
ESSEX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

DECEMBER 2024

MONTHLY REPORT

DIRECTOR - LINDA BEERS, MPH



Health Department Highlights

Vaccine Program

2 (two) vacancies led to 0 nurses from May-September (5 months) in the Public Health Unit.

1 Public Health Nurse hired and started in October!

1 Supervising Public Health Nurse anticipated to start in December!

Onboarding and training during the busy start of school, flu and COVID season.

Training new staff highlighted the need to make significant updates to Vaccine Program Policies & Procedures and create new documents where it was identified there was a gap. These include:

- *Vaccine Storage and Handling

- *Vaccine Emergency Storage and Handling

- *Vaccine Scheduling and Billing

- *Vaccine Administration

- *Vaccine Emergency Management in Community Settings

- *Vaccine Errors and VAERS Reporting

Since September, our Department has been in regular communication with School Nurses about school required immunizations.

We serve as a source of information for our school nurses and families as they strive to navigate the requirements of NYS laws around immunizations.

As we saw last spring, New York State Department of Health Division of Vaccine Excellent (DOVE) was out again this fall making rounds across the state to visit local school districts to audit school immunization records.

Even when nurses thought they had correctly advised on immunization requirements, students were identified for exclusion due to not meeting immunization requirements.

Our staff are trained in understanding NYS immunization requirements for school attendance and working with school nurses and families in understanding immunization records and catch up schedules. While many students are under the excellent care of local pediatricians and healthcare providers, others may not have a strong relationship with a provider. Some are new to the area from out of the region or state; some are here as exchange students. All are required to meet NYS requirements and this is where we can help. For each unique situation, we can provide needed immunizations or connect families with healthcare providers and insurance.

WIC-MAS

WIC-Mas is scheduled to begin Dec. 9. The Essex County Sheriff's Department, NYS Police, and other community donors have sponsored this event. It covers the entire county, with 122 families participating. Families receive simple guidelines and then they get to "shop" for their children and get a sense of ownership and choice. This is a tremendous undertaking by the small WIC team!



ECHD Program Data – November (unless otherwise noted)

Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Improvement Planning (CHIP)

CHA Progress Updates & Special Reports



ECHD and the health partners engaged in CHA/CHIP activities (Adirondack Health and UVMHN-Elizabethtown Community Hospital) are launching a Community Needs Survey in December. The survey aims are to elicit feedback from Essex County residents around health care and social needs and to paint a more complete picture about overall health and well-being in our communities, including the barriers and challenges residents face. The survey will be available through May 2025. Keep an eye out for a press release and periodic reminders on our social media pages. Encourage your constituents to participate!

Communicable Disease

Communicable Disease Surveillance/Epidemiology Investigations

Respiratory Illness investigations (Flu, COVID, RSV, TB) - 39

GI Illness (Water/Foodborne) Illness Investigations - 5

STI/Hepatitis & HIV Investigations – 3

Arthropod-borne (Mosquitos and Ticks) Disease Investigations - 40

Food Safety/Outbreak Investigations – 0

Other Investigations (Strep pneumo invasive, Invasive Group A/B Strep) – 2

Immunization Program

Clinics in the community – 3

*Minerva - School Based;

*Northwood School-School-Based

*ECHD Clinics Days

Individuals immunized – 14

Healthcare provider, school nurse, day care provider or other public health detailing activities:

Public Schools: Keene, Minerva, Newcomb, Ausable Valley, Willsboro, Saranac Lake,

Private Schools: North Country School

IQIP visits – 0; 2 Day IQIP Training attended by 2 staff to ensure proper training to conduct visits.

Stethoscoop meetings – 0

Screening Services

HCV Screenings - 0

HIV Screenings - 0

TB Screening - 0

Referrals to Planned Parenthood for STI Testing – 0

Rabies Prevention Program

Rabies Vaccine Clinics – 0

Pets Vaccinated - 0

Rabies investigations - 8

Specimens submitted for testing – 2 (both negative)

People approved for rabies post exposure prophylaxis – 2

Emergency Preparedness & Response

Real World Events, Drills & Exercises – 1 Tabletop Discussion exercise – Mock Joint Patient interviews

Training/Continuing Education – 7; one in-person at the DSHES Training Center: *FBI/CDC Joint Criminal Epidemiologic Investigations Workshop*

Community Engagement/Collaborative Planning Meetings - 4

Volunteer Coordination – Continue updating MRC activities; updates made to MRC Unit Profile

Plan Updates/Revisions – the Public Health Asset Distribution Plan continues to be reviewed and updated. The

Emergency Communications Plan update was submitted for final approvals.

Chronic Disease

Campaigns/Events - **3**

Coalition/Collaboration Interactions/Meetings - **8**

Public Health Detailing Screenings & Disease Concordant Care - **0**

Direct Community Outreach Initiatives – **2**

Training/Continuing Education – **1**

November Health Campaigns:

- Mo-venber – Men's Health Awareness
- #getfitessexcounty – Giving Thanks and Doing Planks
- Diabetes Awareness Month
- The Request for Proposals for active transportation studies in the towns of Willsboro and Lewis was issued to the firms on the NYSDOT Region 1 LDSA.



Climate Health:

- Tick season is lasting longer due to warmer weather, and tick borne illnesses are on the rise in Essex County. Tick awareness promotion in the Sun Community News and on the ECHD Facebook page, reminding the public to stay vigilant and protect themselves from tick borne illnesses.



Community Opioid Overdose Prevention Program

Narcan Kits Distributed – **4**

SUDOR Submissions/ODs – **1** non-fatal; **0** fatal

Total Overdoses for the year: **60** (53 non-fatal; 7 fatal)

Family Health

Baby Steps to Bright Futures

Babies born & families offered the Program – **16** (**7** pending)

Families enrolled in the program – **3**

Families that were sent a packet as unable to reach or declined the program – **6**

Referrals out to programs and services – **4**

Reached through Little Feeders Support Group – **0** in-person sessions provided; **0** Facebook Live sessions

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

Lead Cases open (elevated lead levels in pregnant women or children) – **8** active; **9** pending confirmatory testing; **4** released with confirmatory testing stating capillary testing was falsely elevated

Lead levels screenings performed by our Department – **0**

Environmental lead assessments/home visits completed this month for confirmed elevated children – **0**

Car Seat Program

Car seat check clinics – **0**

Car seats checked - **7**

Car seats issued as new & installed – **7**

Sexual/Reproductive Health Program

Schools/Camps/Groups – **1**

Classes – **2**

Students reached – **20**

CAP Pack Distribution - **0**

Training - Attended the Healthy Teen Network National Conference in Phoenix, Arizona week of November 17

Children's Services

Early Intervention

Referral received in to the program - **7**
Children found eligible & enrolled (have a plan) - **21**
Children awaiting evaluation - **3**
Speech Therapy – **12** receiving; **6** waiting
Occupational Therapy – **1** receiving; **0** waiting
Physical Therapy – **4** receiving; **1** waiting
Special Instructional Services – **9** receiving; **4** waiting

Preschool Program

Children in process of evaluation, referrals - **22**
Children enrolled - **67**
Children waiting for services: **28**; Counseling – **3**; Occupational Therapy – **8**; Physical Therapy – **5**; Speech Therapy – **8**;
Special Education Itinerant Teacher - **16**
Children Attending Center Based Classrooms in County - **9**; Out of County - **8**

Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs

Children enrolled – **31**

Hillary Perkett attended Safe Travel for all Children, an enrichment course for child passenger safety technicians (CPSTs) to learn more about adaptive transportation. She is now trained to help assist children with special needs families to obtain and properly fit a specialized seat.



The Children's Services Unit hosted an autism conference watch party in November. We had 10 participants attend. Topics included social connection strategies, trauma responsive techniques, emotional regulation, and addressing problem behavior.

WIC

Target Caseload – **600**
Current Enrollment – **555**
Current Participation - **531**
High Risk Participants - **25**
Nutrition Education sessions/contacts – **199**
Referrals made to other programs/services - **93**
Breastfeeding initiation rate – **82.9%**
\$ Redeemed (spent) through the WIC program – **\$30,111**

Women Infant and Children (WIC): is short staffed – P/T peer counselor and a F/T nutritionist as well as a staff out on intermittent medical leave.

Amazing - Food boxes: The Grant from the Essex Food Hub in collaboration with NY Food for NY Families -contains meat, local produce, local protein, dairy and grain (e.g. ribs, carrots, cabbage, yogurt and oats). These boxes are provided to targeted groups, such as WIC, with food insecurities. All WIC participants were offered the program, and it was also extended to community food pantries. They delivered over \$100,000 in food to date.

A new grant cycle has been secured from Mother Cabrini and collaboration with Essex Food Hub. This new round of funding will extend the food boxes and home delivery added to the grant is the expansion of food processing for increased ease of preparation reducing barriers to utilization (e.g. butternut squash/ cubed and peeled allowing for easier preparation). The Charlie Cart Project will equip our WIC staff a portable, compact mobile kitchen, along with all the tools, lessons, recipes and supports needed to build a comprehensive food education program. They will use the cart to support parents with the knowledge and confidence to make healthy food choices through hands-on cooking lessons.

Home Health Care

Home Health Compare Star Ratings - We have received 5 stars for patient satisfaction as updated on CMS home health compare website.

Telehealth - We currently have over 50 telehealth remote patient monitoring units. Hospitalization rate continue to remain low for remote patient monitoring users. Typical reduction is 60% reduction in ER visits and Hospitalizations. Urinary Tract Infections (UTI) have been reduced with our performance improvement project for 2024. The project includes UTI Zone Tools in the patient handbook and early detection of UTI's utilizing dip sticks for suspected UTI's. This allows for early detection and treatment decreasing ER visits and hospitalizations. Catheter Associate UTI's have declined since the initiation of the Performance improvement project. There were Zero potentially avoidable events this past quarter via iQies (Medicare review site).

Department of Health Recertification Survey - conducted on April 25, 2023. One agency deficiency was identified. The deficiency was for PRN medications not listing intervals between doses. For example, if the patient was provided a prescription for a pain medication, as needed, twice a day our order should have indicated that twice a day was at intervals of every 12 hours. Our corrective action plan was accepted by the NY State DOH and all "as needed" medication includes the recommended intervals between PRN doses. We have had improvement for this performance review and currently have 91% clinical compliance. This is an improvement from last review. DME correctly listed on the plan of care is at 97% compliance. This is an ongoing issue with our new EMR. One additional audit was added with the EMR change for ED Risks and actions to prevent ER visits and hospitalizations. The initial audit determined that transitioned patients did not contain required information. Additional audits demonstrated improvement and we are currently at 87% compliance. The goal is 100% compliance for each category.

Staff Training - Staff participated in the following trainings: CPR, Office for the Aging insurance updates, Elder Fraud and abuse, and Matrix Care training and updates.

Cybersecurity - No issues identified at this time. Staff receive on-going training in cybersecurity. Several staff can access Epic Care Link allowing real time information sharing with UVM, ECH, Porter Hospital, Albany Medical Center, GFH, and CVPH. HIXNY (Health Information Exchange NY) has been monitored this quarter. Effective May 28, 2004 all patients were successfully transitioned to the new EMR- Matrix Care.

Staffing - The agency has openings for a Supervising Public Health Nurse, Home Health Aide, a Telehealth Coordinator and a Registered Nurse.