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March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Auburn, NY (March 02, 2022) — The Cancer Services Program (CSP) of Cayuga, Cortland, and Tompkins Counties is now offering free colorectal cancer screening for people ages 45 and older. People at average risk for colorectal cancer and who do not have health insurance may qualify.

The United States Preventive Services Task Force lowered the recommended age for colorectal cancer screening for people at average risk from age 50 to 45. The change comes as national and New York State data show that 9 out of 10 of new colorectal cancer cases happen in adults aged 45 and older. Some people are at higher risk for colorectal cancer due to family history, symptoms, or because they have other bowel diseases. People at high risk may need to begin screening before age 45.

“We are very excited to announce during Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month that we now start screening people at age 45 instead of 50,” said Courtney McCallen of the Cortland County Health Department. The Cancer Services Program uses stool-based tests that are done at home and mailed to a lab. At-home testing is a great choice for many people during the pandemic, and the tests are safe and effective.”

Regular screening for colorectal cancer can save lives. Screening tests can find growths that can be removed before they turn into cancer. Screening tests can also find colorectal cancer early when treatment may work best.

Data show that among New Yorkers ages 50 to 75, about 30% are not up-to-date with colorectal cancer screening. Those who do not have insurance are even further behind with about one-half not being up-to-date with colorectal screening. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic caused many people to delay colorectal and other cancer screenings.

“I can’t stress enough how important it is for New Yorkers to get back to regular, on-time screening. Talk to your health care provider about your risks for colorectal cancer and your testing options,” said Ms. McCallen. “If you do not have health insurance or a health care provider, the CSP may be able to help you.”

The CSP offers free colorectal, cervical, and breast cancer screening to eligible adults who do not have insurance. Call the CSP at 607-758-5523 for help and to find out if you qualify for free cancer screening.