



Report as of April 16, 2018

April is a month with many health, wellness and safety awareness initiatives. This report will highlight many of the awareness topics that have been showcased since my last report in March.

NYS PTA March Advocacy Newsbriefs

- Subsequent to, and as a follow-up on my March 12, 2018 report, on March 14, 2018, the Students, Teachers and Officers Preventing (STOP) School Violence Act, HR 4909, overwhelmingly passed in the House of Representatives. The bill creates a grant program to train teachers, students, school officials and local law enforcement on how to identify and intervene early when signs of violence arise. It also will construct anonymous reporting systems, and implement school threat assessment protocols to prevent school shootings before they occur. Now that the bill has passed the House, it is on to the Senate (S. 2495). <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s2495>
- Governor Cuomo announced more than \$1.6 million towards the expansion of mobile substance use disorder treatment and transportation services across New York. More than 20 vehicles have been purchased, with more expected in the coming months. The governor stated, “While the nation struggles with an ongoing opioid epidemic, New York is doing everything in its power to expand treatment options and resources to anyone seeking to get on the road to recovery.” <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-more-16-million-expansion-mobile-addiction-treatment-and>
- Governor Cuomo announced that the number of laboratory-confirmed influenza cases has been decreasing across New York, since being categorized as geographically widespread. Governor Cuomo stated, “I am encouraged to see yet another decrease in the number of flu cases across the state, but we must remain vigilant against the spread of the virus. If you haven’t already been vaccinated, I urge you to do so and to please stay home if you are sick to avoid spreading the illness.” Please see the following for influenza health information: <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/>
- Hunger Solutions New York released “The NYS School Breakfast Report.” The report shows the findings of school breakfast participation and how food insecurity is addressed across the state. More than 1.6 million New York State students qualify to eat at school for free or at a reduced price. Ensuring all children eats a healthy breakfast and lunch each day can dramatically alleviate hunger and support students’ health and academic achievement. Schools are on the front line of alleviating childhood hunger, and the federal and state funded school breakfast and lunch programs provide the nourishment low-income children cannot always get at home. Over two-thirds (66%) of low-income children participate in lunch, while only one-third (32%) participate in breakfast. Many schools across New York are closing the participation gap between breakfast and lunch. School districts that are leading the state with strong breakfast participation have implemented universal “Breakfast After the Bell” programs—where breakfast is offered to all students at no cost, after the official start of the school day. According to Hunger Solutions New York, “In January 2018, Governor Andrew Cuomo proposed a five-point plan to address student hunger, including a requirement that Breakfast After the Bell be offered in schools with 70% or more free and reduced-price eligible students. The “No Student Goes Hungry” proposal ensures that high-need schools are offering breakfast in a way that is accessible to all students. It provides policy

makers, advocates, educators, school districts, and state and federal child nutrition agencies with directives and resources to help more low-income kids start the day ready to learn with a healthy breakfast.” <https://hungersolutionsny.org/school-meals-hub-ny-0/school-breakfast-program/school-breakfast-report/>

April- Awareness Month for Many Health, Wellness and Safety Initiatives

- **April is Alcohol Awareness Month**- The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) is a valuable resource for millions of people struggling with alcoholism and addiction. <https://www.ncadd.org/>
- **April is STD Awareness Month**- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a valuable resource for all information regarding sexually transmitted diseases. Topics such as prevention, treatment, data and statistics, initiatives, etc. are readily accessible on the CDC website. <https://www.cdc.gov/std/>
- **April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month**- Child abuse is an issue that exists in communities throughout New York State. Every citizen can play a role in helping to protect the safety and well-being of our children. The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) website provides valuable information about programs to help keep children safe from abuse and maltreatment. <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/prevention/>
- **April is National Donate Life Month**- Every day, lives are saved and improved by the gift of life, sight and health. Each year, the number of people on the organ waiting list continues to be much larger than both the number of donors and transplants, which grow slowly. The organdonor.gov website contains inspirational stories about life saving donations, educational videos, statistics, stories and more about organ and tissue donation. <https://www.organdonor.gov/index.html>
- **April is National Minority Health Month**- The theme for 2018 is “**Partnering for Health Equity**” which highlights partnerships at the federal, state, local, tribal and territorial levels that help reduce disparities in health and health care. <https://www.minorityhealth.hhs.gov/nmhm18/>
- **April is Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month**- During Sexual Assault Awareness Prevention Month (SAAPM) people are asked to engage with the issue more directly by learning more about sexual violence, sharing important statistics, and stepping up to stop sexual assault. RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) is the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline (800.656.HOPE, online.rainn.org y rainn.org/es) in partnership with more than 1,000 local sexual assault service providers across the country. It also operates the DoD Safe Helpline for the Department of Defense. RAINN also carries out programs to prevent sexual violence, help survivors, and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice. According to the RAINN website, every 98 seconds, another person experiences sexual assault. Sexual violence affects hundreds of thousands of Americans each year. While progress is being made — the number of assaults has fallen by more than half since 1993 — even today, only 6 out of every 1,000 rapists will end up in prison. <https://www.rainn.org/>
- **April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month**- Distracted driving is any activity that diverts attention from driving, including talking or texting on your phone, eating and drinking, talking to people in your vehicle, fiddling with the stereo, entertainment or navigation system— anything that takes your attention away from the task of safe driving. Texting is the most alarming distraction. Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for 5 seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed. Personal distractions can occur when the driver is impaired by: daydreaming, alcohol, drugs, fatigue or unsafe practices like reading, writing, and shaving, applying makeup or using electronic devices such as computers, cell phones, iPods or GPS navigation systems. Internal distractions occur inside the car, caused by passengers, animals or objects inside the vehicle. External distractions occur outside the car can involve other motorists, inclement weather, deteriorated road conditions, or even the scenery.

New York prohibits all drivers from using portable electronic devices. Illegal activity includes holding a portable electronic device and:

- Talking on a handheld mobile telephone
- Composing, sending, reading, accessing, browsing, transmitting, saving, or retrieving electronic data such as e-mail, text messages, or webpages
- Viewing, taking, or transmitting images
- Playing games

Exceptions to the Laws

- When the driver uses a hands-free mobile telephone, which allows the user to communicate without the use of either hand.
- Using a handheld electronic device that is affixed to a vehicle surface.
- Using a GPS device that is attached to the vehicle.
- When the purpose of the phone call is to communicate an emergency to a police or fire department, a hospital or physician's office, or an ambulance corps.
- When operating an authorized emergency vehicle in the performance of official duties.

Police officers in New York State will be looking for cell phone law violators. Enforcement mobilization dates are April 12 - 16, 2018.

<http://safeny.ny.gov/phon-ndx.htm> See also, <https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/distracted-driving>

See also: <https://www.consumerreports.org/car-safety/dangers-of-driving-while-distracted/> for an excellent article about distracted driving. The article describes in detail some things that the automobile and tech industries are doing to help mitigate distracted driving dangers. Many new vehicles have advanced safety features (usually optional), like automatic emergency braking and lane-keeping assist. Smartphone manufacturers, and also small tech companies, have created apps and services to prevent teens and adults from using their phones while driving. Car manufacturers are trying to balance the desire for safety with technology. The article also has a section on “How to Protect Yourself From Yourself”, with suggestions to put your phone out of sight when you enter the car, take advantage of the in-car system (if there is one), not use earbuds, etc.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) website also contains valuable resources on this topic. It provides the following tips on how to stem distracted driving:

“We can all play a part in the fight to save lives by ending distracted driving.

Teens

Teens can be the best messengers with their peers, so we encourage them to speak up when they see a friend driving while distracted, to have their friends sign a pledge to never drive distracted, to become involved in their local Students Against Destructive Decisions chapter, and to share messages on social media that remind their friends, family, and neighbors not to make the deadly choice to drive distracted.

Parents

Parents first have to lead by example—by never driving distracted—as well as have a talk with their young driver about distraction and all of the responsibilities that come with driving. Have everyone in the family sign the pledge to commit to distraction-free driving. Remind your teen driver that in States with graduated driver licensing (GDL), a violation of distracted-driving laws could mean a delayed or suspended license.

Educators and Employers

Educators and employers can play a part, too. Spread the word at your school or workplace about the dangers of distracted driving. Ask your students to commit to distraction-free driving or set a company policy on distracted driving.” <https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/distracted-driving>