

ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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NEWS RELEASE

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County Invites Residents to Participate in Public Health Dispensing Exercise

Residents are invited to participate in a public health emergency preparedness POD (Point of Distribution) exercise at **MVCC Jorgensen Athletic and Event Center** (1101 Sherman Dr. Utica, NY) **on Tuesday, September 1st, from 1:00 -2:30 pm** Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente, Jr. announced today. *“The Health Department will practice dispensing pretend medication to approximately 300 people that walk through this quick and easy exercise”*, Picente stated. Participants simply check-in, receive a packet of information representing a fictitious household, and walk through a dispensing station to accept pretend medication. The first 300 **households** to register receive **\$10 in FREE coupons** to purchase items at a Farmer’s Market held on site at MVCC or at another time at the Oneida County Public Market at Union Station.

“PODs are a vital function of public health emergency response”, said Phyllis Ellis, Director of Health. She added *“In real public health emergencies, PODs are set up to provide potentially lifesaving medications, vaccines, or medical supplies when there is an actual public health threat that could adversely impact the lives of a lot of people in the community.”* The goal is to quickly provide these items to a large number of people in a short period of time. POD exercises help health departments to test, train, and improve their response to real-life emergencies.

Operating a POD requires significant effort, resources and coordination from multiple community partners. *“We are appreciative of the support and contributions of Mohawk Valley Community College, Oneida County Public Market, and Herkimer-Oneida Organizations Active in Disasters (HOOAD)”*, Picente said. He added, *“This type of collaboration is an excellent example of how working together and sharing resources can bring multiple benefits to our community; this exercise strengthens our capacity to respond to public health emergencies while at the same time promotes the value of buying local.”*

Those interested in participating should schedule an appointment in advance by selecting a 10 minute time slot of their convenience between 1:00 – 2:30 pm. Registration can be completed online at OCGOV.NET or at 798-5748 and will be closed after 300 time-slots are filled. Light refreshments will also be provided at the event.

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“PROMOTING AND PROTECTING THE HEALTH OF ONEIDA COUNTY”