



Consortium Connection

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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Introducing Kylie Rodrigues, Benefits Specialist

We are pleased to welcome Kylie Rodrigues to the Health Consortium staff as our new Benefits Specialist. As the Consortium has expanded to over 6,000 covered lives from 49 municipal employers, the Board of Directors has recognized the need for a Consortium-wide Benefits Specialist:

- to provide customer service and problem resolution for each employer's Benefit Manager,
- to create and implement wellness programs, and
- to act as the primary benefits contact for our members and their employees.

Kylie joined our staff on June 28th and is located at our Headquarters in Ithaca Town Hall. Kylie can be reached at krdrigues@tompkins-co.org or at 607-274-5933. Kylie comes to us with a background in insurance includ-

ing medical records, durable medical equipment, and various related customer service experiences specific to health plans. For eight years, Kylie worked for Schuyler County as an Insurance Counseling Coordinator at the Office for the Aging. Kylie has experience with benefit plans in general, but most specifically Medicare plans. Kylie has created educational classes for clients, including Medicare-eligible members, and has coordinated several pieces of literature regarding navigating insurance systems.



Kylie Rodrigues, Benefits Specialist

Mailing information.

Advice on COVID-19 Booster Shots

The FDA amended the emergency use authorizations (EUAs) for both the Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to allow for an additional dose in certain immunocompromised people. Effective August 12, 2021, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services will pay to administer additional doses of COVID-19 vaccines consistent with the FDA EUAs to those considered immunocompromised. Therefore, following federal guidelines, COVID-19 vaccine boosters will be covered by your Consortium benefit plan in the same manner as the initial vaccinations.

“The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services cautioned that the current protection against severe disease, hospitalization, and death could diminish in the months ahead, especially among those who are at higher risk or

were vaccinated during the earlier phases of the vaccination rollout.” (source: www.npr.org)

People 18 years and older who received the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines will be eligible for a booster dose eight months after their second dose. People who got the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine would also likely need an additional shot to prolong its effectiveness



against coronavirus infection and to reduce the severity of COVID-19 symptoms, health officials said. (source: www.nypost.com)

Please discuss your healthcare options with your doctor and decide the best course of action for your health.

Be Healthy.
Stay Safe.



New Health Insurance ID Cards

The NY State Department of Financial Services issued new minimum standards for the information on health insurance identification cards.

You will receive the new member ID card within 30 days after our January 1, 2022, renewal date. What will be new about the ID cards?

- ID cards will be sent to all subscribers and dependents, regardless of age. Dependents' identification number will be the same as the subscriber.
- Subscribers will continue to receive two member ID cards (Medical and Prescription).
- ID cards will include a standard set of information as designated by NYS.

Excellus Customer Care Unit

Beginning on October 1, 2021, one call will connect Consortium subscribers to Excellus's customer care professionals who know everything about your plan and how your benefits work for you. The Consortium's Dedicated Customer Care Number is 1-877-253-4797.

Flu Vaccines + Covid Vaccines

We are entering our second flu season of the coronavirus pandemic. Record low flu-related deaths last year were thanks in large part to people wearing masks and spending most of flu season working (and socializing) from home.

This year, many people are out and about much more, so getting a flu shot is important. The viruses are different, and so are the vaccines. Influenza season usually begins in October and peaks between December and February.

According to Dr. Anita Skariah, University of North Carolina health internist and pediatrician:

- “[The body] takes a few weeks to make antibodies once vaccinated, and the efficacy does diminish after six months. This is why we recommend obtaining the vaccine in September or October.”
- “It’s important to obtain the flu vaccine even if you have received the COVID vaccine. Neither will protect from the other — the flu vaccine will not protect you against Sars Co-V and the COVID vaccines will not protect you against influenza... Both are potentially deadly diseases that are preventable with vaccinations.”
- Unless you’ve had a severe allergic reaction to the flu shot in the past, it is recommended that everyone six months old and older get the flu shot.

8th Annual Free Flu Clinics Start in September

In keeping with the Consortium’s vision of creating a culture of wellness, we are again partnering with ProAct to offer free flu shot clinics. Beginning in September, subscribers to the Consortium, the subscriber’s spouse, and

dependents who are over 18 years of age can attend any of the flu clinics listed here. Everyone must pre-register.

Appointments should be scheduled through an online link (see table below). More dates are pending for Ithaca clinic sites, which we will announce via email.

Once you register for a flu clinic, you will receive an emailed screening questionnaire that you should fill out and bring with you. If you need assistance registering online, please contact the person who administers benefits at your municipality or Kylie Rodrigues, Consortium Benefits Specialist (607-274-5933).

Flu Clinic Health Precautions:

- Masks are required to access the clinics.
- If you have COVID symptoms in the 14 days before your flu clinic appointment, please do NOT come to the clinic. On arrival, we’ll ask if you’ve had COVID symptoms in the previous two weeks, but (as of this writing) we are NOT taking temperatures.
- There will be some space for walk-ins this year.
- The number of providers (pharmacists) differs based on participation and workstations. To avoid people congregating, please arrive at your appointed time.
- We will follow CDC protocols for cleaning, sanitizing between patients, and wearing shields/masks.

Labor Lens

Our Governance: Municipalities and Labor Working Together

Mental Health As Our Continual Focus

The annual medical utilization report from Excellus showed depression and anxiety continues to be the #1 chronic condition of our subscriber base. In response, the Joint Committee on Plan Structure and Design has named mental health as the number one priority for the Consortium’s wellness communications. Our goal is to provide you with information and ideas to promote mental health awareness in your home and workplace.

- **Suicide Prevention and Crisis Service** (ithacacrisis.org/). Call for a free and confidential crisis counseling at 607-272-1616 or toll free at 1-800-273-8255.
- **Headspace** (www.headspace.com/ny) is offering free meditation and mindfulness content for NYS residents coping with the unprecedented public health crisis.

More information: [Consortium’s Wellness website page](#)

2021 Flu Clinic Dates, Locations, and Registration Links

Date	Time	Location	Address	City	Flu Clinic Registration link
September 13	10 AM - 12 PM	City of Cortland Fire Hall	21 Court Street	Cortland	https://kinneydrugs.as.me/ProactCityofCortlandFireHall
September 22	8 AM - 12 PM	Village of Watkins Glen	195 South Clute Park Rd.	Watkins Glen	https://kinneydrugs.as.me/VillageofWatkinsGlen
September 28	1:30 PM - 3 PM	City Ithaca City Hall	108 East Green Street	Ithaca	https://kinneydrugs.as.me/ProactCityofIthacaCityHall
September 29	7:30 AM - 9 AM	Streets and Facilities (Public Works)	345 Pier Road	Ithaca	https://kinneydrugs.as.me/ProactCityofIthacaStreetsandFacilities
September 29	9:30 AM - 11 AM	Youth Bureau	1 James L. Gibbs Drive	Ithaca	https://kinneydrugs.as.me/ProactCityofIthacaYouthBureau
October 6	11 AM - 1 PM	Seneca County Building	1 DiPronio Drive	Waterloo	https://kinneydrugs.as.me/ProactSenecaCountyOfficeBuilding
October 15	6:30 AM - 8:15 AM	Town of Ithaca Public Works	114 Seven Mile Drive	Town of Ithaca	https://kinneydrugs.as.me/IthacaPublicWorks

Wellness

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

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

One in eight women in the United States will develop breast cancer in her lifetime. In 2020, an estimated 276,480 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in women in the U.S. as well as 48,530 new case of non-invasive breast cancer.



As doctor's offices and specialist's offices are now open again for regular visits, it is time to get back on track with your preventive health. Mammograms are an essential tool in early detection and prevention. Mammograms detect lumps or masses that are too small to be felt through self-exams.

"The American Cancer Society recommends yearly screenings for women with an average risk of breast cancer at age 45-55. After age 55, the ACS recommends a mammogram every other year but may elect to continue yearly screenings if you choose. Women at high risk should get a mammogram every year." (Source: cancer.org).

For more information about breast cancer, early detection, treatment, myths, and frequently asked questions please visit www.nationalbreastcancer.org.

Monthly Wellness Challenge Winners

The winners of the Consortium's June Wellness Challenge were:

- Diana Crouch, Healthy Neighborhoods Program Education Coordinator for the Tompkins County Health Department, and
- Jami Breedlove, Project Assistant with the Tompkins County Health Department.

Diana won a NYS Parks Empire Pass, and Jamie won a \$25 gift certificate to the Ithaca Farmer's Market.

The winners of the August "Eat Fresh" Challenge will be announced soon. Prizes for August are a \$50 gift card to Wegmans or a \$50 Gift Card to your Local Farmer's Market (where available.) For questions, contact Kylie Rodrigues, krdrigues@tompkins-co.org.



Jami Breedlove gardening



Diana Crouch hiking

Upcoming Open Meetings

Meetings are accessible via Zoom with some in-person attendance. If you are interested in attending a meeting, contact consortium@tompkins-co.org.

Board Meetings

September 23 (5 PM)

Executive Committee

November 3 and December 15 (3:30)

Joint Committee on Plan Structure and Design

October 7 and December 2 (1:30 PM)

For a list of all upcoming meetings, see the [Events](#) section of the website.

The Consortium Connection

To receive this quarterly newsletter electronically, email a request to consortium@tompkins-co.org

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