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HEALTH & WELLNESS

Are You
Getting
Enough
Sleep?

page 2



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Don't hit snooze on sleep issues

BY SAMER EL ZARIF, MD
ASSOCIATE MEDICAL DIRECTOR FOR
PULMONARY, CRITICAL CARE AND
SLEEP MEDICINE SERVICES,
GARNET HEALTH DOCTORS

Sleep. Everyone needs it — the mental and physical health benefits are widely reported. And yet it's clear that so many don't get enough of it. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than a third of adults get less than the recommended seven hours of sleep per night.

Practicing good sleep hygiene can vastly improve the quality of your sleep, which in turn can improve your overall health and well-being. Good sleep hygiene refers to the set of habits and practices that promote better sleep quality and duration. The CDC offers these recommendations for better sleep.

- Stick to a consistent sleep schedule. Going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, even on weekends, can help regulate your circadian rhythms and promote better sleep.

- Create a relaxing sleep environment. Keep your bedroom cool, quiet, relaxing and dark.

- Eliminate electronics and screens. Remove electronic devices such as TVs, computers and smartphones from the bedroom.

- Limit caffeine and alcohol intake. Both can disrupt sleep patterns and should be consumed in moderation, especially in the hours leading up to bedtime. Also try to avoid eating large meals before bedtime.

- Exercise regularly. Physical activity during the day can make falling asleep easier at night.

- Manage stress. Stress and anxiety can make it difficult to fall asleep. Practice relaxation techniques like deep breathing or meditation to calm your mind

before bed.

But what if you have tried these tips and are still not getting a full and rested night's sleep? The Center for Sleep Medicine at Garnet Health Medical Center—accredited by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine—can help you rest easy. We can help determine the root cause of your sleep issues, for adults and children over the age of 2. Below are the most common sleep disorders we see.

Obstructive Sleep Apnea

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) is one of the most common sleep disorders, affecting over 25 million U.S. adults, but 80% of cases remain undiagnosed, according to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. OSA is characterized by paused or restricted breathing while sleeping, which affects oxygen levels in the blood and brain. It has been associated with conditions such as high blood pressure, coronary artery disease and heart attack.

While snoring is most often cited as a symptom, other warning signs of OSA include daytime sleepiness, fatigue, headaches, waking up with a dry mouth or sore throat, restless sleep or waking up often, frequent trips to the bathroom to urinate during the night, and reduced focus during the day.

Treatment options for sleep apnea include CPAP therapy and oral appliances—and for those who qualify, surgery.

Insomnia

Insomnia affects 10%–30% of the general population and can become chronic in 10% of cases. Insomnia is defined as having difficulty falling or remaining asleep. It can also mean waking up very early and not being able to fall back asleep. There are several factors that can lead to insomnia.



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Doctors will work to determine the cause then prescribe the appropriate treatment, which can take the form of behavioral therapy and/or sleep aids.

Narcolepsy

Narcolepsy is a sleep disorder where, despite getting enough nighttime sleep, one becomes overwhelmingly sleepy during the day. Sudden muscle weakness can also occur, resulting in a “sleep attack,” where a person slumps over as they suddenly fall asleep. Narcolepsy episodes can happen anywhere and usually last for several minutes.

People with narcolepsy can be at risk for accidents and injury, so it’s important to get a proper diagnosis and treatment.

Restless Legs Syndrome

The time when you should feel most at ease and still can actually trigger restless legs syndrome (RLS). It can best be described as a tingling or painful crawling

sensation up and down the legs while lying down, making it difficult to fall asleep. Many feel the need to move or kick to help alleviate the pain. There are various treatments for RLS, including dietary changes, exercise, medical devices and medication.

A 2024 survey from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine reveals that 51% of Americans have never talked to their healthcare provider about their sleep issues. If you’ve been experiencing any symptoms of restless sleep, Garnet Health’s sleep specialists can help. Once your sleep-disorder symptoms are confirmed, we can develop a sleep study to aid in diagnosis and appropriate treatment. And you can choose to have your sleep study in a specialized sleep center or from the comfort of your home!

Don’t go another night with sleep issues. Visit garnethealth.org/sleepcenter or call Garnet Health Doctors at (845) 333-7575 today to make an appointment with a sleep medicine specialist.



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YOUR CARE. YOUR WAY.

The vital role of Family Peer Advocates:

Supporting families through shared experiences

BY AKILAH SUTPHIN,
CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES
PROGRAM MANAGER

Dealing with the challenges of mental health or other family struggles can be a lonely and daunting journey. Families frequently feel alone, uncertain of where to seek help, find it difficult to navigate the system and advocate for their loved ones.

This is where the essential role of the Family Peer Advocate (FPA) is crucial.

FPA's are trained individuals who offer support and guidance to families confronting these issues, using their personal experiences

to provide empathy, understanding, and practical assistance.

A Family Peer Advocate is more than just a support person; they are a bridge between families and the often-complex systems designed to serve them. They are parents or family members who have successfully navigated similar challenges and are now equipped to support others on their journey.

This shared experience is the cornerstone of their effectiveness. It allows them to connect with families on a deeper level, under-

Advocates are a bridge between families and the often-complex systems designed to help them.

stand their unique struggles, and offer hope based on real-world experience.

The role of the FPA is multifaceted, encompassing a range of crucial support functions:

FPA's enable families to advocate for themselves effectively. They assist them in understanding their rights, navigating the system, and clearly expressing their needs to service providers. They instruct families on how to obtain resources, comprehend treatment options, and actively engage in formulating their loved one's care

plan.

FPA's offer emotional assistance, alleviating the loneliness and embarrassment that frequently come with these issues. They create a secure environment for families to discuss their experiences, pose questions, and obtain impartial information. Additionally, they inform families about mental health disorders, treatment possibilities, and available resources, empowering them to make knowledgeable choices.

The mental health and social service systems can be intricate and overwhelming. FPA's help families find their way through these challenges by linking them to necessary services, clarifying

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procedures, and providing assistance with documentation. They act as navigators, ensuring that families comprehend the system and obtain the support they require. They guide families in managing stress, establishing boundaries, and communicating effectively with both their loved ones and service providers.

Family Peer Advocates have a solid understanding of community resources, such as support groups, mental health professionals, and other important services. They help link families with these resources, making sure they receive the support they require.

In New York State, Families Together in New York (FTINY) is responsible for overseeing the credentialing of Family Peer Advocates. FTINY is a statewide organization led by families, and is committed to assisting those dealing with mental health issues. They are the designated authority for certifying FPAs, ensuring

that individuals offering these vital services possess the essential training, skills, and personal experience to effectively assist families.

The FTINY credentialing process includes extensive training that involves classroom education, supervised practical experience, and a certification exam. This thorough process ensures that Family Peer Advocates (FPAs) are adequately equipped to address the specific needs of families. It also upholds a standard of professionalism and accountability, giving families confidence that they are receiving assistance from qualified and skilled individuals. The presence of credentialed FPAs highlights the significance of personal experience and the value of family support.

If you or someone you know is interested in the services of a Family Peer Advocate, Action Toward Independence (ATI) has two FPAs onsite to assist you. Call us at 845-794-4228.

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Eczema Relief: A triple threat approach offers hope for itchy skin

BY HEDY SCHNELLER
ILLUMIA PRODUCTS



HEDY SCHNELLER

Eczema, a chronic inflammatory skin condition characterized by persistent itching and redness, can significantly impact quality of life. While managing eczema can be a complex and ongoing process, a new multifaceted approach combining diluted bleach baths, colloidal oatmeal soaks, and a birch bark salve is showing promise in providing relief and promoting healing.

This comprehensive strategy tackles eczema from multiple angles. Sodium hypochlorite, the active ingredient in bleach, has long been recognized for its antibacterial properties. When used in a highly diluted bath, it can act as a gentle cleanser, reducing the bacterial load on the skin, which can exacerbate eczema symptoms.

This approach is supported by research demonstrating the effectiveness of diluted bleach baths in reducing staphylococcal colonization in atopic dermatitis (eczema) patients.

1 It's crucial to emphasize that this should only be done under the guidance of a dermatologist, as improper dilution can be harmful.

Diluted bleach baths can be a helpful tool in managing eczema, but it's essential to follow a dermatologist's instructions carefully regarding the concentration and frequency.

Complementing the cleansing action of the bleach bath is the soothing power of colloidal oatmeal. Oatmeal has been used for

centuries to relieve skin irritation and itching. A 10-15 minute soak in a bath infused with colloidal oatmeal creates a protective barrier on the skin, helping to lock in moisture and reduce inflammation. This occlusive effect is crucial for eczema management, as it helps to prevent further irritation, promote skin healing, and can provide significant relief from the intense itching associated with eczema.

2 Illumia's Birch Bark Salve completes a comprehensive three-pronged skincare approach, leveraging the traditional anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties of birch bark extract. While specific research on its effectiveness for eczema remains limited,

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its historical use and known benefits suggest potential therapeutic value. The salve also incorporates caffeine, which stimulates microcirculation and increases blood flow, facilitating tissue oxygenation and nutrition, as well as calendula extract, known for its soothing properties on irritated skin. Designed to moisturize and calm redness, Illumia's formulation offers targeted relief for eczema sufferers.

3 The combination of these three elements – sodium hypochlorite for cleansing, colloidal oatmeal for soothing, and birch bark salve for targeted care – creates a powerful synergy for managing eczema symptoms. This comprehensive approach offers individuals not just relief from the immediate discomfort of itching and redness, but also a pathway to improved skin health and overall well-being. As with any new treatment, it is vital to consult with a dermatologist to



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

determine the best course of action for individual needs and to ensure safe and effective implementation of this promising approach.

Dear reader, please note:

Verify all information presented, especially regarding the use of diluted bleach baths, with reputable medical sources. Consult a dermatologist for any health con-

cerns. This information is for general knowledge and educational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice.

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The doctor alone doesn't know best - Trust yourself just as much

BY WILLOW BAUM

My mother was never one to complain. Even as she endured multiple body aches, frailties, and ailments that can go along with living 93 years. Some mornings, when she sat on the edge of her bed, she placed a hand on her belly and quietly told me, "There's something wrong in my gut."

Over eighteen months, there were tests and scans and ultrasounds and specialists. Results, time and again, showed nothing definitive. The healthcare pros hypothesized diverticulosis. Or maybe anxiety. Silently I had some doubt that the gut thing was physical.

The risks at 93 were high: bleeding out, a blood clot, heart attack, trauma from the invasive procedure, and infection from a hospital stay as she recovered. Alone in the waiting room at 2 a.m., I waited and paced. Two hours passed before I heard the whir of electric doors opening and saw the stoic surgeon in scrubs. The pathology report that would give conclusive, official results wouldn't be in for days. But the surgeon told me he had seen this kind of thing before. A tumor had been growing in line with an intestine, which explained why it went undetected for so long. When he touched it, it disintegrated. Most likely, this meant cancer. Late-stage.

Looking back, I wish I had encouraged her to trust herself – to trust her experience of living her entire life in her body – as much as medical tests and physicians' opinions. Had I done so, I would've respected her agency and been a better emotional support. We might've been better advocates for her healthcare and pushed earlier for more tests. She was told the gut thing must be related to inflammation, diet or stress. Instead, Mom, who was a nurse for chrissake, must've felt weary

and alone around the doctors and me all those months as various diagnostics came back clean.

Shoulda, woulda, coulda... she's gone now. Our experience taught me a hard-earned lesson that I share with clients and their loved ones as they navigate illness, aging, and end-of-life: **Trust Yourself: You, too, are an**

Authority.

Trust yourself. View yourself as an equal and complementary authority to your healthcare providers. Why? We live in our bodies 24/7. We're intimate with the workings of the systems within, our history, mood, life force, etc. If we pay attention, we can know — and trust — when something is off.

We live in our bodies 24/7. By contrast, a primary care doctor's visit is 15.7 minutes*, and "the median visit (covers) a median of six topics. Very limited amount of time was dedicated to specific topics, and about 5 minutes was spent on the longest topic whereas the remaining topics each received 1.1 minutes." Certainly, science, technology, and evidence-based conclusions are valuable, yet YOU know your body. That makes each of us a unique and essential expert, too. Take yourself – and your loved ones – seriously as the experts we are.

Willow Baum is an end-of-life planner, educator, and death doula at FriendForTheEnd.com. If you or your loved ones are navigating transitions related to aging, illness or end-of-life, follow us on Substack to get access to weekly "Ask Us Anythings" live Zooms, monthly workshops, articles, and more resources.

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*According to the National Institute of Health research on time allocation in primary care visits.

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/>



RONDA DORSEY PHOTO

Stress, worry, and the gut-brain connection made sense since the tests were negative. Besides, how could so many medical professionals be wrong? If there were a problem, surely they would have found it. Two days into 2020, a bowel blockage had us racing to the ER. Early interventions failed. Mom needed emergency sur-



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METRO CREATIVE SERVICES PHOTOS

Mental Illness – flaws in chemistry, not character...

By M. Lori Schneider, MS
Executive Director, NAMI Sullivan

The term “mental illness” is almost a misnomer, because it seems to imply that the illness is “all in the mind,” when in fact, it’s in the brain - an organ of the body, susceptible to illness the same way the heart, lungs, kidneys, pancreas are susceptible to illness. Yet, mental illness affects more people than heart disease, lung disease and Cancer, combined.

They affect the way people think, feel and relate to others - and while public awareness has come a long way in the past couple of decades, even in this day and age,

there remains a terrible stigma associated with having a mental illness. Stigma keeps people from seeking treatment, from talking about and getting support and education, and blankets individuals and their families with unwarranted blame and shame, that we don’t normally see associated with other illnesses.

One in four families has a loved one diagnosed with a psychiatric illness. Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, Anxiety Disorders, PTSD are neurobiological brain disorders as real as any other physical illness. Mental ill-



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Among the best treatments for mental/emotional problems is to seek others with whom you feel comfortable sharing as opposed to isolating.

nesses are flaws in chemistry, not character.

NAMI is the National Alliance on Mental Illness. The local, Sullivan County affiliate has been providing advocacy and education in our area since 1983. Primarily a family support and advocacy organization, NAMI Sullivan offers Sharing and Caring Family Support Groups twice monthly, on the third and fourth Tuesday evening of each month from 6:30 – 8:00 pm, NAMI Connection Peer Support Groups meet twice monthly, on the first and third Monday of each month from 5:30 – 7 pm and the Suicide Bereavement Group meets the

first Wednesday evening of each month from 6:30 – 8:00 pm. The meetings are held at 20 Crystal Street in Monticello in the NAMI Sullivan Conference Room and all are available virtually as well via ZOOM. All programs are free of charge, confidential and a safe place to share.

NAMI Sullivan also offers social and recreational and advocacy programs for people living with mental illness in our area. The Compeer (companion/peer) program matches community volunteers with adults living with mental illness in one-to-one friendships. Through each

other, they both become better people. Caring men and women are always needed and hours are flexible to suit your availability. A few hours each month of your friendship can make a difference in someone's life.

Over the next few months in the **Sullivan County Democrat**, there will be articles featuring more information about individual diagnoses and how to get help if you or someone you love is living with a psychiatric diagnosis. Mental Illness is not curable – neither is Diabetes or Epilepsy – but it is treatable.

Treatment works. Medication, talk therapy and a host of other resources are available. While NAMI Sullivan County doesn't directly provide any clinical services, we can put you in touch with local resources and arm you with knowledge and support. If you or someone you love has been diagnosed with a mental illness, you are not alone. NAMI Sullivan County, NY can help.

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NEWS NOTES IN HEALTHCARE

Ellenville Regional Hospital recognizes National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month:

Encouraging early detection through Colonoscopy, Endoscopy, and Pelvic Ultrasound services

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, a crucial time to highlight the importance of early detection in preventing colorectal cancer. Ellenville Regional Hospital is committed to educating the community and providing life-saving colonoscopy, endoscopy, and ultrasound services to detect and prevent colorectal cancer in its early stages.

Colorectal cancer is one of the most common cancers in the United States and the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths. However, early detection through routine screenings can prevent up to 90% of cases by identifying and removing precancerous polyps before they develop into cancer. The American Cancer Society recommends that individuals at average risk begin screening at age 45, while those



with higher risk factors—such as a family history—should consult their doctor about starting even earlier.

Why Screening Matters

Colorectal cancer can often develop silently without noticeable symptoms, which is why routine screenings like colonoscopies are critical. With today's advanced diagnostic tools, including endoscopy and ultrasounds, we can help patients detect potential concerns early and significantly improve their long-term health outcomes.

Recognizing the Warning Signs

Although colorectal cancer may not present symptoms in its early stages, potential warning signs include:

- Changes in bowel habits (diarrhea, constipation, or narrow stools)
- Blood in the stool or rectal bleeding

- Unexplained weight loss
- Persistent abdominal discomfort (cramping, bloating or pain)
- Fatigue or weakness

Risk factors such as age, family history, smoking, obesity, excessive alcohol use, and a diet low in fiber and high in processed foods can increase the likelihood of developing colorectal cancer.

Take Charge of Your Health

This March, Ellenville Regional Hospital urges community members to schedule their recommended screenings. Whether you need a colonoscopy, endoscopy, or pelvic ultrasound, our medical team is here to provide expert, compassionate care.

To learn more or book an appointment, visit www.erhny.org or call 845-647-6400 ext. 314 today.

About Ellenville Regional Hospital

Ellenville Regional Hospital is dedicated to providing high-quality gastrointestinal and diagnostic imaging services to support early detection and prevention of serious health conditions. With a focus on patient-centered care, our team offers advanced screening and diagnostic solutions to improve health outcomes in our community.

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NEWS NOTES IN HEALTHCARE

Wayne Memorial Community Health Centers among 2024 Hypertension Control Champions

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently designated 32 physicians and clinical practices as the 2024 Million Hearts® Hypertension Control Champions. Among those named were three of Wayne Memorial Community Health Centers' (WMCHC) primary care practices: Forest City Family Health Center; Hamlin Family Health Center and Pike Family Health Center. Additionally, WMCHC was also recognized as an organization in 2024. These offices and WMCHC as a whole, join the ranks of only 199 champions nationwide who have reached this milestone. The Million Hearts® Hypertension



Control Challenge is a program that recognizes practices that achieve hypertension or high blood pressure (BP) control rates of at least

80%.

"We are extremely proud to have obtained this distinction and commend all staff members for their commitment to our patients," stated Kara Poremba, MSHA, BSN, Chief Quality Officer, WMCHC. Three other WMCHC's primary care offices were inducted as Hypertension Champions in 2023.

According to the CDC, high blood pressure is a leading cause of heart disease and stroke and a leading cause of disability for millions of U.S. adults.

To schedule an appointment with a WMCHC primary care practice, visit www.wmchc.net.



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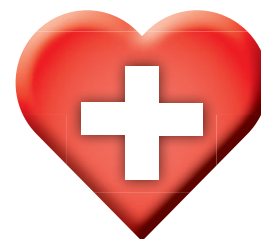
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New York State Department of Health's Tobacco Control Program celebrates 25th Anniversary

Department Celebrates Success in Reducing Tobacco-Related Harms in New York State

The New York State Department of Health announces the 25th Anniversary of its Tobacco Control Program. The Program and its partners have led efforts to protect New Yorkers from the tobacco industry and strengthen public health in communities throughout the state. The Department celebrates the program's longstanding commitment to reducing commercial tobacco use and its related harms and remains dedicated to ensuring that all New Yorkers can live smoke-free lives.

"As we celebrate this 25-year anniversary milestone, we acknowledge the exceptional work that the Department's Tobacco Control Program and its partners have done to protect New Yorkers from the harms of smoking and recognize the

many success stories of helping residents quit smoking," State Health Commissioner Dr. James McDonald said. "Smoking causes long-term disease, disability and premature death, so I am proud of the program for addressing the harmful impact tobacco has on communities for more than two decades."

The Department envisions a commercial tobacco-free and vape-free society for all New Yorkers. Since 2000, the State's Tobacco Control Program has implemented comprehensive programming to reduce illness, disability, and death related to commercial tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure,

and to alleviate social and economic inequities caused by tobacco use. The program uses an evidence-based, policy-driven, and population-level approach to tobacco control and prevention with a commitment to promote health equity among populations disproportionately impacted by tobacco marketing and use.

As an independently evaluated program, the Tobacco Control Program has seen significant success, contributing to record-low youth and adult smoking rates and a nearly 50 percent decrease in the lung cancer death rate in the state. Notably, it has led to thousands of lives and billions of dollars saved in health care

costs associated with smoking. The Program has demonstrated a remarkable return on investment, with New York seeing a \$15 return for every dollar spent on the program.

As these achievements deserve celebration, it is crucial to recognize that tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death in New York State and nationwide and that tobacco control efforts continue to face challenges, including industry-related influences and the changing tobacco product landscape. More than 1.6 million New York State adults currently use cigarettes, and progress in reducing tobacco use and its related harms has been uneven across communities in the state. In addition, the recent surge in youth e-cigarette use



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poses a serious threat to long-term tobacco reduction efforts as more and more young people are put at risk for nicotine addiction. While recent data indicates that youth tobacco use has declined, one in five high school students in New York State report using any form of tobacco, with e-cigarettes being the most used product. Tobacco use in any form is not safe but is particularly harmful for youth and young adults.

The Tobacco Control Program has established a comprehensive infrastructure that includes health communications and media, tobacco use treatment interventions, community programming and statewide and community action. A key focus of the program is to promote tobacco-free norms, with New York State being a pioneer in establishing strong tobacco control policies. The Clean Indoor Air Act of 2003 has been a pivotal policy in protecting New Yorkers from exposure to deadly secondhand smoke.

In recent years, the State has enacted several important policies, including raising the minimum age for purchasing tobacco products, prohibiting the sale of flavored e-cigarettes or nicotine vapor products, including menthol-flavored products, and prohibiting tobacco product price discounting. Many local regulations and policies have been adopted to further protect

residents, such as prohibiting smoking and e-cigarette use in multi-unit housing and public spaces, as well as regulating tobacco and e-cigarette retail locations.

To ensure that all New Yorkers have the opportunity to live smoke-free lives, the Tobacco Control Program provides funding to community grantees through its Advancing Tobacco-Free Communities and Health Systems for Tobacco-Free New York initiatives. Statewide earned and paid media campaigns increase awareness of the problem of tobacco and e-cigarette use and how to get help quitting. These hard-hitting campaigns have proven effective in changing attitudes towards smoking and encouraging people to quit.

The Program also supports New Yorkers in their quitting efforts through the New York State Quitline which provides free, confidential services, including information, tools, quit coaching, support in both English and Spanish, and free Nicotine Replacement Therapy, such as patches and gum. The Quitline has helped more than 1 million people in their journey to quit smoking and has recently expanded its services to include text-based support and educational resources on menthol tobacco products, including how menthol affects African American, LGBTQIA+, and Hispanic or Latinx communities.

Child Care providers needed; Child Care Council can help

If you have considered working with or teaching young children, there is no better time to start! Sullivan County needs childcare throughout the county!

For more information please visit our website: [scchildcare.com](https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/childcare/becomeaprovider.asp), the Office of Children and Family Services at : <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/childcare/becomeaprovider.asp> , or give our office a call at (845) 292-7166.

Great need

According to The U.S. Census Bureau, the population estimate as of July 1, 2023, is 79,920 people in Sullivan County. 6.1 percent of the county's population are children under the age of 5 (US Census Bureau, 2010), making the under 5 population in Sullivan County, 4,795 children.

The current number of infant / toddler childcare spots available in Sullivan County is 1,129. The bottom line is Sullivan County children and current providers NEED your assistance as childcare is filled with waiting lists.

Consider working from home and teaching children. You can run your own small business

from home while contributing to and supporting the working families in Sullivan County!

If you're worried about start-up cost, we may be able to assist in supply costs through grant programs facilitated through the Sullivan County Child Care Council, Inc. and ALL required training is free to anyone opening a program in Sullivan County!!!

Please contact the Sullivan County Child Care Council for step-by-step assistance with the application process, business aspect of your program, as well as the programs and resources available when your program is established.

The Sullivan County Child Care Council, Inc. has determined an immediate need for Infant and Toddler childcare based on our referral services:

- County wide – of 44 inquiries 31 were for Infant and Toddler care
- Requests for Infant and Toddler care through our agency have been made mainly for Fallsburg, Liberty and Monticello
- Most of our providers have no infant or toddler spots available

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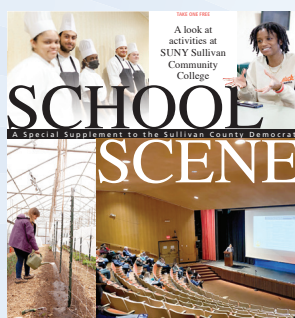


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