ESSEX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

DECEMBER 2022

MONTHLY REPORT

DIRECTOR - LINDA BEERS, MPH

PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT

Director's Message:

At last month's Human Services Committee meeting of the Board, we provided a Community Health Assessment update, with a review of the key data points and indicators that were used to shape our Community Health Improvement Plan. We received excellent feedback from our Town Supervisors regarding health concerns that need more attention in Essex County. One particular concern, dental caries, was discussed in greater detail. Following this meeting, I reached out to our partners at Hudson Headwaters Health Network (HHHN) and was put in touch with their Director of School Based Dental Services. I shared our collective concerns based on the Essex County dental caries data and learned more about their Healthy Smiles School Based Dental Program.

The Healthy Smiles program has been serving schools in Essex County since March 2017. HHHN started in Moriah and Ticonderoga in March of that year and added Schroon Lake CSD in October of 2018 and Crown Point in December the following year. HHHN does a rotation and site visits either once or twice per school year depending on the initial visit date. They provide in-classroom dental presentations on function, homecare, nutrition, and safety prior to visiting the schools. HHHN staff return a few weeks after to provide preventative services for those that enroll.

HHHN recently visited both Ticonderoga and Moriah, where over 100 students are enrolled at each site. Schroon Lake CSD and Crown Point are scheduled for services next quarter.

The Director of the program was alarmed by the high rate of cavities occurring in our young children. HHHN plans is to add a few sites in Essex County in the near future as part of their Northern expansion initiative. Included will be ACAP Head Start locations in Elizabethtown and Moriah! This endeavor will be included as an update to the 2022-2024 Essex County Community Health Improvement Plan.

As our Board of Supervisors/Board of Health, your input and knowledge of the issues impacting your communities is invaluable to our process of assessing and addressing community health needs.

Commissioner Bassett Departs NYSDOH

Last week Commissioner Mary Bassett confirmed she had submitted her resignation.

"…. I have tremendous admiration for the work our staff has done during a very difficult year responding to COVID, mpox, polio and the day-to-day challenges of protecting New Yorkers' health….."

As just this summer we shared with you NYSDOH plans to reorganize the Department and reshape leadership, we are now at a time when there may be additional shifts in direction from the state to local level. Interesting times.

Performance Incentive Program

NYSDOH General Public Health Work (GPHW) Program includes a state-wide performance-based incentive program allowing the Commissioner to provide additional funding for LHDs that meet or exceed performance standards in Local Health Department core programs & services.

Year 10 (2021-2022): COVID-19 Pandemic Response

- Measure 1 – Quantitative Survey $2,500 for LHDs <75,000 people
- Measure 2 – Qualitative Survey $4,000 for LHDs <75,000 people
- Measure 3 – Public Facing Report(s) $5,000 for LHDs <75,000 people

ECHD successfully completed & submitted all measures – see attached reports and anticipated receiving full funding for meeting/exceeding set performance standards. Now we advance the next initiative as described below.

Year 11 (2022-2023): Wastewater Surveillance Expansion: COVID-19 Hep A, norovirus & antimicrobial resistance

- Measure 1 – Participate in educational training
- Measure 2 – Percent of population coverage of eligible population
- Measure 3 – Sampling frequency & consistency

Staffing Updates

STAFF TRANSITIONS:

- PHEPR Coordinator – filled & started Dec 5th
- Senior Account Clerk – filled & started Dec 5th

VACANCIES – Core Public Health Unit

- Public Health Nurse – interviewed & offered position; declined. Must continue to post.

VACANCIES – Grant Funded

- Health Educator – removed position given grant funds are ending
- Health Educator
- Community Health Nurse

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION

Tuberculosis (TB) Response

Even though effective treatments for TB exist, TB remains a global public health threat because these treatments for are threatened by the emergence of strains of the disease resistant to multiple lines of drugs. Health departments are responsible for TB control programs and should conduct the following activities:

1. preparing and maintaining an overall plan and policy for TB control;
2. maintaining a surveillance system; collecting and analyzing data;
3. participating in program evaluation and research; prioritizing TB control efforts;
4. ensuring access to recommended laboratory and radiology tests;
5. identifying, managing, and treating contacts and other persons at high risk for Mycobacterium tuberculosis infection;
6. managing persons who have TB disease or who are being evaluated for TB disease;
7. providing TB training and education; and
8. collaborating in the coordination of patient care and other TB control activities.

Victorian-style homes with long wrap-around porches and balconies were the "cure cottages," of Saranac Lake. For several decades in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, they were where you came to get "cured" of tuberculosis.

We are in the process of strengthening the TB Response Program here at ECHD.

In early November the Communicable Disease (CD) Specialist and the Director of Health Promotion and Planning met with NYSDOH staff to discuss TB lab interpretation.

At the end of the month, the CD Specialist attended a TB Window Prophylaxis Webinar that focused on children and how to promote testing and prevention of this disease.

Additional trainings and webinars attended during the month of November included:

MPOX:

11/16 - Community Response to MPV Webinar

11/29 - The 2022 MPOX Outbreak: Where are we now? Webinar

Ebola:

11/29 - NYSDOH Ebola Webinar

(Note: a meeting is planned for January to dig out/brush off the current P&P for Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) at ECHD; changes and/or updates will be made according to the most recent outbreak and guidelines associated with the disease outbreak in Uganda (the outbreak was declared in September of 2022).

Respiratory Illnesses:

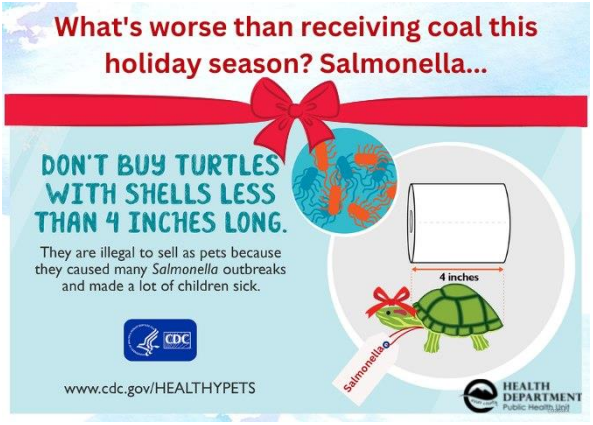
11/29 - Flu, RSV, COVID-19, and Other Respiratory Threats This Fall and Winter Webinar.

Flu and RSV are presenting extremely high numbers this season. For the week ending with 11/26, there were 21,171 lab-confirmed flu cases in NYS; ***this was a 70% increase from the previous week****.*

Communication & Outreach

The Communicable Disease Specialist has collaborated with our Communications Specialist to raise awareness about the following Communicable Disease topics:

Vaccine Trivia - starting on 11/1 and continuing on 11/8 and 11/29.
Pneumonia post - 11/12
Salmonella post - 11/18
Thanksgiving/Turkey Safety Tools - 11/18 *Important information to prevent foodborne illness during the holidays among our community
COVID-19 post - 11/19 *Included best tools to prevent the spread (valuable information during the respiratory illness season)
Antibiotic Awareness post - 11/21
Cold or Flu post - 11/25

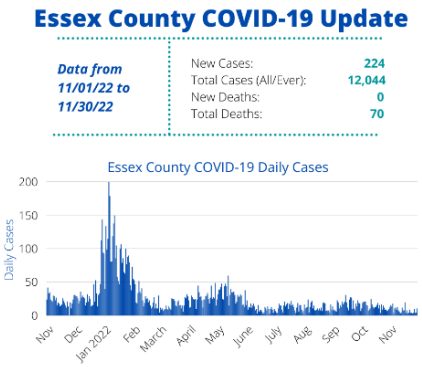


Rabies / Animal Bites

A meeting is planned to discuss potential updates/changes to ECHD's P&P for Rabies. The CD Specialist created a new animal bite/exposure report form and site visits to local ERs are planned for her to meet providers and present the changes.

For the month of November, ECHD received 7 reports of animal bites; 4 dog bites and 3 cat bites. There were no reports of wild animal bites/exposures with humans.

COVID-19 Updates



Rates & Data

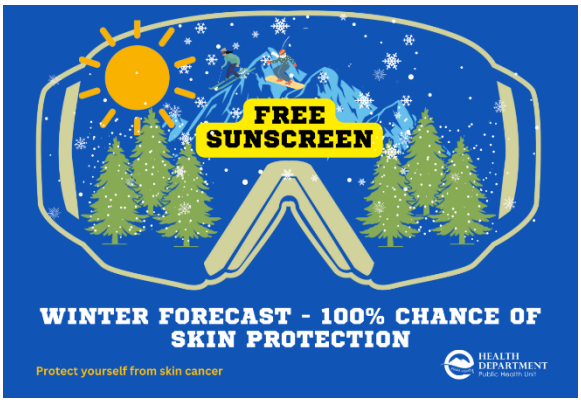
COVID cases continued to decrease in November after a brief jump in September. We currently provide a monthly COVID update & refer those interested in more immediate and comprehensive data to the NYSDOH existing websites designed to meet this demand.

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE (PHEPR)

The first day for our new PHEPR Coordinator, Nicholas Sitts, was December 5, 2022. We're excited to welcome a new member to our team!

CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION & CONTROL

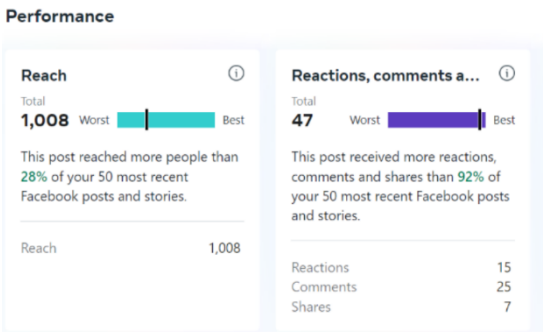
The Chronic Disease Outreach Coordinator attended NYSACHO Fall 2022 Climate and Health Adaptation Workshops virtually on November 2nd and 3rd. Topics included vector-borne diseases, harmful algal blooms, food security, complete streets, climate smart communities, and environmental improvements.



Sunscreen and three dispensers were provided to the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) to promote skin protection and cancer prevention in the winter. Look for our sunscreen dispensers at Whiteface and Mount VanHovenberg. These were products remaining from the summer sunscreen safety promotion, and no additional funds were expended for this winter skin protection campaign. The attached graphic is on the front of the dispensers at the winter venues.

Snowshoes were purchased through a grant from Excellus BlueCross BlueShield and distributed to four local libraries as part of the #getfitessexcounty campaign. This initiative encourages community members to "check out fitness" with a fun way to recreate and exercise in the long North County winter. The snowshoes have easy to use bindings, are available from toddler to various adult sizes, and most sizes come with trekking poles. Residents can "check out" the snowshoes just like they would a book, use them for the library's prescribed lending time, and then return them for the next family to enjoy. Participating libraries include Blackwatch Memorial Library, Paine Memorial Library, AuSable Forks Free Library, and Keeseville Free Library.

The #getfitessexcounty fitness challenge for November was squats. It culminated with challenging participants to do 60 squats on the final day in recognition of the "Movember" 60 men worldwide who commit suicide every hour. "Movember" is a national campaign for men's health awareness, including mental health. The initial Facebook post for the fitness challenge reached 1,008 people, and received more reactions, comments, and shares than 92% of Essex County Public Health's 50 most recent posts.



Stay tuned for December's challenge "Walking in a Winter Wonderland". Participants are encouraged to get outside and walk for at least 30 minutes per day/5 days per week. Snowshoeing counts!

FAMILY HEALTH

Reproductive Health

Dispense boxes were ordered for the Condom Access Program (CAP) that ECHD will be putting up in our lobby and in a few of the pharmacies that participate in the program. These dispensers allow for a more discrete way to obtain the CAP packs and encourage more youth to use them because they will no longer have to ask a pharmacist for them or approach the pharmacist area to take them out of the bowl on the shelf, which is the way many of the pharmacies display them.

Substance Use Prevention

The Outreach Coordinator attended a community conversation in Queensbury regarding substance use disorder that was very informative. Family members of people who have a SUD were able to speak about the challenges and struggles associated with loving someone with this disorder. Stigma as a major part of SUD was discussed, including how people with diabetes, heart disease and cancer are not looked down upon but are in a similar situation as people with SUD because diabetes, cancer, and heart disease are all effected by and "preventable" with choices that we make. At this meeting it was announced that there are 28 Naloxone boxes left to be placed. By the ECHO meeting 3 days later, all 28 boxes were all claimed.

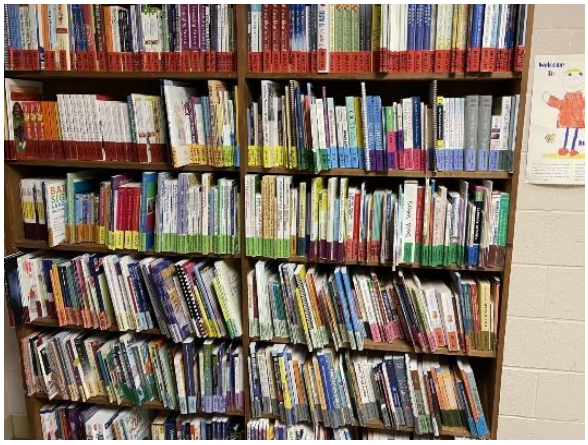
At the November ECHO meeting, members discussed that 8 Naloxone boxes have been placed throughout the county building next to the AEDs, and that the Prevention Team is filling out paperwork to get the boxes in their buildings as well. Talk about the Naloxone boxes lead to a conversation about Xylazine and how Narcan does not work because Xylazine is not an opioid, it is a tranquillizer. Rescue breathing is needed (in addition to Narcan) and a need for bag valve mask (BVM) ventilation was identified. With the help of our partners, funding is available for purchasing this equipment. A survey was sent to all ECHO members to determine where the BVM units will be placed and who will require training. The Essex County Emergency Services Department is assisting with this initiative.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES UNIT

Preschool: There are 73 children currently enrolled in the preschool program. There are 27 referrals in process. All of our providers are at capacity so any newly added service will most likely be added to the waitlist. We are actively and timely billing Medicaid for services through McGuiness with July through October totaling $21,207.50.

Early Intervention: This program is still experiencing waitlists for all services and evaluations. Currently, there are 30 children active in Early Intervention with 3 referrals in process. We are focusing in the next two years though our Community Health Improvement Plan on increasing the number of enrollments in the EIP by 20%. The focus will be on the families that reject or do not respond to the initial referral with greater follow up efforts and working more closely with the primary referral source.

We have also been working on building our Children's Resource Lending Library. These resources are available for all community members to borrow. The books are focused on special health care needs such as Autism, Epilepsy, Anxiety, Allergies, OCD, etc. They are typically borrowed by families, providers, schools and often we get requests on materials that the public may find useful. This is covered under our Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs Grant. We are also working on getting a resource guide that can be shared with community partners through the grant.



WIC UNIT

The Adirondack Health Jingle Bell 2.5 Mile Run/Walk was held on Saturday, September 10.

All participants were encouraged to bring a new/unwrapped toy on race day to benefit Essex County WIC families.

With these proceeds and generous donations from other community members, WIC will be celebrating its second annual WICMAS this month! This event was made possible through help from the Essex County Sheriff's Department and NYS Troopers, and the sponsorship by Adirondack Health noted above. WIC program participants can "shop" for Christmas gifts for their families.

HOME HEALTH UNIT

November is always National Home Care Month to celebrate all the nurses, home health aides, therapists, supervisors and support staff for all that they give to accomplish unparalleled home services to Essex County Residents. There are a wide range of health care service that can be given in the home for a variety of illnesses or an injury. Most insurance plans including Medicare and Medicaid cover home care services 100% with no copay or deductible.
The top four patient admissions in Essex County, are for care after a joint replacement, Parkinson's disease, Diabetes with wounds and chronic respiratory conditions. Clinicians treating the home care patients have a responsibility to assess each patient and develop a patient centered care plan in coordination with all staff assigned to each case. Care planning allows the clinician to project what goals can be achieved as a result of their care and interventions with the patient and family or caregiver.

Essex County Home Care clinicians have certified training in wound care, Parkinson's disease and therapy modalities. The clinicians exercise acute and effective clinical thinking, observation, technical, and teaching and evaluation skills while performing clinical assessments, interventions and management of home care patients. All of this provides the foundation for planning and prioritizing care interventions to the patient. Care is provided only under a physician's or approved provider's order.

A patient who has had a joint replacement is typically admitted within 48 hours of their discharge from the hospital. Nurses make the initial visit and review the medications to ensure the patient is properly taking every medication the surgeon and primary care physician has ordered. This is an important first step as many surgical patients are discharged on a medication to prevent blood clots or infection. Therapy will follow up with their assessment and develop a home exercise program. Patients are instructed how often to perform each exercise with the assistance of their family or a caregiver. If an occupational therapist is ordered then the patient will be evaluated for home safety while performing showering, eating, toileting and the need for safety modifications or adaptive equipment. Initial goals are to keep the patient safe and free from adverse effects of the medication regimen, and prevent falls or injury.

For a Parkinson's disease patient, the therapy is more frequent to provide both physical and occupational therapy 4 days a week for four weeks. At the end of the therapy the patient will have improved balance, and improved ability to perform activities of daily living. This is a specialized program that only our certified therapist can perform. Patients will have a new level of independence following the therapy they receive.

Diabetic patients with wounds are challenged in the ability to heal. This is usually due to circulatory issues caused by the diabetes. The wound care certified nurse oversees the care and coordinates the treatment with the physician and the clinician. Family and caregivers are taught the wound care to be performed between nursing visits. Diet, exercise, blood sugar control and a high protein diet are included in the care planning. Goals include preventing diabetic associated complications in addition to wound healing.

When caring for patient with chronic respiratory illness the nurse and therapist work as a team to improve the life and prevent hospitalizations and ER visits. Nurses may bring in remote patient monitoring equipment so changes in the patient's condition can be identified in real time. This includes

an increase in weight or a decrease in oxygen saturation that may be an indicator the patient requires medication changes to prevent breathing difficulty. Therapists will teach how to conserve energy so the patient can complete tasks without becoming short of breath.

Some patients will require medical supplies for their care. This will be ordered by the clinician and delivered within 2 days to the patient's home. Patients may also need a wheelchair or a hospital bed which is facilitated with the therapist, physician and medical equipment company.

Each patient served by Essex County Home Care will have a plan of care that is developed based on the individual's needs. Effective pain management is an important part of the care plan. The goal of home care is to return the patient to their previous level of independence or the highest level of functioning as soon as possible. If that is not possible the goal is to assist the patient and caregiver to learn about how to care for the patient safely at home.

Benefits of home care may include: less shortness of breath, less pain, decreased edema, when and who to call with questions, information you need and want about the treatment plan and understand goals of the treatment including wound healing, safety and falls prevention.