

Federal COVID-19 emergency declaration ends Now what?

Counties commemorate county role in fighting pandemic, call for rebuilding of local public workforce

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has stated, "May 11, 2023, marks the end of the federal COVID-19 PHE declaration. After this date, CDC's authorizations to collect certain types of public health data will expire.

"The United States has mobilized and sustained a historic response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a nation, we now find ourselves at a different point in the pandemic – with more tools and resources than ever before to better protect ourselves and our communities.

"CDC has been working for many months to fold the agency's COVID-19 emergency response activities into its existing structure and programs, as part of an ongoing transition to sustainable public health practice. The agency has also been working with partners, including states and local territories, to prepare for the end of the PHE declaration and communicate

updated reporting requirements and cadences.

"While reporting frequency and source data for some metrics will shift when the PHE declaration ends, CDC will continue to report valuable data to inform individual and community public health actions to protect those at highest risk of severe COVID-19. Our priority remains providing the information necessary to protect the nation's public health."

On Thursday, The New York State County Executives' Association shared:

As the federal public health emergency declaration for COVID-19 expires on May 11, 2023, the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) is commemorating the county role in fighting the pandemic while warning of challenges that remain for local governments that continue to experience significant workforce shortages.

"County officials played a crucial role in responding to the

public health and economic crisis, working tirelessly to protect residents and preserve our way of life," said NYSAC President and Clinton County Administrator Michael E. Zurlo. "They kept local services functioning, maintained critical infrastructure, administered elections, provided emergency medical services, and performed other essential jobs, sometimes at great personal sacrifice and risk. For county governments, it truly was both our darkest and finest hour."

While the end of the public health emergency is a significant milestone, COVID-19 remains a threat. Coronavirus was the fourth-leading cause of death in the United States in 2022, and it will likely remain a leading cause of death in 2023, especially for our most vulnerable residents.

Adding to the lingering threat posed by COVID and other infectious diseases is the significant depletion of the public workforce that counties have suffered in the

wake of the pandemic, down 3% (40,000 workers) since March 2020.

The drop has been most acute among local health departments (LHDs). A study conducted by the NYS Public Health Officials Association (NYSACHO) found that New York state's LHD workforce saw a 26% decline in the number of full-time staff employed between 2019 and 2021. Compounding the existing staff shortage, all LHD respondents, regardless of size, reported high impending retirements, with 990 FTEs (almost 10% of the current workforce) planning to retire within the next three years. Since the start of the pandemic, 31% of LHD leaders (commissioners/directors) have retired or left their departments.

The end of the public health emergency will have tangible consequences for counties' ability to respond to this threat. Health care providers will have less flexibility, over-the-counter

tests will be more difficult to access, telehealth coverage may be limited, and many Americans will see a decrease in social safety net benefits.

"As we close this chapter of the pandemic, we are reminded of the fear, struggle and pain county officials faced every day at the height of the outbreak, and the triumph they experienced in working to protect the public," NYSAC Executive Director Stephen Acquario said. "Moving forward, counties will continue to innovate and adapt to protect their communities and help them recover from the economic devastation that the pandemic caused. As we honor our local leaders for their courage and dedication in responding to the pandemic, we must also renew our dedication to supporting and strengthening the public workforce, investing in emergency preparedness, and rebuilding trust in our institutions."

Upward Niagara Chamber of Commerce: Growing Business & Community

Destination Niagara USA releases annual visitor guide

This past week, Destination Niagara USA revealed the new 2023-24 Visitor Guidebook for Niagara County. It is a full-color, magazine-style guide highlighting attractions, dining, history and shopping in Niagara County with four different artwork covers featuring Niagara Falls. This year, the Chamber placed a full-page advertisement. It was a major investment on our part financially in hopes to draw tourists to the businesses we represent.

Destination Niagara USA prints approximately 250,000 travel guides. The circulation of the guides is primarily through paid distribution companies who maintain their presence in hotels,

information centers and attractions throughout Niagara and Erie counties. The Chamber also carries the guides in the Welcome Center and distributes them to local businesses and hotels who see in influx of visitor traffic. The Niagara Falls USA Official Visitor Center uses the travel guide as a resource when providing suggestions for visitors. It is their premier print collateral piece that is also featured on their website, as well.

As the destination marketing organization for Niagara County, Destination Niagara USA serves as the tourism experts. Their marketing campaigns span internationally in bringing in visitors from all over the world.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Jennifer Pauly
President

The travel guide is highlighted in all of their e-communications, and website visitors are able to browse the travel guide online and click on the interactive ads.

The guide features the large events in Niagara

County and spotlights the Lewiston GardenFest, Lewiston Art

Festival, Northwest Jazz Festival, Niagara County Peach Festival, Harvest & Hops Festival and Fatima Shrine Festival of Lights.

Our ad features photos, a description of Lewiston and how close it is to Niagara Falls, information on the communities beyond Lewiston, and a QR code that will send visitors to our website. At the time of printing, we had not finished our branding process, but all of the contact information will send people to our site and our welcome center.

The tourism season is an important time for a lot of our member businesses. The winter months are long and, while there are still tourists in the winter, nothing compares to the volume of people that descend to the region in the summer.

If your business would like to have extra copies of the guidebook, let us know and we will bring a stack of them to you! For more information, visit www.upwardniagara.com.

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October 15-19 Vermont/N. Hamp/Maine - Portland Lighthouse
October 25 Sprague's / Seneca Alleg. Casino w/\$25 Casino bonus
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