
ESSEX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

DIRECTOR - LINDA BEERS, MPH



Directors' Statement

Overview

In 2025, the Essex County Department of Health advanced its mission to protect and improve community health through prevention, preparedness, and strong partnerships. The year reflected continued delivery of core public health services locally, paired with sustained leadership and advocacy at the state and national levels to address emerging challenges facing rural public health systems.

Statewide Leadership & Advocacy

My service on the **New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) Executive Committee** concludes this year, following sequential roles as **Vice President, President, and Past President**. During this period, NYSACHO addressed workforce shortages, emergency medical services sustainability, opioid mortality, and ongoing funding constraints.

Although my Executive Committee term has ended, **I remain an active member of NYSACHO**, continuing to participate in committees, workgroups, and statewide advocacy efforts that benefit Essex County and strengthen public health across New York State.

NYSACHO Committees & Workgroups

- Disease Control *Environmental Health *Family Health* Emerging Issues*Workforce & Funding *Rural County Workgroup*Article 28 & 36 Ad Hoc Workgroups*CHHA Counties Ad Hoc Workgroup

Local Value:

This work ensured rural county needs—limited workforce capacity, geographic access barriers, EMS strain, and aging infrastructure—were consistently represented in state policy discussions and legislative proposals.

2025 State Budget & Legislative Highlights

Executive Budget – Public Health

- Article 6 and categorical public health funding remained flat. Advocated for no reduction
- Statewide tick-borne disease funding eliminated - this was reinstated through advocacy
- JUUL settlement funds appropriated, allowing future local distribution- funding being used in Essex with oversight of the TURN Coalition.
- Continued capital investments in lead abatement, swimming safety, and playground infrastructure

Key Public Health Proposals (Pending)

- EMS designated as an essential service with county planning requirements
- EMT authorization to administer buprenorphine
- Expanded scope of practice for pharmacists, medical assistants, and dental hygienists
- Universal free school meals beginning in the 2025–26 school year
- Hospital-at-Home model codified in state law

Non-Budget Legislative Advocacy

Essex County supported NYSACHO advocacy on legislation to:

- Strengthening enforcement of flavored vape product restrictions
- Permit local health officials access to medical examiner and coroner reports for overdose surveillance – very valuable with elected coroners.
- Establish Recovery Ready Workplace programs
- Align Community Health Assessment and Improvement Plan cycles -

These efforts improve data access, prevention capacity, workforce participation, and enforcement tools at the local level.

Local Partnerships & Community Initiatives

Coalitions and Programs

- **Essex County Heroin Other Coalition (ECHO):** Implemented Essex County's first Opioid Fatality Review (OFR)
- **TURN Tobacco Use Reduction Network:** Regional coordination on JUUL settlement planning
- **Building Resilience In Essex Families (BREIF):** Workforce resilience and leadership development
- **Adirondack B-3 Alliance:** Home visiting cost modeling for the North Country

Boards, Advisory Roles & Appointments

- Child Fatality Review Board
- Eastern Border Health Initiative
- North Country Community College – Board of Trustees
- NY Health Foundation – Community Action Council
- SPHWSP – University at Albany Strengthening Public Health with Scholarship Program
- OSFAB – New York State Opioid Settlement Fund Advisory Board (NYSAC-appointed)
 - Contributed to statewide recommendations focused on equity, harm reduction, treatment, recovery, prevention, special populations, and data-driven funding
 - Provided guidance on allocation of **\$35 million in earned interest** from the Opioid Settlement Fund

Major Meetings, Conferences & Presentations

- **NYSAC Conference:** Chair, Public Health & Mental Health Subcommittee
- **AHI North Country Leadership Summit:** Plenary Moderator
- **UVM CVPH Regional Cancer Planning Meeting**
- **National OFR-PHAST Learning Community Partner Call:**
Breaking Barriers to Overdose Fatality Review in New York State—Partnerships, the Mock OFR Toolkit Pilot, and Real-World Successes

Crisis Response Highlight: SNAP (2025)

In response to instability in SNAP benefits, Essex County coordinated partners through the Well Fed Collaborative to rapidly disseminate information and secure emergency resources. **\$20,000** in county funding was authorized and distributed to all local food pantries within days, preventing service disruption for vulnerable households.

Looking Ahead – 2026 Priorities

- Increase community participation in the Community Health Assessment
- Strengthen referral systems with UVM Health Network and local providers
- Expand opioid prevention and OFR-informed strategies
- Continue state and federal advocacy to protect Medicaid, SNAP, and public health funding

Conclusion:

As I begin my sixteenth year with the Essex County Health Department, I remain deeply committed to the communities we serve. Our rural makeup and growing aging population continue to shape the work ahead, and addressing rural healthcare access will need to remain a priority in the years to come. I have added Jessica Darney Buehler as my Deputy, and I look forward to working closely with her and training her in this leadership role to ensure continuity and coverage when I am not available.

Moving forward, my focus is on setting the agency up for the future by developing a strategic plan that clearly outlines our direction and provides a realistic roadmap for how we get there. Essex County continues to face complex public health challenges, but through collaboration, strong local leadership, and advocacy, we are well positioned to respond. Our partnerships at the local, state, and national levels remain essential as we work to meet emerging public health needs while continuing to provide reliable public health services to our residents.

Essex County Health Department Overview

Vision: Healthy People in Healthy Communities

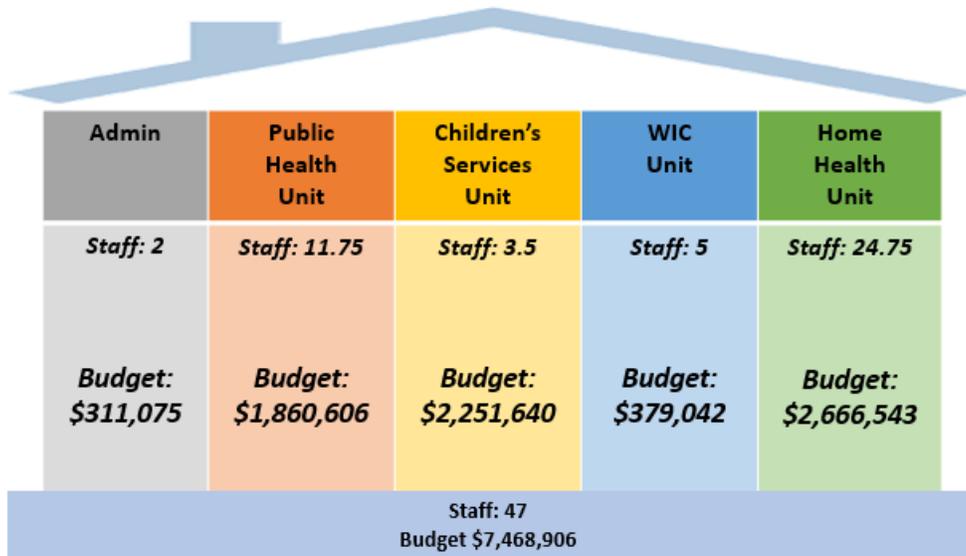
Mission: It is the mission of Essex County Public Health to prevent disease, promote health, and protect life by contributing to conditions within our communities such that people can be healthy.

Board of Health: The Essex County [Board of Supervisors](#) serves as the Essex County Board of Health.

Public Health Advisory Committee/Professional Advisory Committee:

Linda Beers, MPH, Jessica Darney Buehler, MPH, Jennifer Newberry, BSN, Hannah Smith, PT, Kristen Sayers, Dr. Michael Celotti, Dr. Mary Halloran, Dr. Katie Alexander, Julie Tromblee, MSN, Erin Korn, RN, Terri Morse, Krissy Keerkes, Matt Watts, Morgan Conley, Kathy Daggett, RN, Derek Doty, Megan Murphy

Medical Director: Dr. Michael J. Celotti



Annual Staff Training

The Health Department offered training for all staff members in January to go over policies, procedures, expectations and updates applicable to all at the beginning of the year. Annual Training sets the expectations for the Department's work for the year in how we continue to serve the community with accountability and transparency.

On-Call Service Collaboration & Efficiency Realized

The Department transitioned after-hours call services to the Essex County Office of Emergency (OES) Services in April. This transition has been incredibly smooth with the collaboration of the Departments of OES and Information Technology (IT) and is saving the Department from expenses of a private contract. This service ensures the Department meets its requirements to be available 24/7 for issues related to public health and home care.

ON-CALL TYPES 2025

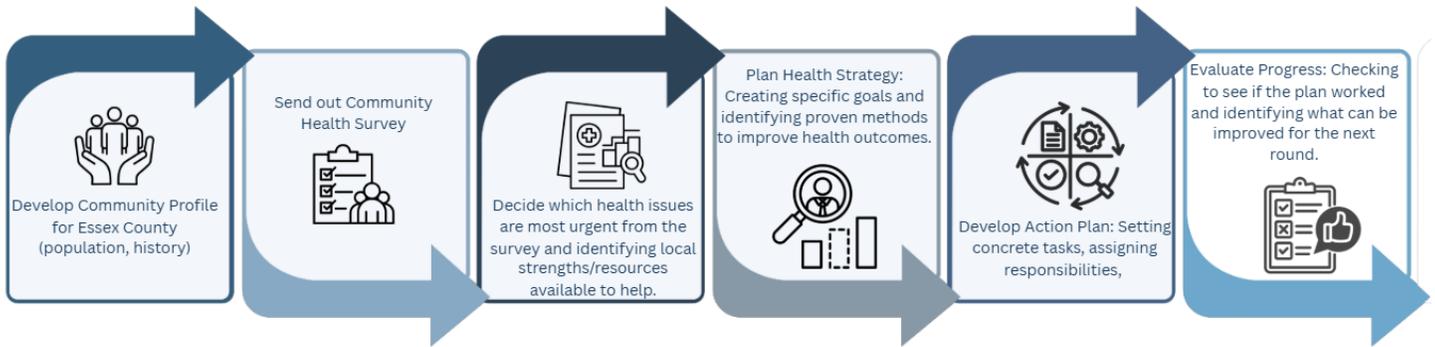
MONTH	Public Health				Homecare			Totals	
	Rabies	Communicable Disease	Other (Vaccine Storage /Baby Steps, Misc)	TOTAL PUBLIC HEALTH	New Admission	Existing Patient	Homecare Other	TOTAL HOMECARE	DEPT TOTAL/MONTH
January	1		1	2	2	2	1	5	7
February	3			3	2	2		4	7
March	2	2	1	5	2	5		7	12
April	2		3	5	5	2		7	12
May	3			3	4	2		6	9
June	3			3	2	3		5	8
July	11		2	13	1	3		4	17
August	18			18	1	2		3	21
September	4			4	2	2	1	5	9
October	6			6	2	3	2	7	13
November	1			1	2	2		4	5
December	2		1	3	4	4		8	11
				66				65	131

PROGRAMS

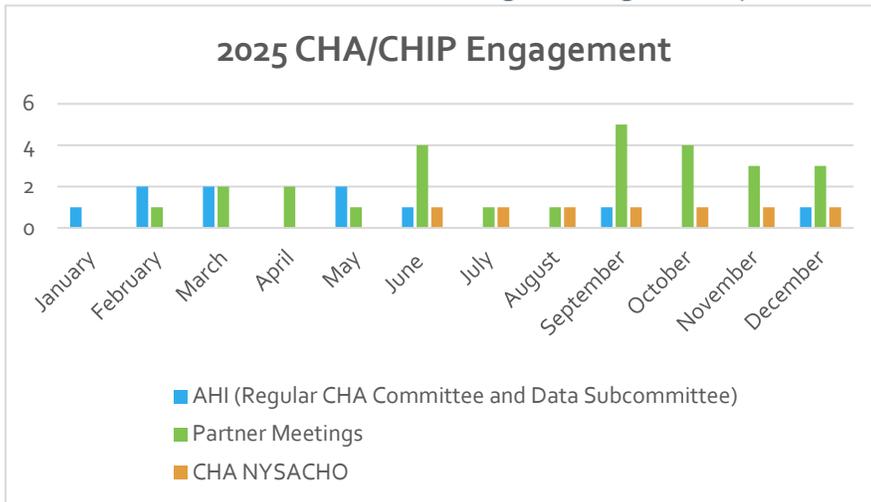
Community Health Assessment

New York State requires its local health departments to conduct Community Health Assessments and develop Community Health Improvement Plans with their local hospitals and other partners on a periodic basis in conjunction with the New York State Prevention Agenda

The year 2025 culminated in the submission of a new Essex County Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan to NYSDOH – produced through a year+ long collaborative effort with area hospitals and other key partner agencies and organizations. The CHA process cycle is described below:



- **Reduce Disparities with Data:** Using statistics to identify which groups are facing the most significant health challenges.
- **Prioritize Needs and Assets:** Deciding which health issues are most urgent and identifying local strengths/resources available to help.
- **Document and Communicate Results:** Sharing the findings with the public and stakeholders so everyone is informed.



Communicable Disease

Local health departments are required to maintain a program designed to minimize the incidence of communicable disease through surveillance, timely investigation, and reporting.

Communicable Disease Surveillance/Epidemiology Investigations

Respiratory Illness investigations (Flu, COVID, RSV, TB) – **1,181**

GI Illness (Water/Foodborne) Illness Investigations - **31**

STI/Hepatitis & HIV Investigations – **86**

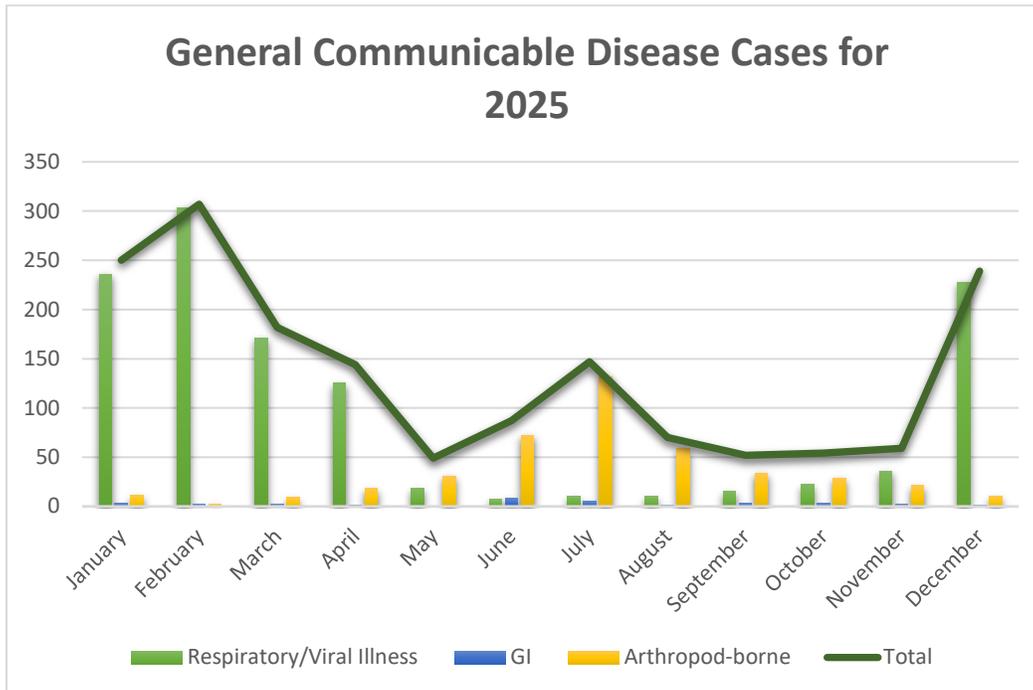
Arthropod-borne (Mosquitos and Ticks) Disease Investigations - **428**

- Presentation at Keene Library on Ticks/Tick-borne Diseases
- Tick-borne Disease Public Service Announcement (PSA) - Let No Tick Stick - launched Fall 2025



Food Safety/Outbreak Investigations – 5 Camp Outbreaks

ECHD nurse conducted visit with NYSDOH District Office to a camp experiencing outbreak in campers and advised camp on steps to break chain of infection transmission.



**Data represents confirmed, probable, & suspect case investigations*

Immunization Program

Essex County Health Department serves as a safety net immunization provider. This means we encourage community members to seek immunizations with their regular healthcare provider if they have one and vaccinate those without a healthcare provider. People with a flux in housing, insurance or whose healthcare provider does not carry the vaccine they need, can access vaccines through our Department.

Following our Vaccine Program Management Plan, ECHD provides vaccine doses based on patient eligibility and NYSDOH billing requirements. We participate in the Vaccine for Children and Vaccine for Adults Programs. Vaccines for Children (VFC) is a federal vaccination program that allows us to provide vaccines to children 0-18yrs who have Medicaid, Child Health Plus, or are uninsured, at no charge. Vaccines for Adults (VFA) is a similar program to VFC exists for adults, known as VFA, providing vaccines at no cost to those adults whose insurance does not cover certain appropriate vaccinations, or to uninsured adults.

Our Department offers school-based clinics to help ensure students meet school immunization requirements allowing them to stay in school. Each fall we offer a clinic for Essex County government center employees to help keep employees healthy and at work. In 2025, it served as a Public Health Preparedness Exercise for staff.

Clinics in the community:

School-based clinics to help children meet NYS immunization requirements to attend school - 3

County Flu Clinic for employees – 1

Open clinic hours upon request - **Ongoing**

Individuals immunized - **152**

Immunizations administered - **219**

Vaccine for Children doses – **69**

Vaccine for Adult doses – **25**

All other Private doses – **33**

Essex County Employee Flu & COVID Clinic doses - **92**

Beyond offering vaccines directly, our Immunization Program works with schools, providers and families of vaccine confidence and ensure quality improvement efforts within our healthcare system.

School Immunization Soft Audits – 4

ECHD offers on-site and/or remote record review of student immunization records to assist school nurses in determining if students are out of compliance with NYSDOH Immunization attendance requirements and then assisting nurses and families of students with coming into compliance.

Provider IQIP Visits – 4

IQIP is a NYSDOH grant-mandated LHD activity that assesses Essex County Health care providers' pediatric and adult immunization compliance with NYSDOH recommended vaccinations, and provides data, feedback, goals, and education to providers with the target of attaining certain percentages of complete immunization compliance at certain ages (example: 95% of 5 year olds will have all the specific vaccinations required for them to enter Kindergarten on time). Visits include an initial visit, goal setting and 6-month follow-up.

Amish Outreach

Given that it is unknown by ECHD if the Amish families in our area follow standard vaccination recommendations, when the US and Canadian Measles outbreaks began in 2025 (many cases were Amish or Mennonite), ECHD developed an education packet with crayons and coloring activities for Amish children, along with messaging for parents regarding measles disease risk, transmission, prevention, and our willingness to come to their community to vaccinate anyone interested in receiving vaccination. Two-dozen or so packets were distributed to Amish by dropping off at farm stands, via neighbors of Amish whose phones the Amish use routinely, and giving packets out at community events in the spring of 2025. Positive feedback from Amish parents and children pleasantly received them as gifts. Unfortunately, no Amish have made contact with ECHD to request vaccination. Nevertheless, we have no knowledge of any Measles outbreaks in Essex County to this date.

North Country Immunization Coalition - Quarterly

Our Department participates in a regional remote-only meeting with immunization nurses from Franklin, Clinton, and Hamilton Counties to discuss goals and current practices of how to collaborate with healthcare partners, fill immunization gaps in our communities and improve immunization update.

Hep B Program

Investigations - <10

Screening Services

HCV Screenings - 4

HIV Screenings - 4

STI Screening Services –referrals and/or services rendered - 11

Outreach events for HCV/HIV Training - 3

TB Program

TB Screening – 17

Case Investigations/Management

<10 *non-infectious* Latent TB cases. Case management requires contact with patient, test result review, education on disease progression prevention, and facilitation of health care provider contact for follow-up treatment.

Exposure Prevention

Mask Fit-Testing determines if a particular size and model of respirator (mask) provides staff with an acceptable fit. Staff must be fit tested for each respirator model they will wear for their designated work tasks. Certain ECHD Health Department staff, such as nurses, are appropriate for Fit-Testing. The Department was also asked to conduct fit testing for a local EMS Squad & was able to provide this service.

EMS Staff Fit Tested - 10

Refugee Health

Referrals/investigations for refugee health – <10

Supporting the administration of the NYSDPH Refugee Health Program, ECHD works with eligible newcomers to Essex County within 90 days of arrival to ensure health assessments and screenings are complete for arrivals. The refugee health assessment is designed to:

- identify individuals with health conditions not observed during or developing after the overseas exam
- initiate appropriate immunizations
- ensure individuals with identified health conditions are referred to primary and specialty care
- provide an orientation to the U.S. healthcare system and education on the availability and utilization of health services
- individual health promotion and population health protection

This work can often require home visits, addressing language barriers, and immunization appointments at ECHD clinics.

Camp Outreach

Summer camp season can often bring with it a significant increase in workload for the Essex County Health Department. We collaborate with our District Office of Environmental Health in Saranac Lake to ensure campers and staff remain healthy and safe throughout the season. Doing what, you wonder? Mostly communicable disease prevention and control.

Unlike schools, camps in NY do not have vaccine requirements. So campers and staff come in from all over the state, country and world and then share a communal living environment.

In the spring we send each camp a welcome letter covering the topics we're most likely to work with them over the summer. Our staff also provide in-person education to Town municipal summer camp staff and accompany District Office staff whenever possible for camp openings to ensure clear and consistent communication all summer long. Voluntary site visits occurred at several visits in 2025. Visits included education regarding measles, rabies exposure prevention, respiratory illnesses, communicable disease reporting requirements and protocols, assessing sick camper isolation capacity and infection control capabilities of camp health offices, and educating on various topics pertinent to the Adirondack outdoors such as tick-borne disease awareness, mosquito protection, etc. Handouts provided as well, to accompany mailings provided to all Essex County camps.

Of the 13 overnight camps operating in county there were 5 outbreak investigations: respiratory illness, coxsackie illness, GI illness and skin lesions.

There were 31 people with rabies exposures to 14 bats over the course of the summer camp season.

Five (5) bats were available for testing and rabies rule out.

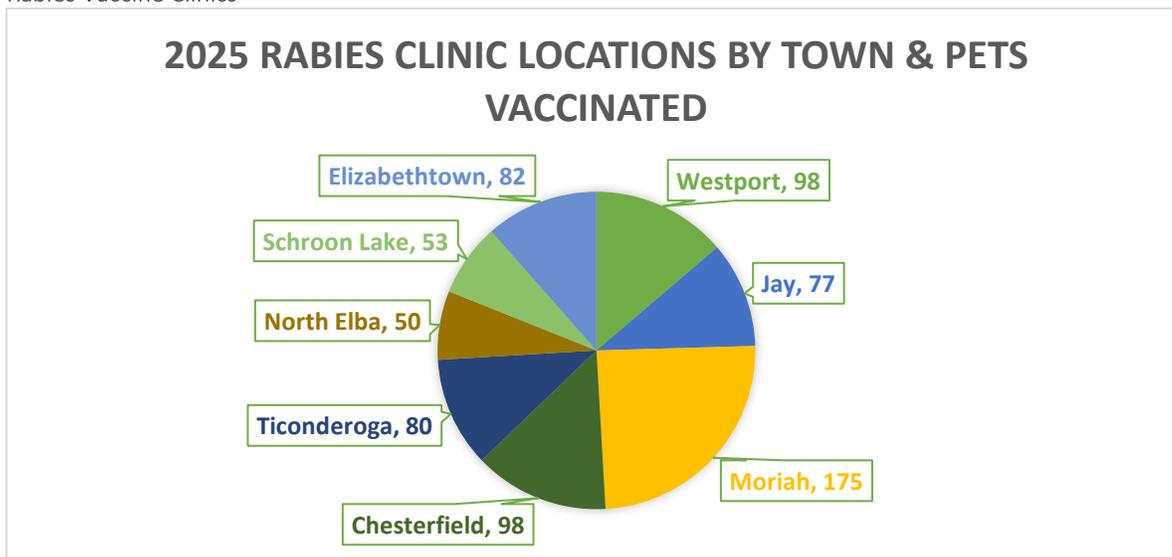
Nineteen (19) people received rabies post-exposure treatment.

NYSDOH HCV Focus Group

In the fall of 2025, ECHD participated in a Hepatitis C Focus Group targeting rural communities in New York experiencing particularly high rates of hepatitis C. The NYS Department of Health Bureau of Hepatitis Health Care and Epidemiology conducted this series of in-person focus groups with the goal of learning from providers and community members about existing knowledge, assets, and challenges related to hepatitis C testing, treatment, and cure in rural communities. Some outcomes/takeaways from this endeavor included developing strategies for connecting people to HCV testing resources, improving surveillance, and increasing treatment uptake.

Rabies Prevention Program

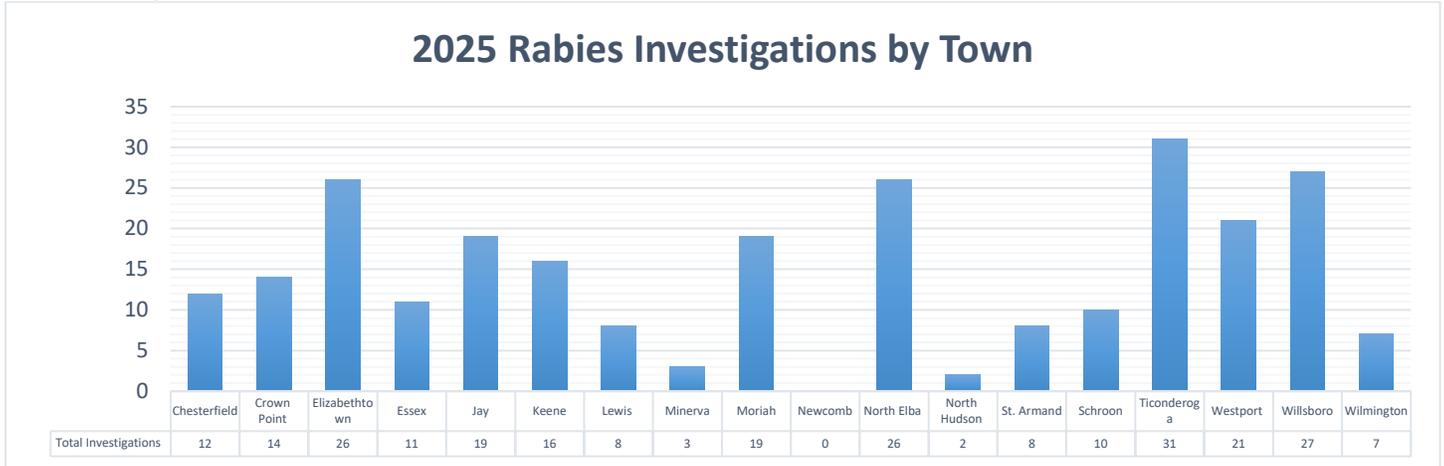
Rabies Vaccine Clinics –



Total donations collected from all clinics = \$2,260.00

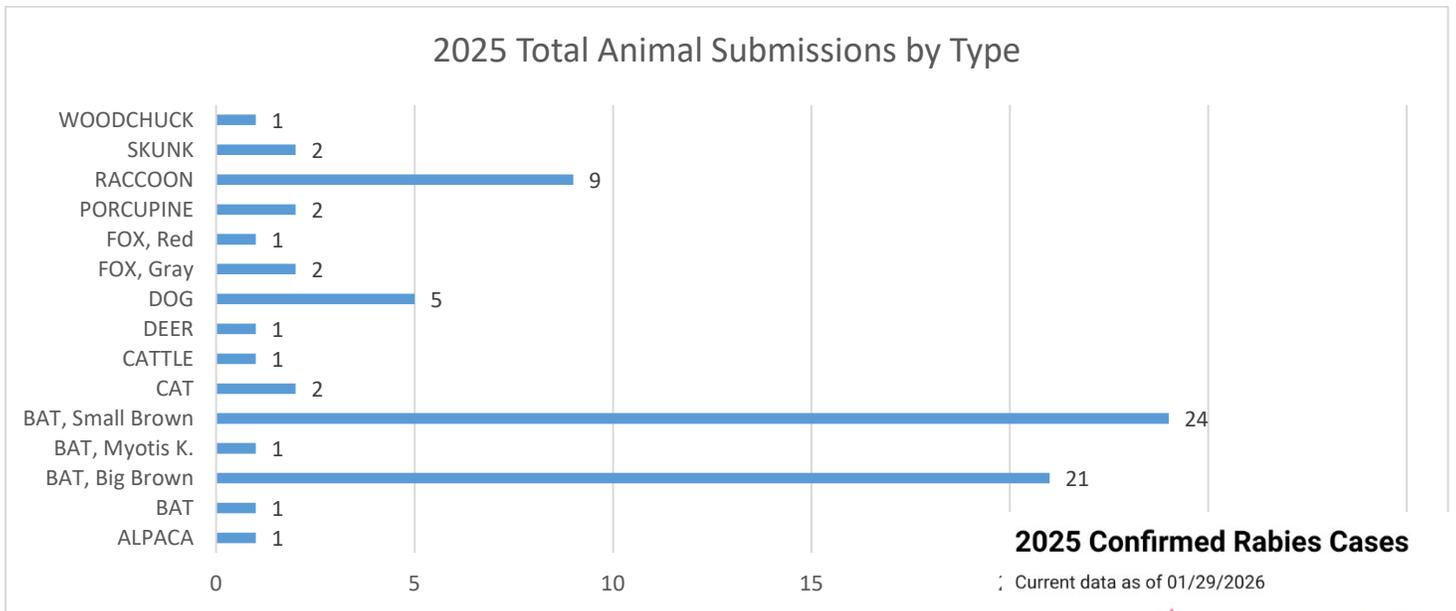
Pets Vaccinated - 713 pets vaccinated in 2025, with Moriah's clinic having the most pets vaccinated in 2025.

Rabies investigations



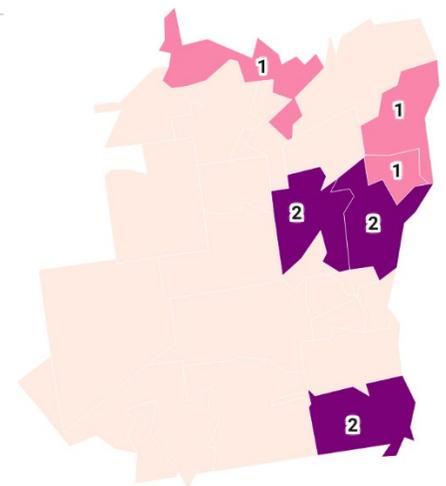
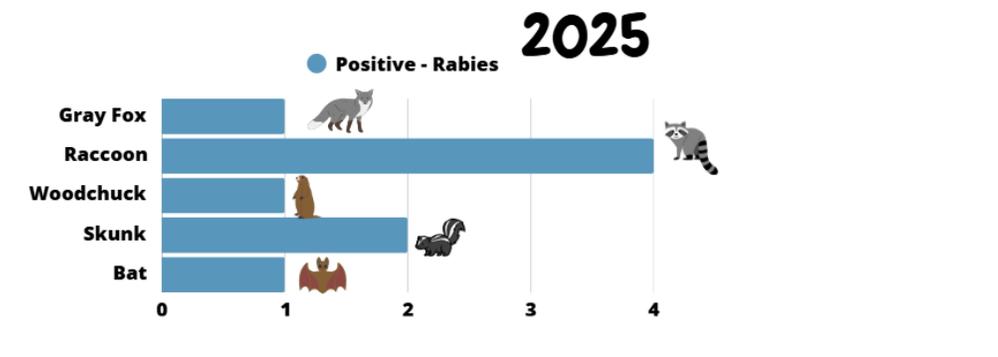
Data includes all rabies investigations, including domestic animal bites, exposures to wild animals, animal submissions.

Specimens submitted for testing -



People approved for rabies post exposure prophylaxis – 78 (total in 2025)

Confirmed rabies cases -



Data is for animal specimens submitted to Wadsworth Laboratory for rabies testing that returned positive.
Map: ECHD • Source: NYSDOH Clinical Laboratory Information Management System • Map data: © Esri, TomTom North America, Inc., United States Postal Service • Created with Datawrapper

Emergency Preparedness & Response

A component of local health department responsibility to promote and protect the health of their residents is to plan for and respond to health emergencies. Emergencies may be naturally occurring, accidents or deliberate acts. Examples include, disease outbreaks, chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, explosive incidents, cyberattacks, storms, power outages, and floods. Real World Events (see additional reports under communicable diseases, camps, schools, environmental)

Drills & Exercises- 9

- Used the Countermeasure Data Management System for people and pet clinics. This supports readiness of staff and the community to use the system for clinic registration and documentation.

Training/Continuing Education – 54

- Building Bridges: Connecting Public Health and County Leadership
- Framing Public Health in Rural Settings
- Voices of Experience: Communication Strategies from Seasoned Public Health Leaders
- Public Health and the Law: Recent Changes and the Impact on State and Local Public Health Agencies
- Building and Sustaining the Public Health Workforce
- Scenario-Based Framing: Strengthening Leadership and Communication Through Everyday Challenges
- Environmental Health & Emergency Preparedness Summit
- Public Health Leaders Summit
- Northeast Epidemiology Conference

Volunteer Coordination/Management & Engagements - 3

- Staff – training included software updates to the NYS volunteer management software, ServNY, that allows the capacity to manage volunteers, verify their credentials & schedule them for shifts.
- Volunteers – through ServNY notification, volunteers were recruited to become trainers for Chronic Disease Self-Management and other community-based courses through North Country Healthy Heart Network's [Get Healthy North County initiative](#).

Plan Updates/Revisions –

- Fire Drill & Evacuation – changes to titles & plans on how staff respond & where to go outside
- Medical Reserve Corps Plan – plans to address spontaneous & unaffiliated volunteers
- Public Health Assets & Distribution – updates to staffing titles for identification & point of distribution (POD) locations to most current plans/contracts

Highlights, campaigns, activities

- Staff served on the Essex County Lockdown Committee led by the Safety Officer & Deputy County Manager to support emergency response at government center buildings.
- Staff participated in the Essex County Emergency Preparedness Assessment (Round 4) conducted in 2025. This effort, facilitated by the Department of Homeland Security through the local Office of Emergency Services identifies susceptibilities and capabilities to various emergencies and responses. Pandemics, biological agent release, animal disease, food contamination, HazMat are included as possible primary public health threats whereas other threats such as extreme weather, active shooter, infrastructure failure or others may have secondary implications for public health. Knowing current threats and capabilities sets paths for local planning, organizing, equipment, training & exercising of preparedness programs.

Environmental Health

A NYSDOH District Office (covering Essex, Franklin & Hamilton Counties) conducts most of the required Environmental Health services for Essex County (see attached report). Our health department is responsible for communications/updates on air quality, blue green algae beach closures, boil water order notifications, investigation of foodborne illnesses, mold & health, and climate and health.

Air, Water and Food Health & Safety

Air Safety Notices - 0

Public Water Notices - 8

5 - Boil Water Orders

3 Blue-Green Algae Notices

Harmful Algal Bloom Safety Notice

Climate and Health

Initiatives – The *Year 13 New York State Health Department Performance Incentive* focused on Climate and Health. ECHD successfully completed and submitted all eight tracking measures (seven required tracking measures, and one bonus measure) by their required deadlines. Required activities included capacity building; required trainings; climate health communications and community outreach through social media and a publically available webpage promoting climate health and community resources for adverse/extreme weather events, vector borne illnesses, and the NYS HEAP Cooling Benefit; reporting of cooling center locations to the NYSDOH; building a communications list of local community-based organizations working with the populations most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change; and developing a Climate Change and Extreme Weather Communication Plan.

Activities -

- The ECHD collaborated with Mercy Care for the Adirondacks to provide tick borne illness awareness and prevention materials (DEET wipes, garden mats, tick kits, and sunscreen) to Mercy Care volunteers assisting older Essex County Residents. Of the 954 cases of tick borne illnesses reported in Essex County from 2020 through 2023, over half (489 cases) were in the 60+ age population. The second highest instances were reported in people 50 – 59 years old.
- Seventeen social media posts were published educating the community about climate health issues like extreme heat and tick-borne illnesses.
- Completed an application for the NYSACHO Climate Change and Health Adaptation Project mini grant, proposing \$3,000.00 in funds to be used for extreme heat outreach and education in Essex County’s aging population. The grant application was submitted on December 19, 2025. It is notable that Essex County has no designated “Disadvantaged Communities” on the NYS Disadvantaged Communities Map, and though it does have some “moderate to high” vulnerability towns on the NYS Heat Vulnerability Index Maps, ultimately we were not awarded the mini grant funding.
- Sunscreen was provided free of charge to attendees at the Essex County Fair, and provided the opportunity for discussion and education about skin cancer.
- Notified the public of climate related health concerns from a high heat index, air quality from the Canadian wildfire smoke, and beach closures due to the presence of blue-green algae blooms, and provided links to federal and state resources for information and monitoring of these issues.
- Distributed over 300 cooling towels with educational information about heat related illness, and over 400 insect repellent wipes to reduce tick-borne diseases in Essex County.
- Social media posts were made promoting Essex County Cooling Centers and the Air Quality Index to help the community stay safe during the projected heat dome(s) and adverse air quality days. Cooling towels and heat illness educational materials



are also being distributed to high risk groups in Essex County, including but not limited to older residents and DPW employees.

- The New York State Department of Health has released a ***New York State Heat Risk and Illness Dashboard*** https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/environmental/heat_dashboard/. One of the tools is an up-to-date Heat-related Emergency Care and Health Index, which **clearly shows a correlation between the heat index and Essex County EMS calls and Emergency Department Visits:**

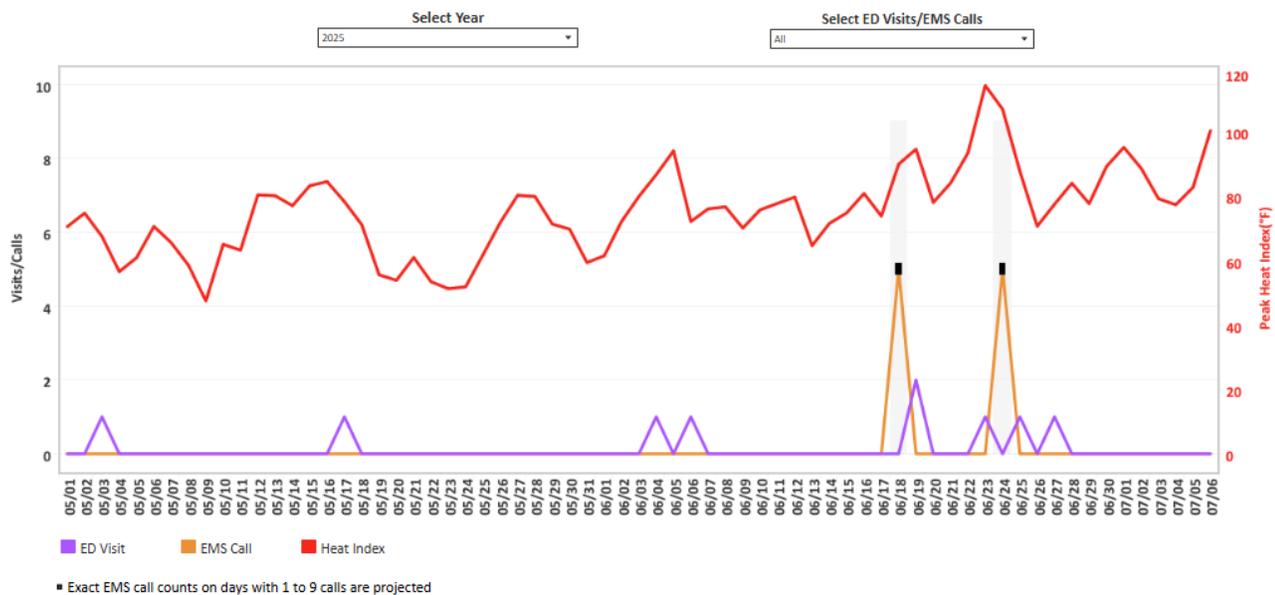
Heat-related Emergency Care and Heat Index, Essex County

Updated 7/7/2025

During extreme heat, more people are likely to seek emergency services due to heat-related illness. View daily emergency department (ED) visits, emergency medical services (EMS) calls and heat index in New York State excluding [New York City](#). Heat index (real-feel temperature) is hotter than temperature because it considers humidity.



During extreme heat, more people are likely to seek emergency services due to heat-related illness. View daily emergency department (ED) visits, emergency medical services (EMS) calls and heat index in New York State excluding [New York City](#). Heat index (real-feel temperature) is hotter than temperature because it considers humidity.



Chronic Disease

As a local health department, we are required to conduct an evidenced-based chronic disease prevention program that focuses on the prevention of chronic diseases and their associated risk factors.

Coalition/Collaboration Interactions/Meetings & Highlights

Well Fed – 20 meetings

- Response to the SNAP Funding Delay
 - Essex County Health Department’s Chronic Disease Outreach Coordinator, acts as the permanent facilitator and organizer for Well Fed ensuring continuity and stability for the collaborative. During the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) federal funding freeze, the ECHD was an instrumental partner in the local response to keep our residents fed. The Well Fed website was rapidly revised and updated to serve as a central hub for locating all food assistance programs in Essex County, including food pantries.
 - The contact list of all the food pantries in Essex County was updated, and an email listserv developed. Multiple social media posts were generated to keep the public informed of the County’s on-going efforts to mitigate the SNAP delay.
 - The Essex County Health Department assisted with promotion of the Regional Food Bank’s Thanksgiving Food Distribution on November 22, 2025
- For Hunger Action Month (September) the Well Fed Essex County Collaborative partnered with the Regional Food Bank for food insecurity related activities, which included:
 - Submitting a Resolution to the Essex County Board of Supervisors recognizing September as Hunger Action Month. Representatives from the Regional Food Bank attended the meeting to pass the resolution, and a signed copy was shared with them for display at the Albany County Distribution Center of the Regional Food Bank.
 - Well Fed Essex County partners, Adirondack Community Action Programs (ACAP), in coordination with the Adirondack Harvest Program of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Essex County, hosted a food drive at the Adirondack Harvest Festival and the Essex County Health Department assisted with food drive promotions.
- The Well Fed Essex County Collaborative engaged in strategic planning, and developed a plan through 2027.

TURN (Tobacco Use Reduction Network)/Nicotine/Vaping – 22 meetings

- Essex County Health Department’s Chronic Disease Outreach Coordinator, acts as the permanent facilitator and organizer for Well Fed ensuring continuity and stability for the collaborative. TURN developed and published a Tobacco Treatment Spotlight campaign in the form of an online “flip-book”, to raise community awareness regarding local resources to treat nicotine dependency.
- The Great American Smokeout was November 20th and the theme was “Go Purple” to raise awareness for smoking cessation and to recognize the 25th anniversary of the NYS Quitline. The Health Department Building was illuminated at night in purple lights, employees wore purple to recognize the day, and two social media posts were made.
- TURN is engaged with Clinton Community College to develop a smoke-free/nicotine-free policy for all three of its campuses, and a policy is anticipated by the end of 2026.

- A Vape Prevention Focus Group surveyed students from three local middle/high schools for development of an anti-vape campaign. The winning campaign is currently featured on the billboard in Moriah, and will be utilized for on-going anti-vape messaging



- Essex County was awarded \$278,549.49 as part of the NYS JUUL Settlement. It was scheduled as eight equal payments, with the first three issued together in 2025 (\$104, 472.93), and the subsequent five payments to be issued yearly starting in June of 2026.
 - TURN developed a plan and budget for the funds, to include NYS approved expenses of evidence based education, retailer compliance checks, and media & community outreach.
 - The ECHD contracted with the Commercial Tobacco Use Reduction Network (CTURN), part of the Champlain Valley Family Center, to conduct retail compliance checks for flavored vape products and under age nicotine sales in Essex County. The contract was executed in late 2025 and CTURN is planning checks.
 - The ECHD contracted with the Prevention Team to offer the evidence based Stanford University anti-vaping educational curriculum “You and Me, Together Vape Free” to all public schools in Essex County. Between September and December 2025, the education was provided to 358 students in 7 school districts.
- TURN engaged in strategic planning, and developed a plan through 2027.

Active Transport, Complete Streets & Chronic Disease, Wellness, and Older New Yorkers - **24 meetings**

Active Transportation is any self-propelled, human powered mode of transportation, including bicycling, walking, running, roller blading, skating, skiing, snowshoeing, etc. Exercise and being physically active can prevent or improve many chronic diseases. Traffic safety and complete streets encourage active transportation and physical activity in communities, and are therefore, important components of chronic disease prevention and outreach.

- The Year 12 New York State Health Department Performance Incentive (2024) focused on active transportation. The ECHD successfully completed that performance incentive and was even awarded bonus funding. Partnerships that were formed between the ECHD and the New York State Department of Transportation as part of the performance incentive led to additional funding opportunities. Collaborative projects between the ECHD, NYSDOT, EC DPW, and the towns of Lewis, Willsboro, and Keene continue.
- The NYSDOT is currently funding multi-modal traffic studies in the Towns of Lewis (\$37,000) and Willsboro (\$63,000), for which an engineering firm has been hired. The Community Survey for Route 9 in Lewis has been published and is receiving higher than anticipated public feedback. The Willsboro survey is expected to be published in the same manner soon. The ECHD coordinated local survey promotion.
- The NYSDOT has pledged \$100,000 for the active transportation study in the Town of Keene, and the state contracts are in process to allow issuing an RFP to hire an engineering firm.
- The ECHD coordinated with the NYSDOT for 3 bicycle/pedestrian counts to be conducted by the NYSDOT at high use intersections in the Town of Keene over Memorial Day weekend to supplement the active transportation corridor study that continues to be planned with the NYSDOT along the same roadway. This information will be used a part of the active transportation study planned for the Town of Keene.
- The speed zone reduction to 40MPH in the Town of Lewis is the result of ECHD collaboration with the NYSDOT in ongoing active transportation safety initiatives. It is hoped that as part of the multi-modal active transportation study, there will be enough evidence to further reduce the speed zone to 35MPH.

- On July 29th, the ECHD received notification from the Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee that the Department was awarded \$2,800 for a traffic safety grant application written and submitted in April of 2025, targeting pedestrian and young driver safety, speed, and impaired driving.

Public Health Detailing – 4 Issues

- Four specific Public Health Detailing Reports were created and shared with the Board of Supervisors/Health during 2025. They were: Nicotine(June), Alcohol (July), Food Insecurity(October), and Vape Prevention Focus Group (December).

Campaigns/Events – 36 Campaigns, Events

- Each month there is community promotion and education for at least one chronic disease, and a monthly #getfitessexcounty fitness challenge. Local events and health fairs are also attended as available.

2025 CHRONIC DISEASE MONTHLY PROMOTIONS & FITNESS CHALLENGES

Month	#getfitessexcounty	Awareness Month
January	Fresh Starts, Health Hearts	Dry January/Alcohol Awareness
February	Pump it Up for Heart Month	1. Heart Month 2. Drink Less, Be Your Best
March	March Madness	Colorectal Cancer Awareness
April	30 Minutes/30 Days	1. Testicular Cancer Awareness 2. Alcohol Awareness
May	Push-up Power and Weekend Wanderer	1. Older Americans Month 2. Stroke Awareness Month
June	30-Day AMRAP & Walking	1. Men’s Health Month 2. World No Tobacco Day
July	Light Up Your July	UV Safety Awareness Month
August	Walk or Run a Marathon in August	1. Beat the Heat 2. Polyp Palace at the Essex County Fair
September	Every Step Counts, Every Rep Matters	1. Healthy Aging Month 2. Hunger Action Month
October	Progressive Push-ups	1. Breast Cancer Awareness Month 2. “See Our Trails, Not Our Jails” – DWI Awareness
November	Gratitude Grind	1. Movember (Men’s Health Awareness) 2. Diabetes Awareness Month 3. The Great American Smokeout 4. Lung Cancer Awareness Month
December	Holiday Hustle	1. National Impaired Driving Prevention Month “See Our Trails, Not Our Jails” – DWI Awareness

Promoting Mental Health & Preventing Substance Abuse

ECHO

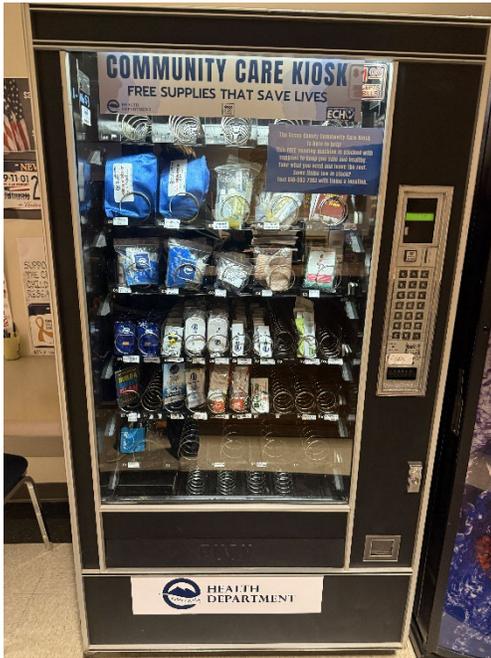
The Essex County Health Department serves as the backbone and co-chair of the ECHO (Essex County Heroin & Other) Prevention Coalition in Essex County.

Leveraging this coalition and Opioid Settlement funding, Essex County has been working on campaigns to reframe how we think about substance misuse and addiction here in the North Country.

One way we have does this is through the use of the Billboards located in Port Henry. This year the billboards had two stigma reducing campaigns. The first being the Community Care Kiosks with **No Cost** Supplies that Save Lives and the second promoting the 2nd annual Recovery day.

Community Care Kiosks

By providing access to essential health supplies, we are making a tangible difference in the lives of countless individuals. We believe that the Community Care Kiosk will be a valuable resource for our community, and we are excited to see the positive impact it will have. The Community Care Kiosk is similar to a snack vending machine, except all health items are free and include items listed below along with other seasonal items. The Community Care Kiosks are located at Mountain Lake Services Consignment shop, Public Safety and outside the DMV.



- First Aid Kits - Help treat minor common accidents & prevent further damage and help wounds heal faster and more effectively.
- Fever monitoring strips - Body temperature provides cues to onset of infection, inflammation, and antigenic responses, as well as indicating efficacy of treatment
- Bath water testing cards – to prevent scalding or burns that can happen in seconds in hot water
- Tick kits - Removing ticks promptly and identifying them can help prevent the spread of diseases and other infections
- Condom Access Program (CAP) packs - Promoting safe sex practices remains a key strategy in preventing sexually transmitted infections.
- Insect Repellent - Staying safe from mosquito bites and other insect-borne illnesses is essential.
- Sunscreen – Protecting against harmful UV rays is vital for preventing skin cancer.
- Fentanyl and Xylazine test strips - To help identify the presence of fentanyl and Xylazine in drugs
- Naloxone (Narcan) - This lifesaving medication can reverse opioid overdoses, empowering bystanders to intervene in an emergency.

Recovery Day

Partners of ECHO hosted the 2nd annual Recovery Day at Hunter Way farm in Moriah. This is/was a family friendly event with many interactive experiences, games, and activities, offering community members the chance to gather and interact with people in the recovery world in a warm and welcoming environment.

A strong network of family, friends, and community is a stronger predictor of long-term recovery from addiction than a person's history of past struggles. Recovery Day had a simple goal of reminding people of the importance of connection and our shared humanity.

Overdose Fatality Review

In Essex County, every overdose fatality is more than a statistic—it represents a life lost, a family impacted, and a community left with unanswered questions. For county leaders and frontline partners, those questions became the catalyst for change: *How do we do better, together?*

That question now drives Essex County's approach to overdose prevention and systems reform. Through ECHO and using the Opioid Fatality Review (OFR) Toolkit as its foundation, Essex County collaborated with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program to conduct its first Mock OFR. The exercise was transformative. It created space for honest dialogue, strengthened trust across agencies, and helped participants see the overdose crisis not through a single lens, but as a shared systems responsibility.

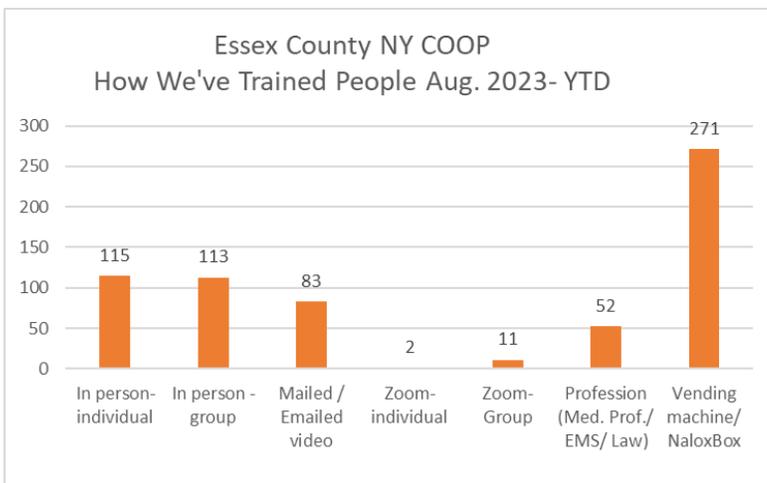
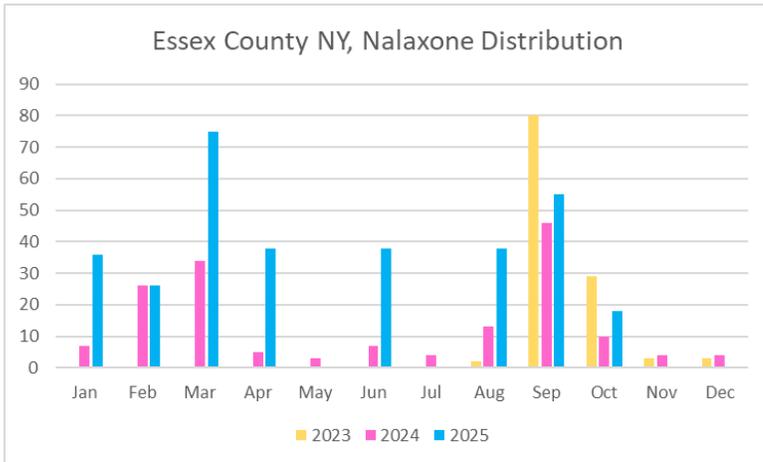
Using the OFR Toolkit as both a policy and practice framework, Essex County then completed their first Overdose Fatality Review. Participants examined demographics, psychosocial history, treatment history, medical records, crisis system encounters, and other prominent risk factors associated with drug overdoses to identify missed opportunities for intervention to strengthen overdose prevention strategies, improve system-level operations, inform local service providers, public policy, and ultimately to reduce the number of overdose deaths in Essex County. Case criteria included a date of death within the 2023 calendar year, a cause of death

attributed to overdose of prescription or illicit drugs, and an accidental/ unintentional manner of death. ODMAP data was used for case selection as well as context for identifying an overdose death consistent with a current drug trend of concern. The group then identified several factors that seemed to contribute to the overdose and followed up with recommendations for adoption at the system and organizational level.

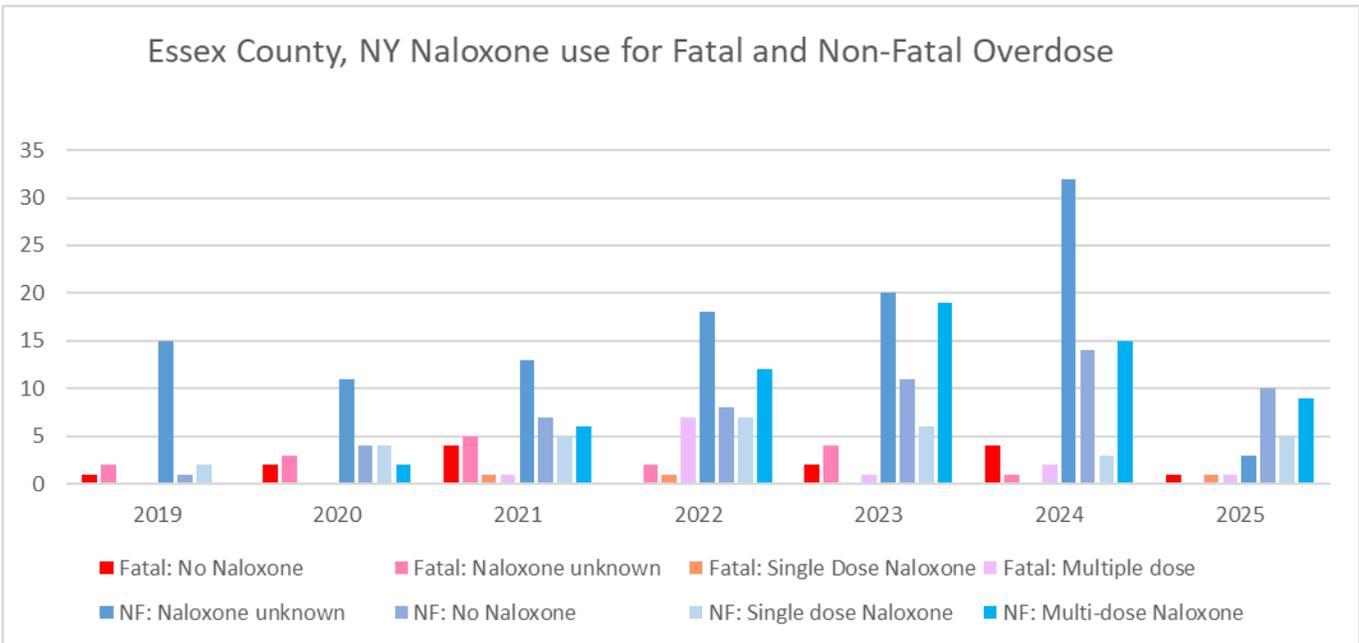
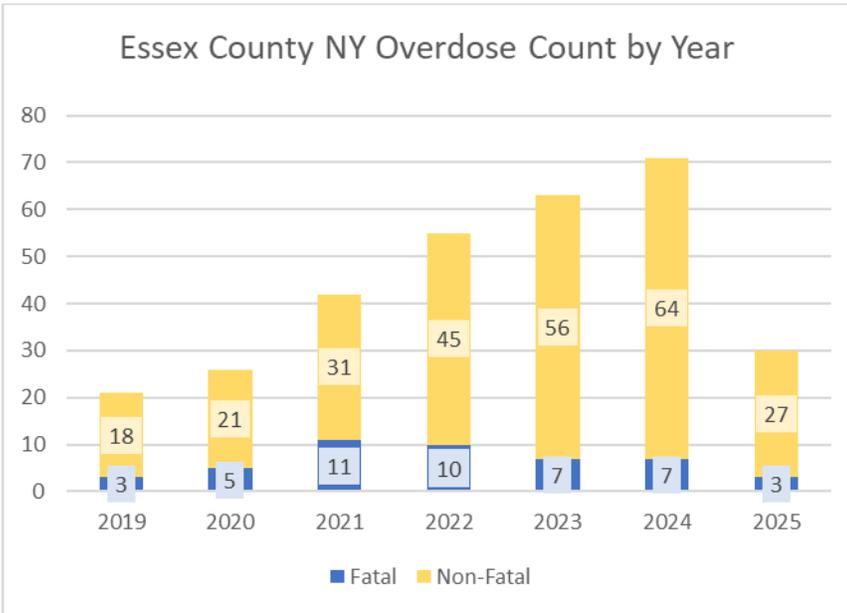
Community Opioid Overdose Prevention Program

The Essex County Health Department is a registered Community Opioid Overdose Prevention Program (COOPP) to reduce opioid overdose deaths through training naloxone distribution and community education.

Naloxone Kits Distributed -



SUDOR Submissions/ODs -



Family Health

Local health departments in NYS are required to conduct public health activities in the areas of child health, maternal and infant health, and reproductive health. The Essex County Health Department meets this requirement by offering the following programs and services:

Baby Steps to Bright Futures

This is a universal home visiting program for families with newborns. Families are offered three home visits & one phone call visit to ensure connections to programs and services that improve social determinants of health.

Babies born & families offered the Program - **235**

Families enrolled in the program - **50 (+ 8 additional families utilized other services such as weight checks, breastfeeding support, and DSS Collaborations*)**.

*DSS Collaborations are instances where Preventive or CPS identifies a prenatal family or with a baby up to 1 years old who could benefit from additional support, education, and referrals to community-based services available to them through a warm hand-off to the Baby Steps program.

Families that were sent a packet as unable to reach or declined the program – **185** (2 babies were listed as fetal demise).

Referrals out to programs and services – **23**

Home visit # 1 – **50**

Homes visits #2-4 – **20** (Visit 2), **6** (Visit 3), **4** (Visit 4)

Reached through Little Feeders Support Group – Little Feeders Circle of Support Lactation Support Groups were offered in several locations across Essex County to support families with newborns. Attendance was very limited. The program will be adjusted with broader topics and formats in an effort to increase participation in the future.

Little Feeders Circle of Support
New, expectant, & experienced parents UNITE!
In Person Breastfeeding Support Groups and 2025 Events

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4
JAYCEE PARK, CHESTERFIELD
10-11AM
National Safety Month
Poison Control information from Upstate Poison Control.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 2
TEDDYBEAR PARK, LAKE PLACID
10-11AM
Developmental Screenings
Ages and Stages questionnaire and staff from Et will be present.

MONDAY, AUGUST 4
ELIZABETHTOWN SOCIAL CENTER, ELIZABETHTOWN
2-4PM
World Breastfeeding Month
Community Baby Shower!

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3
HERITAGE PARK, WILMINGTON
10-11AM
Child Passenger Safety Month
FREE car seat checks done by Certified Car Seat Technicians.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1
BLACK WATCH MEMORIAL LIBRARY, TICONDEROGA
10-11AM
Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week
ECHD staff will share ways to prevent lead poisoning. Lead screening also available.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12
SCHROON LIBRARY, SCHROON LAKE
10-11AM
Nutritional Awareness November
WIC staff will speak about transitioning to complementary foods and postpartum nutritional needs.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3
KEENE LIBRARY, KEENE
10-11AM
National Handwashing Awareness Week
Presentation from ECHD nurses on the importance of hand washing.

LITTLE FEEDERS: VIRTUAL VILLAGE

For questions or additional information call the Essex County Health Dept. at 518-873-3500

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Car seat checks offered at each group!

All groups ran by Certified Lactation Counselors!

QR code for Virtual Village

Community-wide Baby Shower – year 1! In August 2025, the Essex County Health Department hosted its first Community Baby Shower in Elizabethtown, welcoming nearly 50 new and expecting parents from across the county. The event connected families with local resources and provided education to families on topics like safe sleep, car seat safety, lactation support, and childhood vaccines. More than a dozen community partners participated. The strong turnout showed a clear community interest in supporting families with young children.



Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

Lead Cases open (elevated lead levels in pregnant women or children) & ensure appropriate follow-up care – **11** confirmed
 Pending confirmatory testing - **8**
 Received confirmatory testing and were closed - **6**
 Lead levels screenings performed by our Department - **0**
 Home visits/environmental assessments completed this year for children with confirmed elevated lead levels - **5**
 Cleaning kits distributed to families – **3**

Lead outreach to business - The Lead Program continues to deliver paint stir sticks at hardware stores across the county to help educate residents on lead paint hazards and how to safely renovate older homes, especially those built prior to 1978.

Car Seat Program

The car seat program

Car Seat Technicians – **3**

Special Needs Car Seat Technician - **1**

Car seats checked – **45**

Car seats re-fitted for correct install - **8**

Car seats issued as new & installed correctly - **37**

Car Seat Check Events – **4** events conducted during September – Child Passenger Safety Month. Seat checks were also offered at the Club House Daycare in Willsboro and the Moriah Head Start site.

*Tech-Check Tuesdays means our Health Department is a permanent Fitting Station open Tuesdays 10 AM-1 PM

Car Seat Checks were also offered monthly at various towns throughout the county at our Little Feeders Lactation Support Groups.

Training Attended – Our Certified Car Seat Technicians attended the New York State Child Passenger Safety Technical Conference in May. They gained valuable knowledge on recent updates and improvements, learned about digital car seat check forms, and met with car seat manufacturers to strengthen their skills and services.



School Nurse In-Service

Nurses gathered for an in-person School-Nurse In-Service on August 28, 2025. The agenda was packed with Epilepsy Training, School Wellness Committee information, NYS Center for School Health Resources, Immunization Schedules and Requirements, Online Grooming & Human Trafficking Awareness, and Introduction to the Prevention Team Programs and Services. Nurses expressed gratitude for the opportunity to meet and mingle, to learn and share experiences.

School Nurse Stetho-Scoop Monthly Meeting

During the school year, school nurse Office Hours are offered through Zoom meetings to discuss school health topics and allow networking between nurses.

Topic covered by month –

January 2025- school immunization requirements, head lice policies, physical assessment requirements, medication management, and medical waste disposal.

February 2025- NYS Education Immunization Guideline discussion, medication and physical assessment, programs available to come to school for example HHHN “Healthy Smiles”.

March 2025- school Nurse workloads, school health and importance of immunizations, staffing/finding nurses to work in rural schools, policies and documentation, Avian Flu update.

April 2025-

May 2025

June 2025- one nurse questioned if others do the vision and hearing screening at school but others responded that the healthcare providers have been doing them. Updated on the correlation between NYSIIS (NY State Immunization Information System) and VTIIS (VT Immunization information system). Immunization updates. Cassidy gave talk on reproductive health for k-12 students.

July 2025-

August 2025- In- person school nurse in-service. Epilepsy first Aid from Epilepsy Foundation, on-line grooming, Zoom in from NY Center for School Health.

September 2025- No Stetho-Scoop

October 2025- Out of School

November 2025- Part 2 of Epilepsy First Aid from Epilepsy

December 2025- Notified school nurses of NYSDOH joining 8 other states in the Northeast Epidemiology Coalition to share resources after the dismantling of former ACIP.

Sexual/Reproductive Health Program

Schools/Camps/Groups – 15

Classes; # Students – 40 classes/524 students

Public Schools in Essex County - 10

Public Schools Engaged in 2025 - 6

ECHD Outreach Coordinator also provided a 7th public school with all educational materials so their school nurse could provide the lessons per their superintendent.

One private school and the community college campus locations in Essex County were also served by this program.

Condom Access Program

ECHD offers free condom access through our Condom Access Program (CAP), which places condoms and education about sexual health, birth control options and more in easily-accessible locations throughout Essex County.

CAP Packs Distributed – **285**

CAP Pack Locations

Elizabethtown:

- Public Health & WIC Offices,
- DSS Lobby
- Elizabethtown Community Hospital Emergency Department
- Kinney Drugs,
- Vending machine outside DMV

Lake Placid: Kinney Drugs

Port Henry:

- Moriah Pharmacy
- Vending machine at Mountain Lake Consignment

Ticonderoga: Walgreens Pharmacy

Willsboro: Willsboro Pharmacy

Newcomb: Newcomb Health Center

Minerva: Town Hall

Lewis: Vending machine at Public Safety Building



Children's Services

The Children's Services program connects children and youth in Essex County with needed health and educational services.

Early Intervention

Essex County's Early Intervention (EI) Program supports infants and toddlers from birth to age three during the most critical period of brain development, when more than 80 percent of growth occurs. In our rural Adirondack communities, where families face long travel distances and limited access to specialized services, early identification and intervention are essential to improving lifelong outcomes. Through New York State's Early Intervention Program and county-based service coordination, Essex County EI helps children with developmental delays or disabilities build skills in communication, movement, learning, and social-emotional development while guiding families through referrals, evaluations, and services. Despite statewide workforce challenges, our program remains committed to providing timely, family-centered supports that reduce the need for more intensive services later and set children on a path toward healthy development and future success.

Children active - **44**

Total referrals - **73**

Did not qualify - **15**

Qualified - **22**

Child Find* for developmental surveillance - **19**

No response, refused or sent to Committee on Preschool Special Education - **17**

The Child Find System identifies at risk children – those who do not have a diagnosed disability, and for whom the referral source does not suspect that the child has a disability currently. The child is being referred for developmental monitoring because the child is at risk of having a disability.

Preschool

Essex County is proud to support three center-based preschool special education programs co-located within local schools—an innovative rural approach that helps ensure children ages 3–5 with developmental delays or disabilities can access services close to home. With an ongoing shortage of providers for related, community-based, and home-based services, these programs are an essential part of meeting students’ needs in a consistent, supportive environment, while recognizing that not all children require a center-based level of care. Children may be referred to services by a parent or guardian, or by a professional who knows the child, through the chairperson of the school district’s Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE), who assists families with the referral process. Eligibility for services is determined by CPSE in accordance with Part 200 of the New York State Regulations of the Commissioner of Education. Evaluations result in individualized plans that may include speech, occupational, and physical therapy; special education services; and behavioral supports. Together, these efforts promote communication, learning, and school readiness during a critical developmental window and help set children on a path toward long-term success.

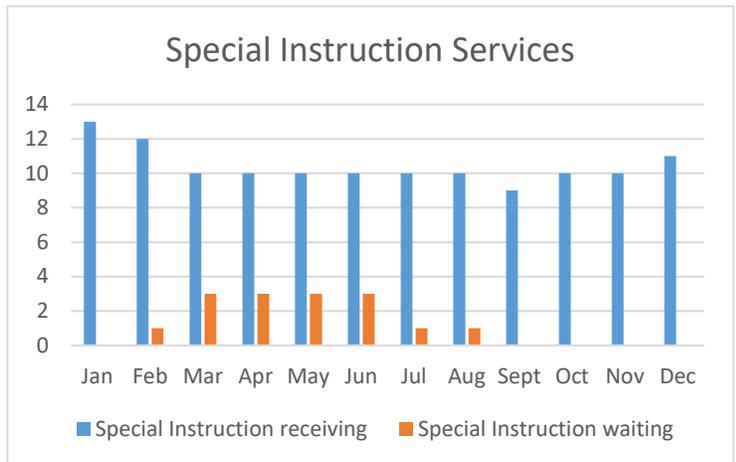
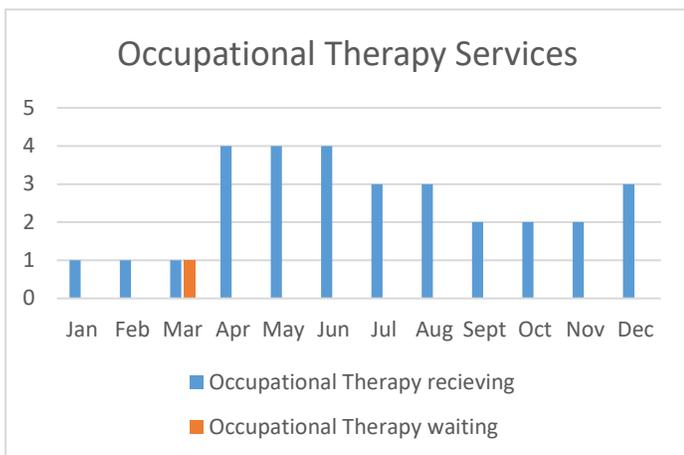
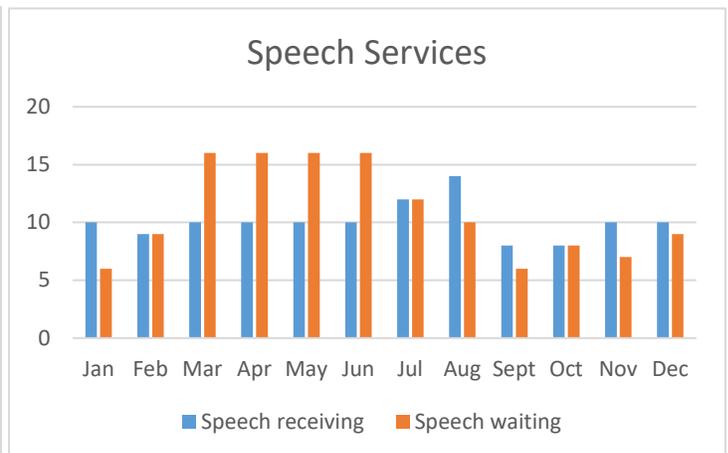
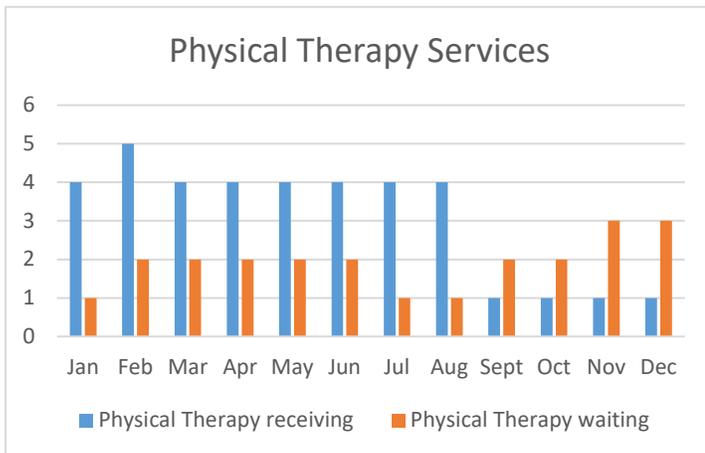
Children enrolled - **124**

On a waitlist for a service at any point - **44**

Children served in a center-based classroom – **36 (23 in county, 13 out of county)**. Transportation has shifted to more parent reimbursement than bussing, although we continue to contract with Durrin and Blueline for four routes.

This year, two new classrooms opened in the county - Schroon Lake and Bouquet Valley - for a total of three classrooms (with Ticonderoga pre-existing).

2025 Waitlist Data



Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs

Kids enrolled - **40**

This grant year, which began October 2025, we were awarded an extra \$28,221 to support inclusion in our communities. We chose to give towns in the process of playground revisions a portion to include a piece (or pieces) of adaptive playground equipment.

WIC

Essex County WIC plays a vital role in strengthening the health and well-being of families across our rural communities, access to prenatal care is limited, and there is no birthing hospital within the county. In the face of food deserts and barriers to healthy food access, our program has been recognized for its strong collaborations, innovative approaches, and ability to meet residents where they are. By partnering with local health care providers, community organizations, and social service agencies, Essex County WIC connects pregnant and postpartum individuals, infants, and young children to nutritious foods, breastfeeding support, nutrition education, and essential referrals. Our work reflects a proven, cost-effective investment in reducing early childhood adversity and improving lifelong physical and mental health outcomes for the families we serve.

Data for Federal Fiscal Year as noted below:

Women enrolled - 103 (2025 average)

Infants (0-1) enrolled - 107 (2025 average)

Children (1-5) enrolled - 303 (2025 average)

Families (inclusive of all above) /Eligible & not enrolled - 506 (2025 average)

High Risk Families - 37 (as of Dec 25)

Nutrition Education sessions –2,591

Referrals made to other programs/services - 972

Money issued through the WIC program - ~\$360,000

WIC-N-Pick Events – All DaCy Meadow: 7/1, 7/8, 7/15, 7/22, 7/29, 8/5, 8/12, 8/19, 8/26, 9/2, 9/9, 9/16, 9/23. 102 families

Charli-Cart Outings: 10 outings

WIC-mas –120 families, 278 kids served

Home Health Care

The Essex County Home Health program is a Certified Home Health Agency (CHHA) providing skilled nursing, wound care, physical therapy, speech & occupational therapy, and telehealth.

Referrals in accepted in past 12 months - **623**

Patients currently receiving services - **73**

Nursing Services - **429**

Physical Therapy - **353**

Occupational Therapy Visits - **126**

Speech Therapy - **8**

Home Health Aide - **11**

Tele-monitoring currently receiving - **40**

Year 2025 initiatives for Homecare

Staff training on Medicare/Medicaid changes, documentation improvement for enhanced reimbursement, preparing for staff retirement and succession planning, hard wiring the EMR processes for clinical and billing operations, adding tele-monitoring units, working with referral sources to identify high readmissions that can be improved by referrals to home care, and providing equipment and supplies for staff to complete their jobs.