

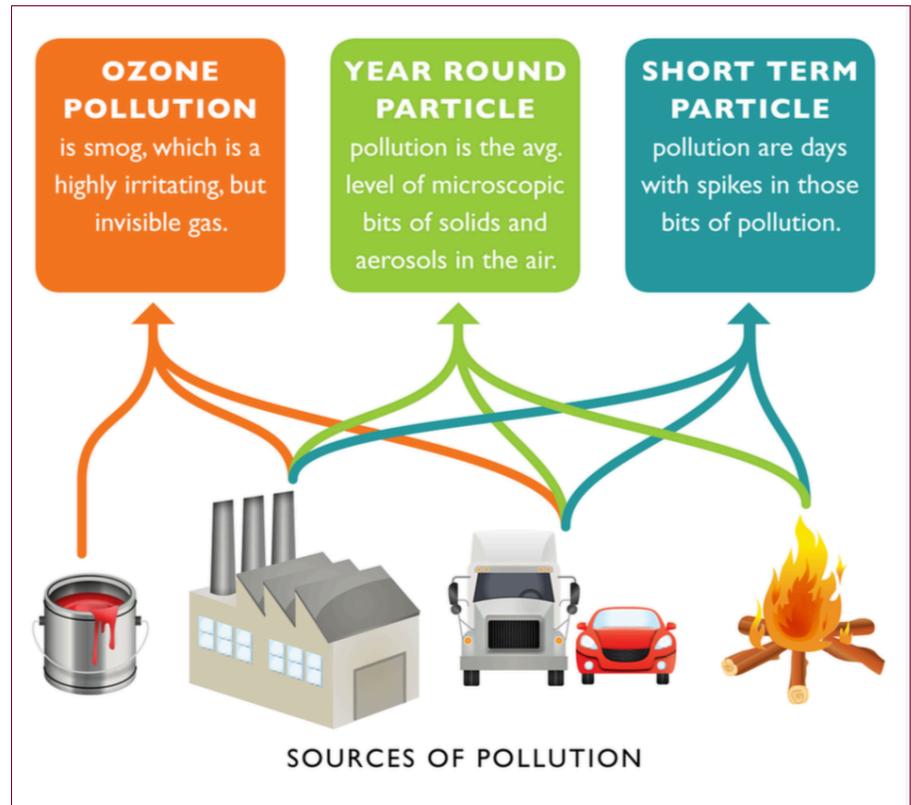
'State of the Air' report finds RI air quality improvement for particle pollution, ozone

PROVIDENCE – The 2022 “State of the Air” report, released recently by the American Lung Association, finds that Rhode Island’s counties improved their grades for some of the most harmful and widespread types of air pollution: particle pollution and ozone. The Boston-Worcester-Providence metro area, which includes Rhode Island’s five counties improved for ozone for the second year in a row, and ranked as one of the cleanest cities for short-term particle pollution for the third year in a row.

The “State of the Air” report is the Lung Association’s annual air quality “report card” that tracks and grades Americans’ exposure to unhealthy levels of ground-level ozone air pollution (also known as smog), annual particle pollution (also known as soot), and short-term spikes in particle pollution, over a three-year period. This year’s report covers 2018–2020. See the full report at Lung.org/sota.

“On unhealthy air days, ozone and particle pollution can harm the health of all of our residents, but particularly at risk are children, older adults, pregnant people and those living with chronic disease. Both ozone and particle pollution can cause premature death and other serious health effects such as asthma attacks, cardiovascular damage, and developmental and reproductive harm. Particle pollution can also cause lung cancer,” said Daniel Fitzgerald, director of advocacy for the Lung Association in Rhode Island. “Fortunately,

Sources of Air Pollution



the area did see an improvement in the levels of both pollutants this year.”

Ground-level ozone pollution in Providence

Compared to the 2021 report, the Boston-Worcester-Providence metro area experienced fewer unhealthy days of high ozone in this year’s report. “State of the

Air” ranked the metro area as the 47th most polluted city for ozone pollution, which is better compared to their ranking of 40 in last year’s report.

Notable county grades on ozone

- Two of the three reporting counties, Kent and Washington, improved their

Groups at Risk

County	Total Pop	Under 18	65 & Over	Pediatric Asthma	Adult Asthma	COPD	Lung Cancer	CV Disease	Pregnancies	Poverty Estimate	People of Color
Bristol	48,350	8,824	10,026	836	4,794	2,952	30	3,449	422	3,747	4,445
Kent	164,646	30,311	32,853	2,872	16,302	9,887	102	11,500	1,427	12,295	21,823
Newport	81,836	13,418	19,370	1,272	8,264	5,242	51	6,204	669	7,413	11,923
Providence	636,547	129,300	102,173	12,253	61,549	33,577	394	37,987	6,319	75,510	257,091
Washington	125,746	19,996	28,055	1,895	12,795	7,920	78	9,299	1,106	9,341	11,750
TOTAL:	1,057,125	201,849	192,477	19,128	103,704	59,578	655	68,439	9,943	108,306	307,032

[GRAPHICS: NATIONAL LUNG ASSOCIATION, STATE OF THE AIR 2022 REPORT CARD FOR RI.]

grades from F to D, while Providence maintained the failing grades from last year's report.

- Each county reported decreased levels of ozone pollution.
- All other counties did not collect this data.

Particle Pollution in Providence

The report also tracked short-term spikes in particle pollution, which can be extremely dangerous and even lethal. Providence's short-term particle pollution maintained an A grade in this year's report, which means there were zero unhealthy days. However, Providence continued to rank as the most polluted county in the Boston-Worcester-Providence metro area for year round particle pollution. The area is ranked 86th most polluted for year-round particle pollution, slightly better than the ranking of 84 last year).

Notable county grades on particle pollution:

- All three reporting counties maintained A grades for short-term particle pollution.
- All counties continued to meet the national standard for year-round particle pollution.
- Washington County ranked as one of three of the cleanest counties in the nation for year-round particle pollution.
- Providence County ranked as the most polluted for year-round particle pollution in the Boston-Worcester-Providence metro area.

Nationwide

The report found that nationwide, nearly 9 million more people were impacted by deadly particle pollution than reported last year. It also shows more days with

“very unhealthy” and “hazardous” air quality than ever before in the two-decade history of this report. Overall, more than 137 million Americans live in counties that had unhealthy levels of ozone or particle pollution. Communities of color are disproportionately exposed to unhealthy air. The report found that people of color were 61% more likely than White people to live in a county with a failing grade for at least one pollutant, and 3.6 times as likely to live in a county with a failing grade for all three pollutants.

The addition of 2020 data to the 2022 “State of the Air” report gives a first look at air quality trends during the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless of the shutdowns in early 2020, there was no obvious improvement. ❖

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¹ www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/cessation/quitting/index.htm





Timothy J. Babineau, MD, stepping down as Lifespan President, CEO

PROVIDENCE – The Lifespan Board of Directors announced on April 14th that it had accepted the resignation of President and CEO **TIMOTHY J. BABINEAU, MD**, effective May 31, 2022. At the request of the board, he will stay on as a consultant to the system through the end of September.

The Board will appoint an interim leader in the coming weeks and will conduct a national search to identify his successor.

“We are very grateful to Dr. Tim Babineau for his extraordinary leadership and exceptional service to Lifespan and the people of Rhode Island. Over the past decade, Dr. Babineau led the way transforming Lifespan into a world-class academic health system. We wish him and his family the very best in their next chapter,” said **DR. ZIYA L. GOKASLAN**, a Lifespan board member and Chief of Neurosurgery at Rhode Island and The Miriam hospitals and Director of the Comprehensive Spine Center at Rhode Island Hospital, and Clinical Director of the Norman Prince Neurosciences Institute.

Dr. Babineau first took the helm at Lifespan in August of 2012, following his tenure as President of Rhode Island Hospital, Hasbro Children’s Hospital and The Miriam Hospital.

His long-held vision, and what attracted him to Rhode Island, was the promise and opportunity to bring Lifespan, Care New England, and Brown University together to create a Rhode Island-based, integrated academic health system that would improve quality, access, and affordability of healthcare for all Rhode Islanders, a vision that unfortunately did not come to fruition.

“I joined Lifespan because I thought I could make a difference and I was impressed with the compassion, intelligence, and experience of those who work here and the quality of care provided to our patients. My initial impressions of Lifespan and our workforce have been not only validated but exceeded repeatedly over the years. It’s been nearly 10 years since I took this role, and while it has been difficult at times, it has been an extremely rewarding experience,” said Dr. Babineau.

“It is hard for me to put into words the incredible honor and privilege I have been given over these past several years to lead such an incredible organization. Working with my teams and all of the employees and caregivers at Lifespan, along with the board of directors, has been incredibly gratifying. Despite some recent challenges brought on by the pandemic, Lifespan is well positioned for continued future success on its journey to achieve the vision set forth in Lifespan 2025, our organization’s strategic plan. I am incredibly optimistic about Lifespan’s future and feel gratified to be leaving it on sound footing.” ❖

Whitehouse secures \$450K to connect electronic health records

Funding will support launch of new electronic records initiative through the Rhode Island Quality Institute

PROVIDENCE – U.S. Senator **SHELDON WHITEHOUSE** announced recently that he has secured \$450,000 to help the Rhode Island Quality Institute launch a new program aimed at improving patient care by expanding the availability of data from electronic health records in more health care settings. The Congressionally Directed Spending request was included in the omnibus bill that President Biden signed into law last month.

“Everyone wins when electronic health records are easily accessible to different providers. Patients get better, more efficient care and there is less waste in the system,” said Whitehouse, who founded the Rhode Island Quality Institute while serving as Rhode Island’s attorney general. “The Rhode Island Quality Institute has made a real difference in health care over the past two decades, and I’m pleased to deliver federal funds so that its services can reach more patients.”

The Rhode Island Quality Institute operates CurrentCare, Rhode Island’s health information exchange. The exchange supports access to medical data that enables better care coordination, reduces medical errors and waste, advances quality measurement, and engages patients and families in care decisions. CurrentCare was the first health information exchange in the nation to develop an independent patient portal. The exchange won the National Council for Community Behavioral Health’s Impact Award for Excellence for enabling substance abuse and alcohol treatment health data to flow into the health information exchange.

The federal funds will be used to develop, deploy, and evaluate a digital system to improve the quality of care for residents of skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies, and hospice and palliative care facilities across the state. The system will connect with existing

electronic health record systems used in different health care settings. In addition, the Rhode Island Quality Institute will help facilities that do not currently use CurrentCare to adopt it, and provide one-time support to upgrade existing electronic health record systems at Rhode Island hospitals and support information sharing across transfers.

“We are pleased to have the opportunity to lead this project that will benefit the many Rhode Islanders with high-need conditions who reside either in skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies, or hospice/palliative care facilities. This project will improve quality of care for these patients and will serve as a model for how public health infrastructure can significantly improve quality of care, improve patient satisfaction, and reduce healthcare expenditures,” said **NEIL SARKAR, PhD**, President and CEO of the Rhode Island Quality Institute. ❖

Lifespan hospitals join National Age-Friendly Health Systems Initiative

PROVIDENCE – Lifespan affiliates Rhode Island Hospital, The Miriam Hospital and Newport Hospital have formally begun participating in the Age-Friendly Health Systems initiative, a nationwide movement to advance health care for older adults.

Age-Friendly Health Systems, launched in 2017, is an initiative of The John A. Hartford Foundation and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, in partnership with the American Hospital Association and the Catholic Health Association of the United States. They are helping hospitals and other care settings implement a set of evidence-based interventions specifically designed to improve care for older adults.

The initiative is based on a series of practices focused on addressing four essential elements of care for older patients:

- **What Matters:** Align care with each older adult's specific health goals and preferences, including end-of-life care.
- **Mentation:** Prevent, identify, treat, and manage dementia and depression.
- **Mobility:** Ensure that older adults move safely every day to maintain function
- **Medication:** If necessary, use medications that do not interfere with mobility, mentation or what matters to the older adult.

Lifespan's Age-Friendly interventions will initially focus on mobility, volunteer support, doll therapy, geriatric resource nurse training, and medication alerts. ❖

VA Providence Healthcare System holds ribbon cutting for advanced hemodialysis facility

PROVIDENCE – The VA Providence Healthcare System (VAPHS) held a ribbon cutting for its state-of-the-art hemodialysis facility on April 18th at the VAPHS Providence campus on Chalkstone Avenue.

The new hemodialysis wing comprises more than 12,000 square feet of newly constructed clinical space and can service 14 dialysis patients simultaneously, including two private rooms with one negative pressure room that can be used for high-risk patients such as those with COVID-19. ❖

Integra Community Care Network, Flourish Fund announce maternal wellness program

PROVIDENCE – Integra Community Care Network and the Flourish Fund announce an innovative community-based program for parents-to-be to improve health outcomes and equity for pregnant patients. The maternal wellness program will connect eligible families to a range of resources, including community-based providers, online education, and a “wellness essentials” care package to support them during pregnancy, birth, and early parenthood.

This pilot program will be offered to patients of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Care Center (OGCC) at Women & Infants Hospital who are also members of Integra's Medicaid Accountable Entity program.

“Integra is committed to finding innovative ways to help our members meet their healthcare needs,” said **JOHN MINICHIELLO**, president of Integra Community Care Network. “We're excited to partner on this initiative and to provide a new level of maternity care in the community.”

The goal of this wellness program is to improve maternal and infant health outcomes such as C-section rates, breastfeeding rates, pre-term birth rates, NICU and emergency department utilization, mental health, patient satisfaction, and self-efficacy.

The Flourish Fund will help match eligible patients to a choice of appropriate community-based doulas based on patient preferences including preferred language. Enrolled members can receive doula support during their pregnancy, birth and up to six months postpartum. In addition, patients will receive access to monthly education in the form of live webinars as well as videos and articles by national and local experts, in both English and Spanish. All enrolled patients will also receive a parent and baby “wellness essentials” care package.

Integra Community Care Network has partnered with the Flourish Fund to help refer patients to culturally and linguistically appropriate birth and postpartum independent community-based doulas participating in the program.

“The Flourish Fund is excited to partner on this innovative model of maternity care that extends support beyond the clinic and into the community. Partnerships like this provide families access to a unique combination of education, tools, and the right support system from pregnancy through post-partum,” said **MELISSA BOWLEY**, CEO & Founder of Flourish Fund.

The program is directly funded by Integra as part of its Medicaid AE program. The program will be available at no cost to members who enroll. ❖