissioner of Health

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January 4, 2016

Dear Rockland County resident:

As most of you know, the quality of life and the health and well-being of those who live, work and play in Rockland County are impacted by how neighborhoods are built and whether our residents can fairly access services, facilities and amenities. With this in mind, my administration has worked proactively, and in partnership, with local elected officials, physicians and community organizations to create an environment where the healthy choice is the easy choice for everyone.

The Rockland County Department of Health's 2016 – 2018 Strategic Plan is a roadmap for the agency on how to remain a vital part of an effective public health system today and into the future. In order to achieve this purpose, we must commit to doing all we can to ensure that there is an adequate and competent workforce, and that we are collaborating with our partners to create community environments that promote healthy lifestyles and the prevention of injury and disease.

This Strategic Plan is intended to be a practical, descriptive document designed to reflect our priorities and demonstrate how we apply our resources to improve the public's health. It's a "living document" intended to change as necessary to ensure the well-being of the people we serve.

I fully adopt this important Plan and commend our skilled Department of Health professionals for their dedication to improving the quality of our work in order to achieve the shared vision of a healthier Rockland County.

Cordially,



Edwin J. Day  
Rockland County Executive

## Introduction

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*“No other entity has the legal mandate or universal charge to protect and enhance the public’s health. There is no substitute.”*

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Rockland County was organized in 1798 and is approximately 33 miles northwest of Manhattan and is bordered by Orange County to the north and west, Bergen County, New Jersey to the south and the Hudson River to the east. Pursuant to the provisions of Local Law 14 of 1984, the County adopted a charter form of government in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Home Rule Law of New York State. The County Executive is the chief executive officer responsible for the administration of all County affairs. The County Legislature is the legislative, appropriating and policy determining body of the County.

In 1955, the Rockland County Department of Health was initiated and the first Commissioner of Health was appointed to this position. At that time, the total population of the county was 89,276 and today the total population is 320,000. Through the years, the health department invested significant energy and resources in developing services and programs. We were the “safety net” provider and our objective was to prevent disease and serve the residents of Rockland County. Programs and services developed with particular emphasis on the underserved, uninsured and underinsured.

Sixty-one years later, the Rockland County Department of Health has realigned programs to meet the challenges of change and times. We endeavor to protect the public’s health and perform core functions, such as investigating and controlling communicable disease outbreaks, ensuring food safety, preparing and responding to disasters and other emergencies. But the most profound progression of the Health Department has been the development of population-based policies, which affect health quality outcomes. To this end, it is the role that local government officials, especially the County Executive has championed and supported to effect a healthier community. Annually, the county budget provides the economic resources to perform our functions at an optimal level. It is important to note that both the County Executive and County Legislature have, and continue, to support our department’s mission, programs and new initiatives.

An example of the vision and leadership of County Executive Scott Vanderhoef and the Rockland County Legislature was the use of tobacco settlement funds, which allowed the development of a comprehensive Department of Health tobacco program based on quality measures and outcomes. As a result, the smoking rate in Rockland County was reduced from 16% to 9.2%.

In the current administration of County Executive Ed Day, Rockland led New York State in “overall health” in the 2015 County Health Rankings, published by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. Our partnership and collaboration with area hospitals, federally qualified health centers, the local medical community and other partner agencies contributed to Rockland County’s high ranking.

In the years ahead, we will move forward with determination and excitement as we pursue the implementation of our strategic plan.

## Acknowledgement

**The Rockland County Department of Health acknowledges the contribution of the following in the development of this strategic plan:**

**Julie Ann Cunanan – Principal Clerk-Typist**

**Junie Delizo, MPH – Director of Emergency Preparedness/Public Health**

**Una Diffley, MPH – Director of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention**

**Maura Donoghue, LCSW, BCD – Director of Public Health Social Work**

**Jeremy Erlich – Assistant Flow Control Engineer**

**Ron Hansen, MBA - Deputy Commissioner of Health**

**Judi Hunderfund, PE – Director of Environmental Health**

**Kevin McKay, MPH - Director of Epidemiology and Public Health Planning**

**Angela Pantano-Alexander – Confidential Secretary to the Commissioner**

**Samuel Rulli, BS, PE – Senior Public Health Engineer**

**Scott Salotto – Director of Strategic Communications**

**Mary Simon, LCSW – Assistant Director, PH Social Work - Adult Services**

**Gail Talamini, RN, BSN – Director of Patient Services**

**Anil Vaidian, MD, MPH – Medical Director, TB and Communicable Diseases**

## Message from the Commissioner

In January 2012, the Rockland County Department of Health initiated a strategic planning process. Our focus was to address the challenges facing the Department, including fiscal constraints, workforce development and the changing public health landscape. The crafting of a Strategic Plan was also a necessary step toward voluntary national accreditation.

In the coming years, these challenges are expected to continue, under even greater financial and personnel constraints. An updated organizational Strategic Plan provides the Health Department with a clear framework of where we are headed, what we plan to achieve, action steps to be taken and a necessary timeline. This plan is based on a decision-making process by which the Department collectively frames its mission, vision, values, goals and objectives. It is also a blueprint for our active pursuit of Public Health Accreditation by late 2016. As part of the process, we are developing quality improvement tools and methods to measure progress and evaluate outcomes as we move into the 2016-2018 period.

We know that our efforts will lead to optimized health and health equity for the communities that we serve. We aspire to place Rockland County among the healthiest communities in the nation.

*Respectfully,*



*Patricia Schnabel Ruppert D.O., M.P.H., DABFM, FAAFP  
Commissioner of Health of Rockland County*



# Executive Summary

## **Mission Statement:**

*The mission of the Rockland County Department of Health is to protect and promote optimal health for all residents.*

## **Vision Statement:**

*We envision a future in which the Rockland County Department of Health, along with our partners in public health and health care, effectively, efficiently and equitably promote the health of all populations.*

## **Our Values: I DESIRE**

- Integrity
- Diversity
- Excellence
- Service
- Innovation
- Respect
- Expertise

## Guiding Philosophy and Principles

The following statements further explain and demonstrate how the Rockland County Department of Health carries out its organizational values in our daily work and interactions with the public.

- We share a common desire to help others in our community. This is central to our culture.
- We strive to provide optimal care and service to everyone at all times. This requires technical expertise combined with respect and compassion for all.
- We value and foster a climate of respect for diversity and we expect cultural competence throughout the department and in each interaction with clients and patients.
- We recognize the importance of the social determinants of health and work to address them through policies and programs
- We are accountable to our community to conduct our operations and programs with the highest degree of personal and professional integrity.
- We promote a climate of innovation and initiative, and a positive attitude to new ideas and opportunities at all levels of the organization.
- We advocate throughout our community for policies and programs that advance public health priorities
- We value quality improvement efforts across all programs as a means to continuously improve our services.

# SWOT Analysis

## Summary of key internal and external issues affecting the Rockland County Health Department.

A strategic planning process includes an analysis of an organization’s internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities or threats. The goal of the planning process is to help the organization use its strengths to seize new opportunities and minimize any potential threats while developing a plan to address its weaknesses so they do not hinder the success of the organization.

<p><b><u>Strengths</u></b>            Dedicated staff with institutional knowledge            Diverse subject matter experts            Mantra of teamwork            Strong sense of mission            Flexibility &amp; responsiveness            Centralized location            Cross training            Fiscal accountability            Team building</p>	<p><b><u>Weaknesses</u></b>            Limited funding &amp; resources            Bureaucracy            Division in silos            Low morale            Limitations of civil service            Lack of communication            Decrease in staffing            Aging workforce            Facility infrastructure</p>
<p><b><u>Opportunities</u></b>            Accreditation            Liaison with community partners            Employee recognition, improve morale            Enhance partnerships with municipal leaders            Social Media            Strengthen management &amp; leadership skills            Increase LHD role for population health improvement            Education and academic partnerships            Resource sharing</p>	<p><b><u>Threats</u></b>            Aging population            Financial state of the County            Unfunded mandates            Loss of long-term staff            Lack of internet access            Federal, State &amp; Local funding cuts            Serious housing issues            Insufficient return on investment data            Lack of LHD input to Health System</p>

# Goals and Action Planning

## **Our Strategic Issues, Goals, and Strategies**

Rockland County Public Health identified 5 strategic issues and corresponding goals, as well as 13 strategies with appropriate action steps for implementation. In addition, it developed a workplan and a timeline that assigned responsibilities for each strategy and corresponding action.

## **Strategic Issue I: Workforce Development and Internal Communications**

**Goal:** We will maintain a competent, accountable, and motivated workforce.

### **Strategies**

1. Establish a multi-faceted internal communications plan that connects staff, provides necessary information, and fosters internal dialogue.
2. Establish an equitable cross-training program that addresses succession planning and workforce development.
3. Ensure staff provide high quality, respectful customer service.
4. Recognize staff contributions.

### **Background**

Rockland County DOH has numerous program divisions and a diverse workforce that is located in multiple buildings. Many staff work out of the office and in the field during a large portion of their workday. This has led to communication challenges and difficulties ensuring that all staff receive timely, consistent, and appropriate information. These challenges have been exacerbated by budgetary uncertainties and personnel changes in recent years. The Department has recognized that positive and effective internal communication is critical to the Department's success and staff morale and has identified strategies to foster positive communications, increase transparency where appropriate, and engage staff at all levels in planning and decision making. A number of committees or workgroups are being established to facilitate this communication and engagement.

Staff development and cross training are also important for the Department's success.

Most staff hiring are based on public health knowledge and background. Other staff hiring is based on a civil service registry unrelated to public health. This presents many opportunities for training and development. Due to personnel changes, many staff already work in multiple areas. Many are approaching retirement eligibility in the near future.

Loss of institutional knowledge and experience is therefore, a huge concern considering the limited resources for new staff hires. Similarly, the Department wants to ensure that all staff can provide culturally competent and respectful customer service.

With few opportunities of affording financial rewards to personnel who provide excellent work and service, the Department would like to avail of venues to provide recognition to those employees. The hope is that the expansion of staff recognition initiatives and the creation of a culture where appreciation for accomplishments is acknowledged will support morale and a positive workplace.

## **Strategic Issue II: Marketing, Media, and Community Engagement**

**Goal:** We will strengthen our visibility and community collaborations to develop and advance a shared public health agenda.

### **Strategies**

1. Enhance staff knowledge of and support for community collaboratives.
2. Continue to engage the community through a variety of strategies, including the website, social media, newspapers, etc.

### **Background**

The Health Department's success is dependent on its effective community engagement and outreach to local agencies, organizations, businesses and collaboratives. The Department continually explores all available venues, potential resources and possible partnerships with local entities in developing and implementing its Community Health Improvement Plan.

## **Strategic Issue III: Information and Data Management**

**Goal:** We will improve the availability and maximize the functionality and effective use of information technologies.

### **Strategies**

1. Enhance staff capacity for information and data management.

### **Background**

Meeting the demands of a 21<sup>st</sup> –century health department, Rockland County DOH emphasizes the paramount importance of staff adept in information technology. Improving access, increasing usage and availability of IT platforms are deemed essential in the conduct of its daily operations.

## **Strategic Issue IV: Strategic Planning and Accreditation**

**Goal:** We will become a nationally accredited local health department by the end of 2016 and maintain that accreditation.

### **Strategies**

1. Complete strategic plan in first quarter of 2016 and monitor progress for ongoing strategic decision making.
2. Complete update of the CHA and CHIP by December, 2016.
3. Monitor internal progress to prepare accreditation application in 2016.
4. Formalize quality improvement and performance evaluation systems.

## **Background**

Although the Rockland County DOH has long worked to provide professional, quality services, strategic planning and accreditation provide tools and a clear framework for benchmarking the Department's competencies and identifying areas for improvement. These include new efforts such as formalizing the Department's quality improvement and performance evaluation systems as well as carrying out pre-requisites such as the Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).

RCDOH plans to complete the process for accreditation in 2016. An Accreditation Team has been established and has begun working through the guidance documents and developing a plan to complete requirements.

## **Strategic Issue V: Divisional Planning**

**Goal:** We will formally integrate broader goals into divisional planning

### **Strategies**

1. Divisional planning will reflect Department wide priorities and goals as specified in the strategic plan, CHA, and CHIP.
2. Ensure every division has a workplan and evaluation mechanism for deliverables and outcomes.

### **Background**

The Rockland County DOH has recognized that many of the goals developed in this Department-wide strategic plan will require staff, program, and division-level planning and coordination. This goal will ensure that the Division-level planning moves forward in strategic alignment.

## Implementation Groups and Abbreviation Guide

In order to successfully carry out the actions identified in the strategic plan, RCDOH has identified a number of workgroups or committees that will be responsible for their implementation. These committees will be populated by staff from throughout the Department.

- **Strategic Planning Committee (SPC)**
  - Assists and makes recommendations related to the RCDOH's mission, vision and strategic initiatives.
- **Learning Management System Coordinators (LMSC)**
  - Facilitates the tracking of learners in competency-based courses for staff in using the *NYLearnsPH.com* Learning Management System.
- **Outreach Committee (OC)**
  - Facilitates communication among outreach staff by bridging gaps between communities & health/social service systems and promotes professional development through best practices, resource sharing and peer support.
- **Workforce Development Committee (WFDC)**
  - Helps identify training needs, gaps and resources to promote a competent workforce
- **Program Quality Management Improvement Committee- (PQMIC)**
  - Advises and establishes specific quality improvement initiatives for formal adoption of approaches and the implementation of a Quality Improvement Plan for the RCDOH programs and services.
- **Accreditation Team (A Team)**
  - Assists in the review, completion of prerequisites, internal processes, required documentation and other tasks for submission of the accreditation application.
- **Social Media Committee (SMC)**
  - Promotes Internet-based materials and resources to better showcase the activities to the Department staff and to the public
- **Staff Recognition Committee (SRC)**
  - Organizes programs and events that recognize and reward staff members for their contributions to the Department and community
- **Focus Groups**
  - Groups created as a result of the county-wide Engagement Survey conducted in the Spring of 2015 and shared with staff in August-September 2015. Groups are to be created to identify priorities or opportunities for the department to collaboratively improve the work environment.
- **Commissioner (Comm)**
  - The Commissioner of Health of the RCDOH
- **Division Directors (DD)**
  - The Directors of the Divisions of the RCDOH
- **Administration (Admin)**
  - The Administration Division of the RCDOH
- **County Resources (County)**
  - County of Rockland resources external to the RCDOH
- **Division of Chronic Disease and Health Promotion (DCDHP)**
  - Formerly known as the Division of Health Promotion/Health Education

## Strategic Issue I: Workforce Development and Internal Communications

Goal: We will maintain a competent, accountable, and motivated workforce.

Strategies	Actions	Responsibility	Timeframe
1. Establish a multi-faceted internal communications plan that connects staff, provides necessary information, and fosters internal dialogue.	1.1 Enhance two-way communication mechanisms at divisional and department-wide levels	DD Comm	1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr. 2016
	1.2 Engage staff fully in the development and implementation of strategic planning at the division and department-wide levels.	FG SPC	1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr. 2016
	1.3 Establish internal resource and referral process (and identify staff expertise and skill sets).	LMSC Comm	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. 2016 & annually
	1.4 Continue to expand staff knowledge of Department programs and services through the Health Department Directory.	OC	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. 2016
	1.5 Define, summarize and disseminate appropriate information from Division Directors meeting.	Admin DD	1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr. 2016 Quarterly Ongoing
	1.6 Disseminate appropriate budget information consistently and with as much accountability and transparency as possible.	Admin DD	3 <sup>rd</sup> Qtr. 2016
	1.7 Work to locate all staff in the same physical building.	Admin	4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. 2017
2. Establish an equitable cross-training program that addresses succession planning and workforce development.	2.1 Provide routine training to ensure that all staff have knowledge of public health.	WFDC DD	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. 2016 Ongoing
	2.2 Ensure all staff maintain registration on the Learning Management System.	Comm. DD	1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr. 2016
	2.3 Disseminate Learning Management System and other free web based training resources regularly.	LMSC WFDC	Ongoing
	2.4 Develop policies and procedures to promote and support training initiatives.	WFDC Admin	3 <sup>rd</sup> Qtr. Annual Review
	2.5 Develop a succession plan for each division to facilitate redundancy and mentoring.	Admin DD	3 <sup>rd</sup> Qtr. 2016
	2.6 Continue training and support for particularly managers.	WFDC County	1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr. 2016 Ongoing
3. Ensure staff provide high quality, respectful customer service.	3.1 Establish and enforce expectations re: customer service etiquette.	Admin	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. 2016 quarterly staff
	3.2 Continue to enhance cultural competency and sensitivity of staff using in house and community resources for training.	OC WFDC	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. 2016
	3.3 Promote and integrate customer service feedback department wide.	OC PMQIC	1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr. 2016
4. Recognize staff contributions.	4.1 Reinforce positive actions and staff accomplishments.	SRC WFDC DD	1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr. 2016 Ongoing

## Strategic Issue II: Marketing, Media, and Community Engagement

Goal: We will strengthen our visibility and community collaborations to develop and advance a shared public health agenda.

Strategies	Actions	Responsibility	Timeframe
1. Enhance staff knowledge of and support for community collaboratives.	1.1 Establish a mechanism for outreach and clinic staff to know about Department and community events affecting clients.	OC	Ongoing
	1.2 Maintain a resource contact list and disseminate internally.	OC	1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr. 2016 Annually
	1.3 Foster staff opportunities to present at collaborations and other professional networks.	DCDHP	Annually 4 each year
2. Continue to engage the community through a variety of strategies, including the website, social media, newspapers, etc.	2.1 Actively engage the community by providing health related information and relevant and timely updates.	SMC DCDHP	Monthly
	2.2 Educate staff about how they can promote the Department's work/programs on social media.	SMC	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. 2016 Quarterly Staff
	2.3 Develop an annual plan for messaging and marketing programs through multiple media and integrate into press plan.	SMC DHPCD	Ongoing
	2.4 Obtain community and customer feedback, including how they hear about the Dept. Disseminate results to appropriate staff.	PMQIC	1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr. 2016 Ongoing

## Strategic Issue III: Information and Data Management

Goal: We will improve the availability and maximize the functionality and effective use of information technologies.

Strategies	Actions	Responsibility	Timeframe
1. Enhance staff capacity for information and data management.	1.1 Survey and assess staff training needs and develop a training plan.	WFDC IT Liaison	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. 2016
	1.2 Identify in-house expertise and staff who can serve as potential trainers.	WFDC	1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr. 2016
	1.3 Identify Public Health Training Center (PHTC), state, and alternate web-based training resources.	WFDC LMSC	Ongoing
	1.4 Provide information and training to all staff about data management systems.	WFDC	Ongoing
	1.5 Explore the possibility of establishing basic competencies needed for staff positions.	HR, Admin DD	3 <sup>rd</sup> Qtr. 2016

## Strategic Issue IV: Strategic Planning and Accreditation

Goal: We will become a nationally accredited local health department by the end of 2016 and maintain that accreditation.

Strategies	Actions	Responsibility	Timeframe
1. Complete strategic plan in first quarter of 2013 and monitor progress for ongoing strategic decision making.	1.1 Present plan to staff at the March quarterly staff meeting.	SPC	1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr. 2016
	1.2 Continue to educate and engage staff in the monitoring process.	SPC	Quarterly
2. Complete the update of the CHA and CHIP by December 2016.	2.1 Utilize the Public Health Priorities Committee to assess progress since last CHA and develop priorities for the CHIP.	Epi	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. 2016
	2.2 Gather necessary data.	Epi	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. 2016
	2.3 Conduct analysis and write reports..	Epi	3 <sup>rd</sup> Qtr. 2016
	2.4 Engage key staff in CHA outreach plan.	Epi QI	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. 2016
	2.5 Engage staff in developing a revised summary of current program areas and the priorities and goals of each.	Epi DD PMQIC	3 <sup>rd</sup> Qtr. 2016 Annually
3. Monitor internal progress to prepare accreditation application in 2016.	3.1 Work through the process to ensure compliance with accreditation requirements.	A Team Comm	Ongoing 2016
4. Formalize quality improvement and performance evaluation systems.	4.1 Establish a department-wide quality and improvement/quality control plan. Evaluate and implement QI projects.	PMQIC	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. 2016

## Strategic Issue V: Divisional Planning

Goal: We will formally integrate broader goals into divisional planning.

Strategies	Actions	Responsibility	Timeframe
1. Divisional planning will reflect Department wide priorities and goals as specified in the strategic plan, CHA, and CHIP.	1.1 Establish division-wide workplans that address the implementation of strategic issues and goals.	DD WFDC	2016 for 2018 annual planning
	1.2 Educate staff about strategic goals and integrate activities into staff workplans.	DD WFDC	2016 for 2018 annual planning
	1.3 Reorganize by removing divisional barriers to optimize allocation, sharing and utilization of resources to achieve departmental goals and priorities.	SPC	2016-2018
2. Ensure every division has a workplan and evaluation mechanism for deliverables and outcomes.	2.1 Create evaluation and reporting system metrics for each Division and share with staff.	PMQIC DD	2016 for 2018
	2.2 Analyze data and implements results to demonstrate effectiveness and impact.	PMQIC Epi	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. 2017
	2.3 Allocate staff time for writing and publishing findings, engaging academic partners where appropriate.	Admin DD	4 <sup>th</sup> Qtr. 2017

## Moving Forward

Our Health Department commits to implement this strategic plan and will achieve the outlined goals and objectives. Through focused attention to our stated priorities in this plan, our department will be successful in the implementation and operation of all our programs, policies and services.

Our county was ranked FIRST in overall health in New York State in the 2015 County Health Rankings released by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. Our health department was instrumental, through its programs and services, in achieving a healthier Rockland County. The rankings were the result of our department's pursuit to be the healthiest county in the nation.

The development of new public health programs and enhancement of existing ones reinforce our primary role of protecting Rockland County's public health. Our focus on encouraging Rockland residents to eat healthier, be more active and tobacco free has led to lower incidence of chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer. We have the State's lowest adult smoking rate of 9.2%, according to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

Our partnership and collaboration with area hospitals, federally qualified health centers, medical community and other partner agencies in the county contributed to Rockland County's very high ranking.

Clearly as a County we are making strides, and we will continue to work to improve the health of our residents. Our strategic plan provides a powerful guide in achieving excellence in health outcomes. Our next steps will include the update of a Community Health Assessment, a Community Health Improvement Plan and an application for National Accreditation in 2016.