



NEWS RELEASE

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF HEALTH

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DuPage County Health Department Celebrates 75th Anniversary

DUPAGE COUNTY—The DuPage County Health Department is celebrating 75 years of protecting the health of residents and visitors.

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The history of public health in DuPage County starts in 1925, however, the attempt to organize failed due to a lack of laws authorizing counties to collect taxes for health departments.

Since the early 1940s, a form of Health Department has operated in DuPage County, the first of which was designated on March 11, 1942. With the nation involved in World War II, the Illinois Department of Public Health, following a General Assembly “special war-emergency session,” established DuPage County as one of 19 “Defense Zone” Health Departments to preserve public health during the state of war.

On November 1, 1944, with many health concerns that include the lack of countywide sanitation measures, and ordinances governing dairies and food vendors, the citizens of DuPage County voted in favor of a Health Department. The DuPage County Health Department began operations on March 13, 1945 in the DuPage County Courthouse, 201 Reber Street, Wheaton. With a budget of \$39,000 and a staff of 15, the Health Department served a mostly rural population of nearly 125,000.

In 1945, the leading cause of death in DuPage County was “accidental,” and measles was the number one communicable disease with 725 cases reported in the county. Among the first acts of the department, as recommended by the new Board of Health, were five countywide sanitation ordinances: regulation of public water supplies; sewage disposal; garbage disposal; inspection of public swimming pools; and regulation of trailer parks.

The rich history and forward-thinking of DuPage County Health Department officials, includes responding to several health-related concerns in every decade that followed.

- 1950s – The worst polio epidemic in the county’s history, which resulted in 130 cases and 14 deaths in 1952.
- 1960s – Recognizing the mental health needs for the fastest growing county in Illinois at the time, the Health Department began providing mental health services in 1964.

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- 1970s – The need to increase services continued, and in 1973 the Health Department opened a new central office at 111 N County Farm Road, Wheaton. In 1976, satellite offices were added in Addison, Lombard and Westmont.
- 1980s – The health-needs of the community again increased, and the Health Department added a Prenatal Clinic, an AIDS Program, took over the county tuberculosis (TB) program, tracked the largest foodborne illness outbreak in U.S. history with 2,798 cases of Salmonella reported in DuPage County, and contained a measles outbreak to 321 cases.
- 1990s – In August 1990, the Health Department provided its Disaster Team to assist the Will County Health Department following an F-5 tornado in Plainfield. Expansion of the Central Public Health Center in Wheaton was completed in 1993, which added 26,000 square feet to the building.

In recent years, efforts include,

- 2004 – The response to the emergence of West Nile virus with a surveillance program that places mosquito traps throughout the county to test for mosquito-borne diseases.
- 2013 – DuPage County recognized the opioid epidemic and the Health Department initiated the DuPage Narcan Program, which has saved hundreds of lives.
- 2015 – The Health Department opened what is now known as the Linda A. Kurzawa Community Center at 115 N County Farm Road, Wheaton, and relocated Transitional and Crisis Services to offer coordinated care and community services in the facility.
- In 2018, the Health Department adopted its definition of Integrated Care: “We collaborate to assess needs, deliver services and coordinate care to improve the health of our clients and our community.” Some of the collaborative efforts include the Heroin/Opioid Prevention and Education (HOPE) Taskforce, DuPage Health Coalition, Advocate Good Samaritan Hospital/Great Beginnings prenatal care, AMITA Family Health Residency Program, Impact DuPage, RxBOX, the Behavioral Health Collaborative, VNA Clinic, Prevention Leadership Team, FORWARD, Crisis Intervention Team, and Post-Crisis Response Team.

The DuPage County Board of Health, in a Resolution dated December 12, 2019, “Recognized the aforesaid visionary accomplishments and the 75th Anniversary of the DuPage County Health Department’s existence.”

Visit <https://www.dupagehealth.org/> to learn more about the services provided by DuPage County Health Department.

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