

ESSEX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

FEBRUARY 2025

MONTHLY REPORT

DIRECTOR - LINDA BEERS, MPH



Health Department Highlights

The Essex County Health Department conducts mandatory annual training for all staff, ensuring compliance with essential policies and procedures. This significant undertaking is led by Jessica Darney Buehler, Director of Health Planning and Promotion. The training covers a wide range of topics, including corporate compliance, the county manual and its policies, vehicle policy review, and mandated reporter responsibilities. Employees also engage in discussions on ethics, conflicts of interest, and workplace violence prevention. Special guest speakers, such as Seth Celotti, provide insights into training requirements, while Nathon Miron leads IT discussions, emphasizing the importance of following computer protocols. Additionally, OSHA bloodborne pathogen protocols and other preventive measures are thoroughly reviewed by Jen Newberry Director of Patient Services to maintain workplace safety and best practices.

Beyond policy adherence, annual training plays a crucial role in team development and organizational success. Our in-house, Trauma Informed Care, trainers Andrea Whitmarsh, Program Coordinator, and Elizabeth Terry, Sr. Public Health Educator, educate and lead discussions on the importance of understanding peoples life experiences, how they may have involved trauma, and how our staff can best meet our community members where they are to increase engagement, have positive communication, and improve health outcomes.

The training offers employees the opportunity to connect with colleagues they may not interact with regularly, fostering a sense of camaraderie and collaboration. The structured learning environment enhances productivity by reinforcing knowledge and skills necessary for daily operations. More importantly, it creates a space for fellowship and professional growth, strengthening the overall workplace culture. By prioritizing this training, the Essex County Health Department not only ensures compliance but also invests in the continuous development and cohesion of its workforce.

ECHD Program Data – January (unless otherwise noted)

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

CHA Progress Updates & Special Reports



Our Community Survey is live and we have received 143 responses so far! Our goal is 1,000+ responses, so we encourage all Essex County residents to take the survey and share their thoughts about health and well-being in their communities. Residents can access our survey on the Essex County Health Department website (home page) or on Essex County's main landing page <https://essexcountyny.gov/>. We also frequently share the survey link on our social media pages.

Town Supervisors and other leaders in education, business, health and human services, etc. will be receiving a link to complete a Stakeholder Survey. Please consider taking this survey! Your input will influence priority setting for the Essex County Health Partners (health department and healthcare) for the next several years.

Communicable Disease

Communicable Disease Surveillance/Epidemiology Investigations

Respiratory Illness investigations (Flu, COVID, RSV, TB) - 229

GI Illness (Water/Foodborne) Illness Investigations - 1

STI/Hepatitis & HIV Investigations – 9

Arthropod-borne (Mosquitos and Ticks) Disease Investigations - 23

Other Investigations (Strep pneumo invasive, Invasive Group A/B Strep) – **4**

Food Safety/Outbreak Investigations – **1**

Immunization Program

Clinics in the community – **1***

*Elizabethtown - School Based; **3** students vaccinated

Individuals immunized – **2** adults at ECHD Clinics Days

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

Stethoscoop Meetings: **1** (5 school nurses attended!)

School nurse phone/e-mail contacts: **8** (head lice, influenza like illnesses, immunizations)

Provider contacts: **1** (immunizations)

IQIP visits – **1**

Training: **CDC TB 101; Immunizations; TB Skin Testing**

Screening Services

HCV Screenings - **0**

HIV Screenings - **0**

TB Screening - **4**

Referrals to Planned Parenthood for STI Testing – **0**

Rabies Prevention Program

Rabies Vaccine Clinics – **0**

Pets Vaccinated - **0**

Rabies investigations - **5**

Specimens submitted for testing – **0**

People approved for rabies post exposure prophylaxis – **0**

Emergency Preparedness & Response

Real World Events, Drills & Exercises – **1** (Tabletop Exercise)

Training/Continuing Education – **8**

Community Engagement/Collaborative Planning Meetings - **5**

Volunteer Coordination – **Working on finalizing a new MRC Volunteer policy**

Plan Updates/Revisions – **Public Health Asset Distribution Plan (PHAD) review/updates continue**

Chronic Disease

Campaigns/Events - **2**

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

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

Direct Community Outreach Initiatives – **0**

Training/Continuing Education – **2**

January Chronic Disease Campaigns/Activities:

- #getfitsexcounty – “Fresh Start, Healthy Hearts”
- January – “See our trails, not our jails” continued into January to raise awareness of drinking and driving. Coasters, napkins, and/or pint glasses with sober driving messaging have been delivered to **38** local businesses serving alcohol to Essex County residents.
- Well Fed Essex County Collaborative is coordinating planning efforts to offer trauma informed response training to food shelf volunteers in Essex County.
- TURN (Tobacco Use Reduction Network of Essex County) is engaged in communication with Clinton Community College to improve its campus tobacco use policy to have only designated areas or tobacco free, as it currently only follows the NYS Clean Indoor Air Act. TURN has also developed a comprehensive plan for appropriate service allocation of JUUL settlement funds.
- The Year 13-NYS Performance Incentive is focused on climate health, and all relevant tracking measures for incentive funds are being worked on.

- The Essex County Health Department received a bonus point for work on the Year 12-NYS Performance Incentive, resulting in an award for the maximum available funding.
- Additional resources as a result of Year 12-NYS Performance Incentive work, active transportation, are continuing with six firms submitting interest in conducting traffic studies in the towns of Lewis and Willsboro.

Community Opioid Overdose Prevention Program

Narcan Kits Distributed – **34**

10 to EMS

13 mailed to community members

10 placed in Community Care Kiosk at DMV

1 to a school

SUDOR Submissions/ODs – **10** non-fatal; **1** fatal

Total Overdoses for the year: **11**

Family Health

Baby Steps to Bright Futures

Babies born & families offered the Program – **16** (**3** pending)

Families enrolled in the program – **3**

Families that were sent a packet as unable to reach or declined the program – **10**

Referrals out to programs and services – **2**

Reached through Little Feeders Support Group – sessions on hold

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

Lead Cases open (elevated lead levels in pregnant women or children) – **8** active; **9** pending confirmatory testing; **0** 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 - **1**

Car seats issued as new & installed – **0**

Sexual/Reproductive Health Program

Schools/Camps/Groups – **1**

Classes – **2**

Students reached – **25**

CAP Pack Distribution – **240**

194 to UVMHN-ECH Community Health Centers

30 to UVMHN-ECH Emergency Department

16 in Community Care Kiosk at DMV

Children's Services

Early Intervention

Referral received in to the program - **9**

Children found eligible & enrolled (have a plan) - **23**

Children awaiting evaluation - **6**

Speech Therapy – 10 receiving; **6** waiting

Occupational Therapy – **1** receiving; **0** waiting

Physical Therapy – **4** receiving; **1** waiting

Special Instructional Services – **13** receiving; **0** waiting

Preschool Program

Children in process of evaluation, referrals - **24**

Children enrolled - **74**

Children waiting for services: Counseling – **5**; Occupational Therapy – **6**; Physical Therapy – **5**; Speech Therapy – **13**;

Special Education Itinerant Teacher - **14**

Children Attending Center Based Classrooms in County - **9**; Out of County - **8**

Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs

Children enrolled – **32**

New York State Department of Health's (NYSDOH) State Plan Amendment (SPA) submitted on December 31, 2024, included a plan to modify Early Intervention fee-for-service reimbursement rates. The modifications include a 5% rate increase for in-person services and a reduction in reimbursement for telehealth services; a 22% decrease for NYC, Westchester, Poughkeepsie, and Long Island, and a 10% reduction for the rest of the state. We are concerned about the reduction of payment for telehealth services as we are already experiencing a provider shortage. Since the reduction in telehealth reimbursement was announced, we have already lost the only teletherapy provider that we used. We will no longer be able to offer this service to our waitlisted families.

Essex County preschool program participated in a Documentation Training to assist with the Medicaid billing process. In 2022-2023 we billed \$236,000 Medicaid eligible services. As part of the training, supporting documentation was submitted for 10 sample claims that were selected. We recently completed the training meeting which reviewed all of the documentation to support the billing without any findings! It was a very positive review that confirmed that we are getting the correct documentation to successfully bill Medicaid for the School Supportive Health Service Program.

WIC – no report for January

Home Health Care

Home health care is a wide range of health care services that can be provided in your home for an illness or injury. Our goal is to prevent hospital readmissions, ER visits and allow patients to stay in their homes. We work with you, your family and your doctors to provide a hands-on care plan and personal assistance. We provide physical, occupational and speech therapy, and medical supplies and equipment. We can refer you to other community services and caregiver support.

Did you know we have been providing services to the people of Essex County since 1969? Most of our experienced and knowledgeable staff live in the communities of the patients they help.

Our dedicated staff live and work in the following communities:

Elizabethtown, Wadhams, Willsboro, Reber, Lake Placid, Keene Valley, Newcomb, Moriah, Jay, Saranac Lake, Schroon Lake, Lewis, Ticonderoga and Minerva.

The staff performed 704 visits during the month of January 2025. Admitting 47 new patients to our services from our local hospitals, nursing homes and physician offices. They helped 43 patients reach their goals and were safely discharge to their own home. Staff drove a total of 4,382 miles for January 2025.

Patients were admitted for the following diagnosis:

Hip or Knee Joint Replacement	Following cardiac surgery	Alzheimer's disease
Fractures	Multiple Sclerosis	Gastrointestinal disorders
Wounds	IV medications for infection	Malnutrition
Strokes	Spinal surgery aftercare	Parkinson's disease
Heart Failure	Diabetes	Repeated fall