



# Consortium Connection

QUARTELY NEWSLETTER  
VOLUME 6, NUMBER 1 -- MARCH 2021

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## The COVID-19 Vaccine is now available

### WHY SHOULD I GET THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

COVID-19 is very serious and can cause severe medical complications that lead to death in some people. The best way to protect yourself from COVID-19 is by getting the vaccine when it is available to you and taking other precautions, including practicing social distancing, continuing to wear a mask, and washing your hands often and thoroughly.

### WHEN AND WHERE CAN I GET THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

To check your eligibility and find locations to schedule an appointment, visit the New York State website at [am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov](https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov).

The COVID-19 vaccine is available at pharmacies, hospitals, and through local health departments and state-

run sites. Vaccines do not require a prescription and are provided at no cost to patients.

### CAN THE VACCINE GIVE ME COVID-19?

No. The COVID-19 vaccines being used in the U.S. do not use the live virus that causes COVID-19 and cannot make you sick from the virus. Some side effects are normal signs that your body is building protection. You may feel like you have the flu, but it should go away in a few days.

Some COVID-19 vaccines require two shots for them to work in your body to build protection. Get the second shot even if you have side effects after the first shot unless a vaccination provider or your doctor tells you not to get a second shot. COVID-19 vaccines may not protect you until a week or two after your second shot.

Mailing information.

# We are the Consortium

*Our mission: An efficient inter-municipal cooperative that provides high-quality, cost-stable health insurance for our members and their employees and retirees*

## Reorganizing Governance

The Consortium has grown each year with new municipal partners and their subscribers. The Board of Directors annually makes changes to provide an excellent level of service, oversight of expanding expenditures, and prudent management of finances.

In recent years, the biggest change has been to bring administrative functions in-house that were previously externally contracted.

The Board's membership has also grown, and we have added more committees to support the mission of the Consortium. Two newly created committees are the Nominations and Engagement Committee and the Claims and Appeals Committee.

The newly adopted Municipal Cooperative Agreement provides for a more efficient governance model with the creation of an Executive Committee with powers and du-

ties to conduct certain business operations, as delegated on behalf of the Board of Directors. At the September meeting, the Board created an expanded Executive Committee (effective January 1, 2021). This new Executive Committee is filled by 11 to 15 Directors with one-year terms.

The Executive Committee meets bimonthly, beginning in January 2021 on the second Wednesday. Please find the [Bylaws for the expanded Executive Committee on our website](#) as well as its minutes and actions.

Current Executive Committee composition:

- Four Board officers (Chair, Vice Chair, Chief Fiscal Officer, and Secretary);
- Chairs of five standing committees (Joint Committee on Plan Structure and Design, Audit and Finance, Operations, Nominations and Engagement, and Claims and Appeals); and
- Two at-large seats.

## Blue4U Wellness Screenings



**Do You Know Your Wellness Numbers?** Knowing your blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and body mass index numbers is key to understanding your physical well-being and can help determine your risk for developing several diseases. The Blue4U program provides a free and easy way to secure those numbers.

The Consortium annually offers a free Blue4U program consisting of biometric screening and wellness education program to all subscribers covered by our Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze plans.

When you participate in Blue4U, you will receive a con-

fidential personal health report, an individual health risk assessment, and free access to online coaching, support services, and educational tools.

You can schedule a screening until March 31, 2021. Register via phone at 888-823-3827 or set up an account at <https://www.integratedhealth21-blue4u.com>.

1. Click on, "New User? Register Here."
2. Enter your first name (as it is listed on your insurance card or payroll check), last name, birthday, and the company code: GREATERTOMPKINS
3. Create your username and password, enter your contact information, and complete the lifestyle questionnaire.
4. Then "Click here to register" and choose a screening option below.

**Test at a Lab:** click "Screening Services". Select the desired lab facility and complete registration.

**Obtain results from your doctor:** Select "Screening Services" and download the Physician Form. Note: participants may be responsible for out of pocket costs/copays if lab work is required to complete the Physician Form.

## Diabetes Pilot Program

The Consortium and Cayuga Health System (CHS) have developed a patient-centric diabetes pilot program, because diabetes is becoming more prevalent in the U.S. each year. In 2015, 7.4% of Americans had diabetes, but by 2018, 10.5% of the population did. There is no cure, but diabetes can be treated and controlled, and some people may go into remission.

We are bringing this opportunity to our subscribers in the CHS system. The pilot program identifies eligible pa-

“Diabetes” continued on page 4

## Labor Lens

### Our Governance: Municipalities and Labor Working Together

The Joint Committee on Plan Structure and Design elects its officers annually. The Joint Committee Chair and Vice Chair are elected by both labor and management committee members. Directors are elected by labor members only.

The Committee leadership extends a huge thank you to all who participate in the Joint Committee work, and to those stepping forward into leadership positions.

In April, Jim Bower, Town of Ithaca, will stand for re-election as Chair of the Joint Committee and Director of the Board. Jim was first elected as Joint Committee Chair in 2020. Laura Shawley, Town of Danby, has been reelected as Vice Chair, a position she has served since 2011.

Labor Directors in 2021 are:

- Nancy Webster, TC Blue Collar (since 2020);
- Zack Nelson, City of Ithaca (2018);
- Doug Perine, Tompkins County (2017); and
- Carol Sosnowski, Seneca County (2019); and
- Alternate Director: Jeanne Grace, City of Ithaca (2017).

Tim Farrell, City of Ithaca, was appointed as Labor Rep #5 in 2017. Tim has announced his retirement and will step down from the Director position. Tim has served on the Joint Committee since 2014. We will miss his commitment, good questions, and well-thought-out position statements.

The Joint Committee is seeking to fill the Labor Rep #5 vacancy in April. Please contact Executive Director Elin Dowd or Jim Bower with your questions or interest.

## Maintain Don't Gain Recipe Challenge

Participants in the Maintain Don't Gain Holiday Challenge competed to win a prize by sharing in the Recipe Challenge. Here is the winning recipe from Amanda Anderson of the Town of Dryden:

### Chocolate Avocado Pie

#### Ingredients

- 2 ripe avocados, flesh scraped out of skin and chopped in medium size pieces
- 1 ½ tablespoon of Dutch cocoa powder, or any type of baking cocoa powder
- 10 oz of chocolate chips, milk or dark
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons maple syrup
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 2 to 3 tablespoons coconut milk or regular milk, if needed
- 1 pie crust in 9-inch pan. Can be graham cracker, chocolate cookie, or traditional pie crust that has been blind baked.



Photo by [Adam Levine on Flickr, CC-BY](#)

Carefully melt the chocolate chips in the microwave by putting in a glass bowl. Microwave on high for 30 seconds, remove and stir. Continue microwaving for 30-second intervals until chips are fully melted after stirring.

Add the melted chocolate, avocado pieces, cocoa powder, salt, maple syrup, and vanilla to a blender and blend. Stop blades and scrap down the sides often. If not blending smooth add 1 tablespoon of milk at a time to allow the mixture to fully incorporate all the ingredients. Be sure all the avocado pieces are fully blended with the chocolate and you do not see any pieces in the mix. The mixture will be thick.

Taste for flavoring. Add more cocoa powder or maple syrup, if preferred. Pour in prepared crust of your choice. Refrigerate until firm, about 3 hours. Serve with whipped cream or your favorite topping. Store leftovers covered in the fridge for 3 to 4 days.

# Wellness

*Wellness is preventative health care that promotes health and prevents disease.*

## Emotional Health Support Resources

Do you need professional Emotional Health Support?  
Here are six signs:

- **Changes in Eating and Sleep Habits:** A notable increase or decrease in appetite and disrupted sleep patterns.
- **Unexplained Physical Ailments:** headaches, upset stomach, and general aches and pains.
- **Chronic Fatigue and Lack of Energy:** Everyone gets run-down, but it's not normal to feel that way for weeks or months.
- **Shunning Social Activity:** Personal connections, even if virtual, are crucial to good mental health.

- **Feeling Stressed with Daily Activity:** an inability to cope with problems to simply feeling overwhelmed.
- **Substance Abuse:** Overdrinking or using drugs is a common sign of more serious underlying issues.

If you have any of these behavioral health symptoms you can use our Telemedicine benefit.

Many local providers offer telemedicine visits for Emotional Health Support. Plus, subscribers can access MDLIVE™ to connect with a national network of board-certified psychiatrists and licensed therapists any-time for help with: Anxiety, Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Stress Management, Grief and Loss, LGBTQ Support, Trauma & PTSD, Relationship Issues, Panic Disorders, Addictions, and more.

You may download the FREE Well-frame® app and get started today by using access code: EXCELLUS



Image from Excellus BCBS Behavioral Health Brochure. (3. Data from health.ny.gov)



## Diabetes Pilot Program, continued

Continued from page 3

tients for outreach and interventions in diabetic education, provider engagement, and gap-in-care closure. The goal is to create an environment for more effective and affordable care of diabetic patients.

The program runs for 12 weeks from February to April. Jennifer Hatch (RN/CDE) at Cayuga Health System will

work with patients with a diabetic diagnosis to secure the treatment they need. Please contact Jennifer with questions regarding the pilot program or securing care at [jhatch@cayugamed.org](mailto:jhatch@cayugamed.org) or 607-274-4615.

Please note that the Consortium will not have a list of members being contacted, as that information is only available to Excellus and Cayuga Health System.

### Upcoming Open Meetings

At this time, all meetings are via Zoom. If you are interested in attending any meeting, contact [consortium@tompkins-co.org](mailto:consortium@tompkins-co.org) for the Zoom meeting link.

#### Executive Committee

March 3 and May 5 (3:30 PM)

#### Joint Committee on Plan Structure and Design

April 1 and June 3 (1:30 PM)

### The Consortium Connection

To receive this quarterly newsletter electronically, email a request to [consortium@tompkins-co.org](mailto:consortium@tompkins-co.org)

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