
ESSEX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

FEBRUARY 2023

MONTHLY REPORT

DIRECTOR - LINDA BEERS, MPH



PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT

Director's Message

Role of Medical Cannabis

New York State Department of Health recently highlighted the role of medical cannabis for chronic pain in reducing prescription opioid dosages. Its multi-agency study detailing the association of receiving medical cannabis for 30 days or longer with a reduction in prescription opioid dosages was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open.

The study was conducted with researchers from the Department of Health, Office of Cannabis Management, and CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy. The results of the peer-reviewed study, in combination with existing evidence, show that managing chronic pain with medical cannabis may reduce the opioid burden. This may, in turn, reduce the risk of illicit use and overdose for patients on long-term opioid therapy.

Acting Health Commissioner Dr. James McDonald said:

"Medical cannabis is increasingly being used as a treatment in pain management, and this peer-reviewed study is further evidence that medical cannabis has the potential to reduce the amount of opioid-based medications needed to treat chronic pain."

"I applaud the work done by the Department's members and the Office of Cannabis Management and CUNY. These findings can further inform health providers and policymakers here in New York and in other jurisdictions where medical cannabis is not yet legalized or used to its fullest potential."

Learn more information about the NYS Medical Cannabis Program here:

<https://cannabis.ny.gov/medical-cannabis>

NYSAC's Public Health and Mental Health Committee chair, Linda Beers, will bring forward a resolution Calling on Governor Kathy Hochul to declare a state of emergency regarding the overdose epidemic in New York State to remove statutory barriers to local data sharing necessary for timely interventions. The Resolution is attached to this report.

Recent data as viewed by the ECHO Coalition covering January and February draws attention to this need. Thank you for funding the ECHO coalition with OSM to support programs increase awareness and reduce stigma

Governor Hochul's Executive Budget Proposal impacts Public Health by including improvements to

- * a lead poisoning primary prevention proposal and

- * tobacco enforcement around flavored vapor products and

- * reform of Article 36 to allow LHDs to provide limited core public health nursing services in the home without a LHCSA license.

Wastewater Surveillance Program Update

As part of the New York State wastewater surveillance network, wastewater samples were being collected weekly and tested for SARS-CoV-2.

In May-June 2022 NYSDOH conducted a pilot study of using wastewater to estimate drug use, including opioids and cannabis, in five counties across New York State. This included the Lake Placid treatment plant in Essex County.

Results indicated low variability of detected drugs over the six weeks of measurement with expected use patterns including cannabis use being much higher than other drug use. NYSDOH is encouraging the adoption of illicit drug use measurement statewide in the wastewater surveillance network to empower the public health response to the opioids crisis.

CORE PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMMING UPDATES

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION

Statewide Communicable Disease Call



During the weekly call on January 17, ECHD was recognized by our regional team for our hard work and dedication during the FISU games in Lake Placid. Several staff members here responded to a possible foodborne illness outbreak, including after hours and over a weekend. The "outbreak" consisted of nine individuals working in Lake Placid at the time who reported gastrointestinal illness with onset dates during the first week of the games. Interviews were conducted for some of the individuals, and we were able to send out one stool sample for analysis. The sample came back positive for Norovirus, which is not a foodborne illness.

Norovirus is a very contagious communicable disease that causes stomach pains, vomiting and diarrhea. Often people with norovirus think they have food poisoning from something they ate. However, people can get Norovirus by direct contact with another person with Norovirus, consuming contaminated food or water, and even by touch contaminated surfaces and then touching mouth. Norovirus can be identified by lab testing where other foodborne germs can also be tested as potential agents of illness.

This response is a demonstration of how our Department coordinates efforts with our regional Environmental Health District Office, NYSDOH, local providers and individuals when a concern about potential foodborne illness is brought to our attention. We take such reports seriously and are always at the ready to ensure the health of our residents and visitors.

Flu & Respiratory Illness Updates

Since starting the weekly flu report in December, numbers have decreased significantly, both county and statewide. The data for January:

January 4 - 111 new cases; no change in the number of lab-confirmed cases from the previous week.

January 11 - 65 new cases; 45% decrease in lab-confirmed cases from the previous week.

January 18 - 35 new cases; 46% decrease in lab-confirmed cases from the previous week.

January 25 - 19 new cases; 45% decrease in lab-confirmed cases from the previous week.

NYS has yet to declare that flu has peaked for the season, as it is too soon to identify that trend in their data. Other respiratory viruses, like RSV and COVID are also decreasing across the state. Essex County COVID-19 case numbers for the month of January were similar to that of the previous couple months, with no new deaths reported.

Tick-borne Illness

Due to the high volume of tick-borne illness reports within the past year, efforts are underway to find new resources that can help our community.



The **Tick Bite Bot** is an interactive tool that will assist individuals with removing attached ticks and determining when to seek health care, if appropriate, after a tick bite.

The online mobile-friendly tool asks a series of questions covering topics such as tick attachment time and symptoms. The Tick Bite Bot was embedded on our website for our community members to use! Read about the bot, created by the CDC, here: <https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/removing-a-tick/tick-bite-bot.html>

When temperatures climb just a bit above freezing, ticks can become active again. The warmer weather we experienced in much of January is a reminder to stay vigilant with tick prevention strategies. In preparation for spring, our Communicable Disease team will be working on building new tick kits, featuring new items, to hand out to community members

Rabies/Animal Bites

ECHD received 13 reports of animal bites for the month of January.

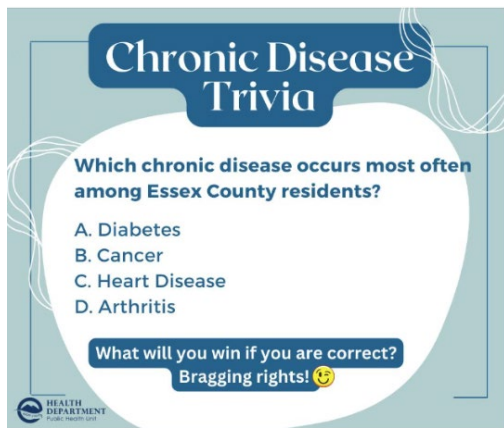
This includes 1 report of a cat bite, 11 reports of dog bites and 1 report of a wild animal bite/exposure.

On January 5, a staff member responded to an after-hours call from the Ticonderoga Emergency Department regarding a potential rabies exposure. A fox entered a resident's garage in Ticonderoga and bit an individual in the leg. With the help of the NYS DEC and Ticonderoga Police Department, the fox was captured and sent to the NYSDOH Wadsworth Laboratory for testing. The fox, as expected, tested positive for rabies. The individual bitten followed all Rabies Post Exposure Treatment protocols as directed by our Department and no additional threat to the public is anticipated. ECHD issued a press release to alert the public of the incident.



IMPORTANT! *If a new Animal Control Officer (ACO) or Dog Control Officer (DCO) is appointed in your town, please alert the Essex County Health Department.* Having up-to-date ACO/DCO contact information is vital to our ability to respond to bite incidents in a timely and effective manner. ECHD can also provide training materials for new staff members, as needed. Together, we can ensure the health and safety of our community members.

CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION & CONTROL



Collaboration and outreach has begun with the North Country Chronic Disease Prevention Coalition to promote local resources for chronic disease self-management.

Chronic Disease was highlighted on the Essex County Public Health's Tuesday Trivia. Of the seventeen responses from community members, none were correct. Do you know the most common chronic disease in Essex County?

Trivia Answer: B, Cancer

The Chronic Disease Outreach Coordinator attended three trainings in January:

- *Collecting and Disseminating Public Health Data Disaggregated by Race and Ethnicity, and
- *Act for Public Health: Assessing Litigation Impacting Public Health Authority, both offered through the Network for Public Health Law; and
- *Racial Healing for Health offered by County Health Rankings and Roadmaps.

The #getfitessexcounty initiative continues to receive positive reactions and higher than typical community feedback.

January's challenge, "Walk this way...Plank this way", challenged participants to walk 30 minutes a day for 6-days per week and add progressive planks, which helped people work up to a 1-minute plank – what an accomplishment! Examples of strength exercises are always provided for all agility and fitness levels. Stay tuned for a challenge we know you will love for American Heart Month in February. ❤️





Two other initiatives were supportive of, and cross-promoted with #getfitessexcounty.

The first was a reminder to residents that Essex County Public Health has made snowshoes available for lending at four local libraries.

This post reached a whopping 4,852 people, received 41 shares, and 86 reactions! It was popular indeed!

The second cross-promotion was “Walk it Wednesdays” where we challenged people to guess the walking trail where the picture was taken.

Do you recognize this view?

If you guessed this picture was from Belfry Mountain Fire-tower, a great little trail for people of all ages, you were right (bonus points if you knew it was the first sunrise of 2023)!


We did three such promotions, which also included Marcy Field and Crown Point Fort, garnering many correct responses for all three. This has been such a fun way to engage with people in our community in both fitness and community pride. Have you engaged with us yet? Now’s the time!

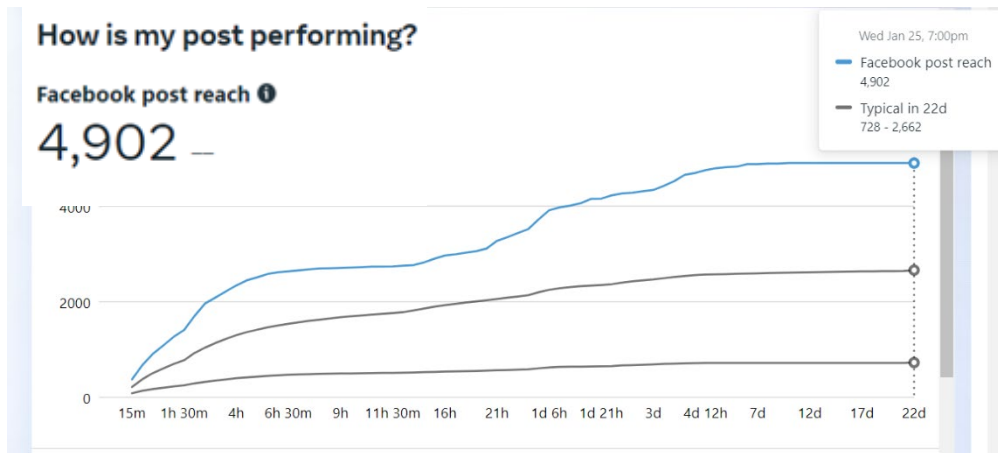
COMMUNICATIONS

Engagement with community members has been steadily increasing month over month.

Facebook page insights for January - as of 1/27/23



Tuesday Trivia 1/3/23 – Average trivia reach in December was 1,991. The below trivia asked about what action should one take if they wake up with a bat in their room? This post reached 4,902 people up  **146%**



Link clicks ⓘ

67 ↑ 1.6K%

Higher than typical

Typically 2-10

Facebook post comments ⓘ

34 ↑ 3.3K%

Higher than typical

Typically 0-5

Facebook post shares ⓘ

10 ↑ 400%

Higher than typical

Typically 1-5

Facebook post reactions ⓘ

18 ↑ 100%

Typical

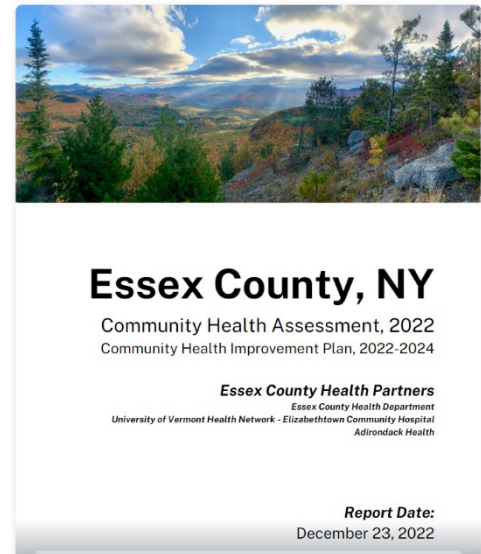
Typically 6-18

Our Communications Specialist introduced the 2023 Health Observance Calendar for the purpose of planning for community outreach, communications, awareness and timing if items need to be ordered for events.

February Health Observances					Community Outreach	
Month	Weeks		Days	Clinics		
American Heart Month National Cancer Prevention Month National Children's Dental Health Month Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month Women's Heart Health	Heart Failure Awareness Week National Condom Week		World Cancer Day National Wear Red Day			
	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	
	2/1/2023	2/2/2023	2/3/2023	2/4/2023	2/5/2023	
	Flu #s, Update Fitness Challenge	American Heart Month	Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month & National Wear	World Cancer Day		
Facebook	✓✓	✓	✓	✓		
Website	✓✓	✓	✓			
Press Release						
Program Focus	CD/Communications	Chronic Disease	Reproductive Health	Chronic Disease		
Target Audience						
Other						
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	2/6/2023	2/7/2023	2/8/2023	2/9/2023	2/10/2023	2/11/2023
	National Cancer Prevention Month	Trivia Update Fitness Challenge	Flu #s, National Children's Dental Health Month	Women's Heart Health Month	National Cancer Prevention Month	
Facebook	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	
Website	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Press Release						
Program Focus	Chronic Disease	Communications	Family Health	Chronic Disease	Chronic Disease	
Target Audience						
Other						
At a Glance Jan 2023 Feb 2023 March 2023 April 2023 May 2023 June 2023 July 2023 August 2023						

COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Community Health Assessment (as a mandated core area of the state's General Public Health Work Program) does not stop now that the 2022 Community Health Assessment (CHA) and 2022-2024 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) have been released. In fact, activities begin in earnest to share the Assessment & Plan goals and objectives, forge and strengthen suitable and beneficial partnerships, and implement the collective strategies and interventions identified in the CHIP work plan. New and updated sources of county-level data are also compiled, evaluated, and tracked to ensure that the most up-to-date information directs and influences the work in our communities.



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

The Public Health Emergency Preparedness & Response Coordinator has been busy with training and other required activities. In January, the Coordinator:

- Reached out to our Medical Reserve Corp (MRC) volunteers to determine who would still like to be an active member (181 volunteers are now active on the list). A message was also sent about volunteering for FISU games;
- Received MRC navigation training;
- Attended monthly PHEP Coordinator Meeting;
- Assisted with FISU games GI investigations;
- Participated in Medical Surge Exercise on 1/25 and discussion after;
- Updated computers/tablets to ensure readiness for future PODs and events;
- Completed IHANS training and certification; and
- Participated in meet and greet with OES staff to discuss ideas about future collaboration.

FAMILY HEALTH

The Department went out to RFP for a case management software program to assist with the management of the Baby Steps to Bright Futures program. Critical to the tracking of program participants, the search continues for a strong & well-fitting solution for the program.

Multiple staff proceed with training to establish themselves as Certified Lactation Consultants!

CHILDREN'S SERVICES UNIT

Early Intervention: The Early Intervention Program is experiencing waitlists for all services and evaluations. There are 31 children active in Early Intervention with seven referrals in process. There are 14 children waiting for one or more service.

Preschool: The Preschool Program currently has 90 children enrolled. There are 31 referrals in process. All our providers are at capacity, so any newly added service will likely be added to the waitlist. The waitlist currently is at 30 children, who are waiting for at least one service - occupational therapy, physical therapy, or speech therapy.

The Children's Services Coordinator is working with a speech provider in New Jersey who summers in Loon Lake and would like to see kids in Saranac Lake. A contract has been drafted to support in all ways possible the speech therapy needs of our youngest residents.

Mountain Lake Services hired a part-time Speech Therapist who may be able to help with evaluations and pick up one or two preschool students.

The Coordinator is also pursuing inquiries that have been received from another Speech Therapist who wants to work part-time and a Physical Therapist. One such provider is a Physical Therapist from the Finger Lakes region who would like to provide tele-therapy for Early Intervention children in Essex County.

All inquiries from providers and creative solutions are being pursued to help meet community needs.

HOME HEALTH UNIT

Over the past decade, Essex County Home Care has served over 3,500 people.



Our field clinicians have driven more than 1 million miles to care for our residents. Collectively, the clinicians professionally provided nearly 115,000 home care visits. We continue to proudly and professionally serve our elderly, disabled, chronically and acutely sick residents from birth to 100 year olds.

Benefits for recipients under home care include part-time and intermittent visits by a skilled nurse, physical, occupational, speech therapy and home health aides. The total Medicare and Medicaid spending remains a relatively small expenditure. Both programs reimburse home care on a per episode basis regardless of how many visits are required to serve the patient needs. An episode is 30 days of care. Most of Essex County Home Care patients will have a reimbursement rate of \$1,000 per month of service. If the person requires very few visits (e.g. 2-4 visits), then the agency is reimbursed as a low utilizer at a rate of \$350 per month of service.

Nearly all of Essex County home care patients have four or more chronic conditions and at least one functional impairment. The Kaiser Family Foundation and author Tricia Neuman report that only 9% of the Medicare population receives home health care services. Overall, the use of home health care services has increased in recent years reflecting both an aging population and the rise in chronic conditions.

Caring for frail elders with chronic disease and disabilities and keeping them out of hospitals can save a lot of money for both Medicare and Medicaid. Most people learn about home health care services at a time of crisis when the hospital advises them that their family member is being discharged, and home care arrangements need to be made. The declining availability of family caregivers adds to the crisis.

Home care services are proven to delay nursing home admissions and mortality among the sickest people. The goal of home care services is to prevent functional decline, slow the progression of chronic disease, and reduce hospitalizations and ER visits.

Essex County Home Health Unit has adopted the most advanced remote monitoring platform focused on changing patient behavior to reduce readmissions and improve clinical outcomes.

Health Recovery Solutions (HRS) is our telehealth vendor that provides disease-specific engagement kits customized with educational videos, care plans, medication reminders while integrated with Bluetooth peripherals to engage patients. For clinicians, HRS' software allows for the management of high-risk patients and provides seamless communication with them through video chat, phone, and text messaging. In addition, it allows for wound imaging. For family members and caregivers, HRS' software gives them the ability to be fully involved in their family member's care and well-being.

My Plan of Care

What matters MOST to you?

Benefits of Treatment:

- ☐ Your condition should improve or stabilize
- ☐ We expect you to reach pre illness condition
- ☐ WHAT DO YOU WANT? _____

Goals of your care:

- ☐ You will become less short of breath
- ☐ You will have less discomfort/pain
- ☐ You will experience less edema
- ☐ You will know who to call with questions
- ☐ You will have information you need and want about your treatment plan
- ☐ You will understand the treatment and activities you experience
- ☐ Wounds will heal by _____
- ☐ You will be safe in your home

How will Essex County Health Department Home Health Unit help you reach your goals?

☐ WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

- ☐ Assess your health
- ☐ Teach about your med-side effects, risks, benefits, use precautions, high risk meds
- ☐ Teach you a home exercise program and/or about your Condition: _____
- ☐ Monitor Vital signs/weights
- ☐ Contact your Doctor about questions regarding your care/treatment or medication Reconciliation.
- ☐ Teach about ways to prevent Hospitalization, Diet, Safety, UTI's, Constipation, Skin Care, Falls, Medical Equipment, Precautions

☐ Provide treatment:

☐ Monitor Labs

☐ Identify availability of primary caregivers schedule who will provide care for you (ex: Jane available T/W/S for Wounds)

☐ Notify the PT/Caregiver/Responsible Party of all changes in the Plan on care in advance of the changes_____Request a review of drug interactions with Nurse

☐ Prevent Risks- You may be at Risks for: Falls Bleeding precautions

Other:_____

☐

What you can do to reach your goals

- **WHAT MOTIVATES YOU?** _____

- Request night lights/stair treads or bathtub treads from your case manager to prevent falls
- Let us know of worsening symptoms
- Let us know of any Concerns/questions about treatment symptoms or Medications
- Let us know if you do not understand something we say
- Request written handouts about your condition
- Notify Agency of any caregiver changes that will affect your treatment plan
- Notify Case manager if you would like services from Center for Blind or Hearing Impaired

Resolution Calling on Governor Kathy Hochul to declare a state of emergency regarding the overdose epidemic in New York State to remove statutory barriers to local data sharing necessary for timely interventions.

WHEREAS, the use of opioids, such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, Fentanyl, carfentanil, tramadol, methadone, and heroin can be fatal or cause severe side effects; and

WHEREAS, a 2022 report released by the New York State Comptroller showed that in 2020, opioid overdose deaths increased 38 percent nationally and 44 percent in New York and, provisional data indicated that in 2021, overdose deaths increased by 17 percent nationally and in New York to 80,401 and 4,946, respectively, in 2021. Between 2-19 and 2021, opioid overdose deaths in New York increased by 68 percent; and

WHEREAS Overdoses involving opioids in NYS increased to 85% in 2020 and 2021, with synthetic opioids accounting for 78% in 2021, compared to 11% in 2010; and

WHEREAS, New York State Counties continue to experience upward trend of drug overdose deaths and non-fatal overdoses, particularly those resulting from opioids; and

WHEREAS, drugs, including but not limited to, heroin, cocaine, opioids, and Xanax are being laced with Fentanyl, and while pharmaceutical Fentanyl is 50-100 times more potent than morphine, illicitly manufactured Fentanyl can contain even higher concentrations, increasing the danger of overdose, with two out of every five pills laced with Fentanyl containing a potentially lethal dose; and

WHEREAS, since 2019, the increase of counterfeit pills containing Fentanyl seized by the DEA has increased by 430 percent; and

WHEREAS, access to data is critical to identifying and quickly adjusting response to local trends in opioid and other drug use and the presence of additives such as fentanyl and xylazine which increase risk of death as well as potentially impact response options; and

WHEREAS, the American Medical Association 2022 Overdose Epidemic Report notes data gaps as a limiting factor to evidence-based, public health interventions and outcomes; and

WHEREAS, currently available data remains incomplete, delayed in availability, is not standardized for comparison and often lags years behind current year trends; and

WHEREAS, statutory reporting requirements typically flow from state to local, with no statutory mechanism or bi-directional data processes to allow real-time data access and sharing at the local level; and

WHEREAS, improving standardization, quality and timeliness of data collection and analyses will help advance local prevention, treatment and harm reduction efforts to improve outcomes and reduce overdose and death; and

WHEREAS, the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) permits covered entities to disclose protected health information, without authorization, to public health authorities who

are legally authorized to receive such reports for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease, injury, or disability; and

WHEREAS, barriers exist in various sections of New York State Law that constrain local ability to access and share critical information regarding opioid use and overdoses, include electronic death records, toxicology reports, emergency response reports and other vital events;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the New York State Association of Counties calls upon Governor Kathy Hochul to declare a state of emergency regarding the overdose epidemic to address statutory barriers to local data access and sharing; and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Governor and Legislature pursue statutory changes to permanently allow for local data access and sharing to facilitate real-time identification of

local trends in drug use, including non-fatal and fatal overdoses to allow for timely interventions to reduce preventable injuries and deaths.