



Member Spotlight

What is your organization's mission? What does your organization do? Who do you serve?

The Cancer Services Program (CSP) of Nassau County provides breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screenings and diagnostic services at no cost to women and men who qualify. In order to qualify, individuals must live in New York State (NYS), must be uninsured or underinsured, and must meet age and income requirements. We serve the members of the community most in need of cancer screenings at no charge. These are individuals who would not be able to receive cancer screenings without the program. We have investigated the county's demographics to be able to pinpoint exact locations and communities and to target these particular populations to offer our services.

What motivates you to reduce the burden of cancer?

As a Registered Oncology Nurse, I have seen firsthand how cancer can affect an individual and their family. I have cared for patients of all ages with many different diagnoses and a cancer diagnosis is like a train that has gone off the track. It is not what was planned, however we as caregivers can assist to get the train back onto the track. I believe we all have a role to play in reducing the cancer burden in NYS, either clinical or non-clinical individuals can all work toward the same goal of educating about early detection and cancer risk reduction. The more education we can provide and the more services we can provide to lower-income individuals, the more we can find cancers at their earliest stages when they are most treatable.

What might you say to an individual who is considering joining the NYS Cancer Consortium?

I would tell anyone that is considering joining the NYS Cancer Consortium that there is no negative in joining! You get to be a part of the greater good to reduce the cancer burden in the state, to assist and educate as many people as possible and to help people! What a great group to be a part of!



Sara Parise, RN

The Cancer Services Program of Nassau County

Which of your cancer-related initiatives are you most proud of?

The CSP of Nassau County is proud that we have been able to activate all Nassau County Federally Qualified Health Centers as CSP sites, even during the pandemic. We have not stopped screening, seeing patients or working towards our goal of screening and educating as many Nassau County residents that we can. We have maintained all of our previous initiatives, all while pivoting the program to be run virtually whenever possible.

How does your work support the NYS Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan?

The work of the CSP of Nassau County supports the NYS Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan (Plan) by engaging with the community as a goal of the program. The Plan identifies and addresses the cancer burden in NYS. The CSP aligns with the same goals in order to find cancer at its earliest and most treatable stage through community education, outreach and increasing access to screening and diagnostic services for members of the community most in need.



What do you think will be the biggest challenge in reducing the burden of cancer in the near future?

The reduction of screening rates due to the current health crisis we are experiencing globally. We have seen more and more individuals not maintaining their regular cancer screening schedules, which could negatively affect their health. I believe we are going to see cancer diagnosed at a later stage due to the reduction of screening rates. We have to work together to collaborate with advocacy groups, providers, elected officials and groups like the Consortium to disseminate public education that is it extremely important to maintain regular cancer screenings. We have heard that individuals don't feel completely safe coming into hospitals or imaging centers for appointments in fear of becoming sick -- we, as healthcare professionals, need to increase the public trust that the centers are doing everything they can do to keep them safe and healthy and how important it is to come in for evaluation.

What collaborations have been successful to your organization in your work to reduce the burden of cancer?

During the time since the pandemic began, we have shifted our outreach strategies to offer more virtual options to maintain spreading the word about the Cancer Services Program along with the importance of maintaining regular screenings. We have collaborated with a local University Breast Cancer program to offer a virtual seminar in Spanish teaching about the signs and symptoms of Breast Cancer and to offer up locations for screening that are safe. We have also collaborated with our elected officials, specifically a New York Assemblywoman, and we were able to participate in another virtual forum sponsored by her and her colleagues focusing on Colon Cancer in the Black community after the death of Chadwick Boseman. Both of these sessions yielded calls to our office for appointments for screenings. We have found that partnering with local groups and individuals that share the same goals that we do increases our chances to reach as many people as possible.

What benefits do you see to joining the NYS Cancer Consortium?

Joining the NYS Cancer Consortium has provided invaluable resources, networking opportunities and further education to reduce the cancer burden in NYS. It provides a strategy that we can use as a framework for community engagement in order to reduce cancer morbidity and mortality.