

# ESSEX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

JANUARY 2025  
MONTHLY REPORT

DIRECTOR - LINDA BEERS, MPH



## Happy New Year!

This board report will include a review our department's prior year activities, as well as an overview of our governance structure; budget; mandated programs & services; and highlight the ways that Town Supervisors might interface with our leadership and staff.

**The Essex County Board of Supervisors serves as the Board of Health in Essex County.**

ECHD functions through the Human Services Committee of the Board of Supervisors.

### Governance

ECHD convenes a Public Health Advisory Committee/Professional Advisory Committee (PHAC/PAC) that meets quarterly with the following responsibilities:

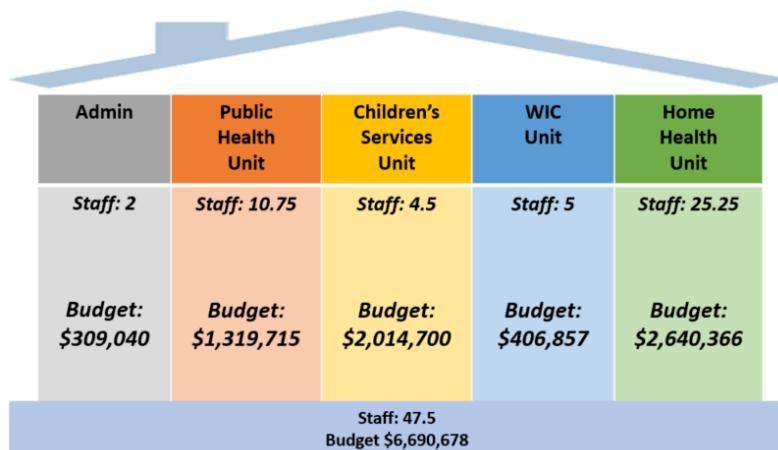
- advising the agency on professional issues,
- participating in evaluation of agency programs and services,
- serving as liaison with other health care providers and coordinating with other agencies and organizations,
- reviewing agency policies and recommending approval by the governing body (Board of Supervisors),
- offering recommendations on adequacy and appropriateness of services,
- assuring the agency's capacity to serve the community's needs.

The committee structure is defined by ECHD policy and includes defined positions:

- Agency administrators
- Practicing physician
- One or more members knowledgeable about the health care needs of the county
- One or more consumer representatives
- One or more professional nurses of the agency staff
- Representative professional service and therapy providers.

### Budget

#### 2024 Health Department Overview



#### What We Have To Do:

New York State Public Health Law describes performance standards and minimum requirements for the Core Public Health Services required of a local health department to be eligible for State Aid in the areas of:

- Community Health Assessment
- Communicable Disease Control
- Emergency Preparedness & Response
- Chronic Disease Prevention
- Family Health
- Environmental Health

Our Department also operates these programs following NYS Public Health Laws to meet our community needs:

- Children's Services
- WIC
- Homecare

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## Community Health Assessment

#### What We Have To Do:

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.

A Community Health Assessment (CHA) examines the demographic and health status indicators for a given population to identify key problems and assets in a community. The goal of a CHA is to guide the development of strategies to address the community's health needs, compiled in a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CHIP is used by the local health department and other governmental, education, and human service agencies to set priorities and coordinate and target resources.

#### What We Did in 2024:

- Continued to work independently and with our health partners to implement CHIP interventions
- Met with health partners and stakeholder committees on a quarterly basis
- Participated on monthly regional data sub-committee
- Conducted ongoing compilation and analysis of primary and secondary data
- Served as a member of 2025-2030 Prevention Agenda Domain Work Group
- Launched new Community Survey and prepped for new round of CHA CHIP to start in 2025

#### Why It Matters:

Ongoing data collection and analysis direct the work of the Department and informs how we interact with other Departments of the county, healthcare providers, and community based programs and services. Using local data to drive decision-making ensures that ECHD responds to resident needs more effectively and efficiently.

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## Communicable Disease

The Communicable Disease program includes:

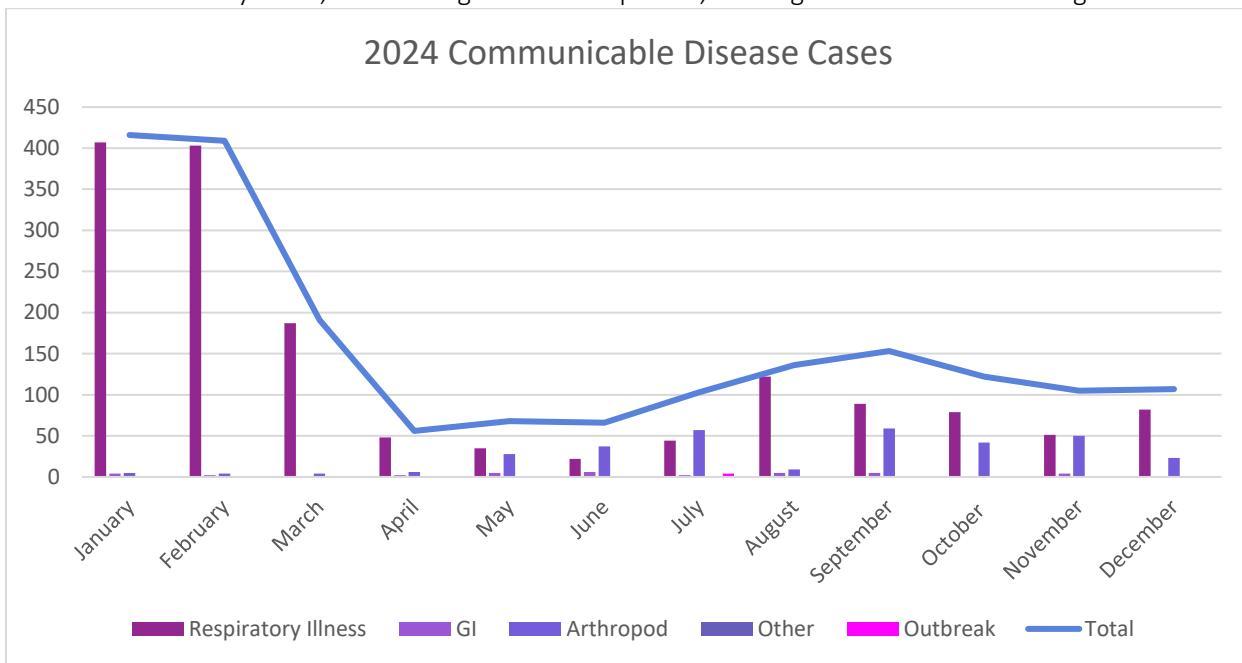
- General Communicable Diseases;
- Rabies prevention and control;
- Arthropod (tick and mosquito-borne) diseases;
- Immunizations (for vaccine-preventable diseases);
- Sexually Transmitted Disease (including HIV and Hep C); and
- Tuberculosis.

#### What We Have To Do:

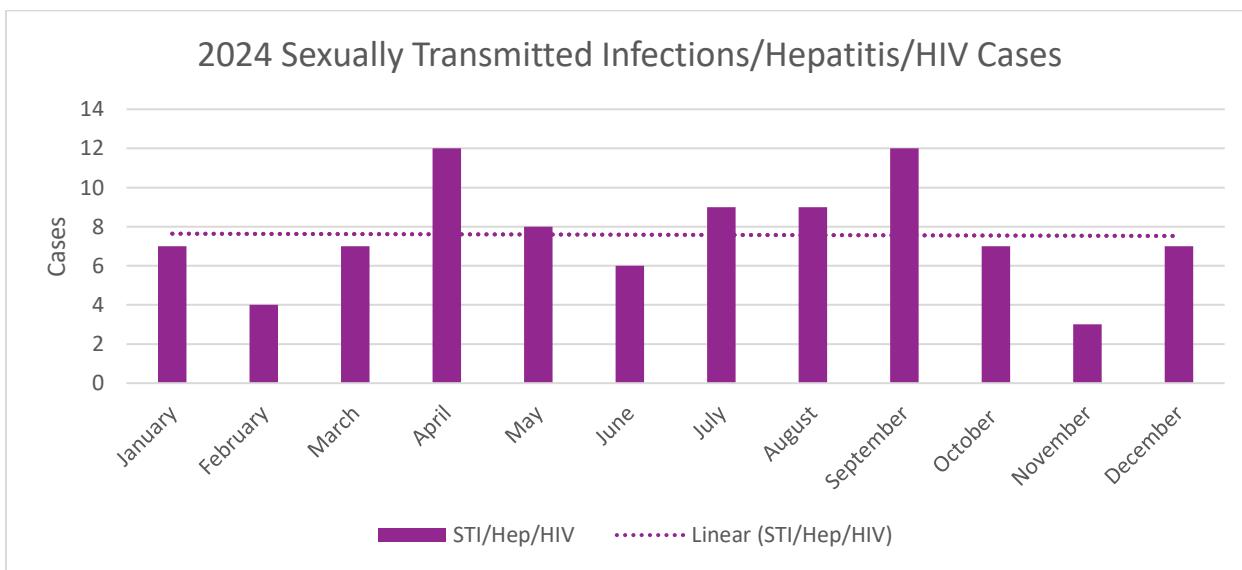
- Maintain capacity for electronic disease surveillance for all diseases identified as reportable in NYS;
- Retrieve electronic lab reports for all reportable diseases daily;
- Accept all reports from labs, providers and the public about potential disease risks or outbreaks;
- Investigate each report to ensure diagnosis and treatment and prevent spread or outbreak;
- Coordinate with medical providers and laboratories to ensure testing, diagnosis & patient care;
- Conduct outreach and education about communicable diseases and incidence of diseases in Essex County;
- Promote prevention strategies including immunizations for vaccine preventable diseases and serve as the safety-net provider for vaccines; and
- Provide updates regarding communicable disease risks , local data and prevention for stakeholders and the community at large.

#### What We Did in 2024:

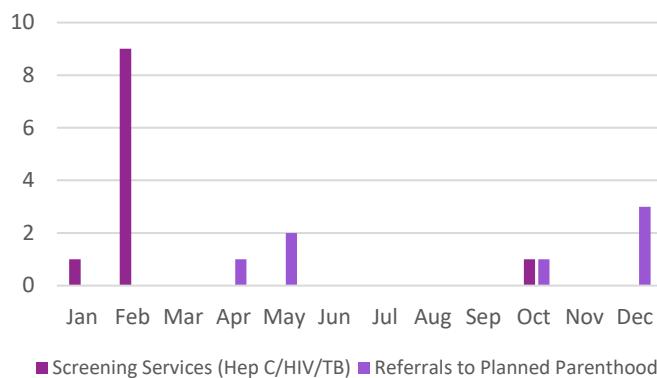
- NOTE – Only cases, not investigations are reported; investigation counts would be greater.



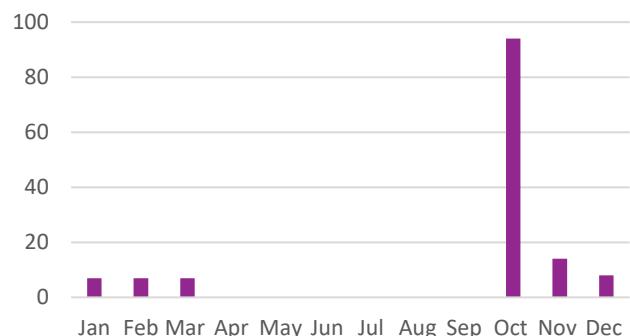
Each case tallied above and below represents some level of work by department staff, including investigation, response, communication and education activities.



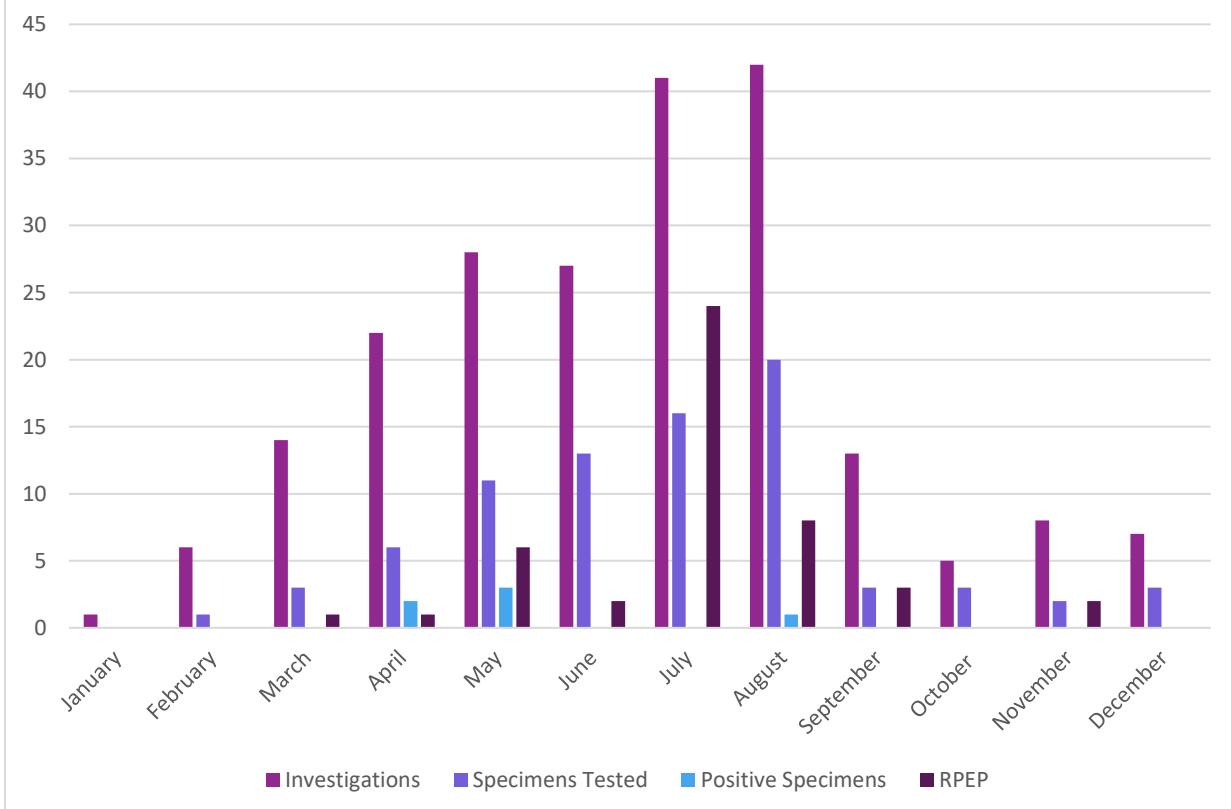
### Screening and Referral Services

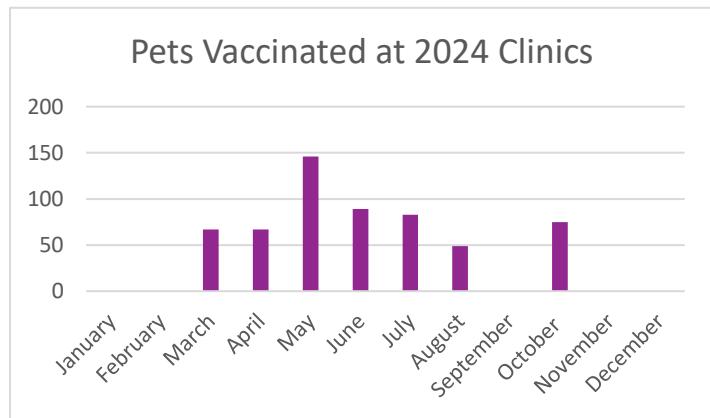


### Immunizations Administered in 2024



### 2024 Rabies Program Data





\*Clinics not conducted in Jan, February, September, November or December.

#### Why It Matters:

In addition to investigating all reports of domestic animal bites, we investigate reports of altercations between potentially rabid wild animals and people/pets, with the goal of ruling out rabies exposures, sometimes through capture and testing. Rabies investigation and response activities are one of the more labor intensive areas of our Communicable Disease Program. Each report of an animal bite or interaction requires prompt response from our staff, involves follow-up with animal owners and/or bite victims, and in many cases requires that we interface with healthcare partners, law enforcement officers (e.g. NYS DEC, NYS Police, local PDs, USDA, etc.) and town personnel where incident occurred or where the domestic animal will be confined (ACO/DCO, clerk, Supervisor).

We also work closely with towns to secure and staff a suitable location when we hold Rabies Vaccination Clinics. These clinics are popular events that tend to be an overwhelmingly positive experience for our staff, your residents, your town employees, and the vet staff who attend.

## Emergency Preparedness & Response

A component of local health department responsibility to promote and protect the health of their residents is the planning for and responding to health emergencies. Emergencies may be naturally occurring, accidents or deliberate acts. Examples include storms, power outages, floods, disease outbreaks, the intentional release of hazardous substances, etc.



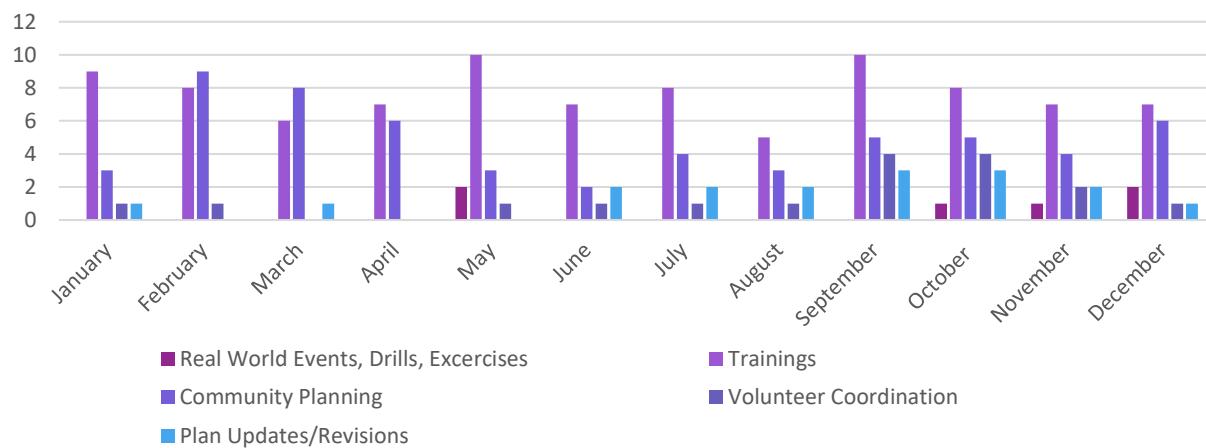
#### What We Have To Do:

- Maintain an All Hazards Preparedness and Response Plan;
- Ensure readiness to provide medical countermeasures to the public;
- Train & educate staff and community partners;
- Implement and participate in drills & exercises;
- Respond to actual public health emergencies and support of other emergencies as appropriate.

#### What We Did in 2024:

ECHD accomplishes this work largely through partnerships with Government – local, state & federal; hospitals; and community Based Organizations. Our Emergency Preparedness and Response staff also works closely with our Communicable Disease staff due to the interrelated nature of the two programs. ECHD vaccination clinics have served as controlled real world events to drill and further refine the emergency response procedures we already have in place, as well as strengthen our partnerships with community agencies and practice our incident management system. One of the amazing strengths of our program is the coordination of a volunteer program, the Medical Reserve Program (MRC) comprised of clinical and non-clinical volunteers who are at the ready to serve in a multitude of capacities for emergency responses.

## 2024 Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program Data



### Why It Matters:

By having pre-established plans and procedures, ECHD and our partners can quickly:

- Mobilize resources and take necessary actions to minimize injuries and fatalities during an emergency.
- Identify and contain health threats, reducing the spread of disease outbreaks.
- Direct attention to vulnerable groups like the elderly, children, and people with disabilities to ensure their needs are met during a crisis.

Our preparedness program also ensures that we have the necessary equipment and supplies on hand or readily accessible to respond appropriately to public health threats and emergencies.

### Chronic Disease

Chronic diseases are defined broadly as conditions that last 1 year or more and require ongoing medical attention or limit activities of daily living or both. Chronic diseases include cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, arthritis, asthma, etc.



### What We Have To Do:

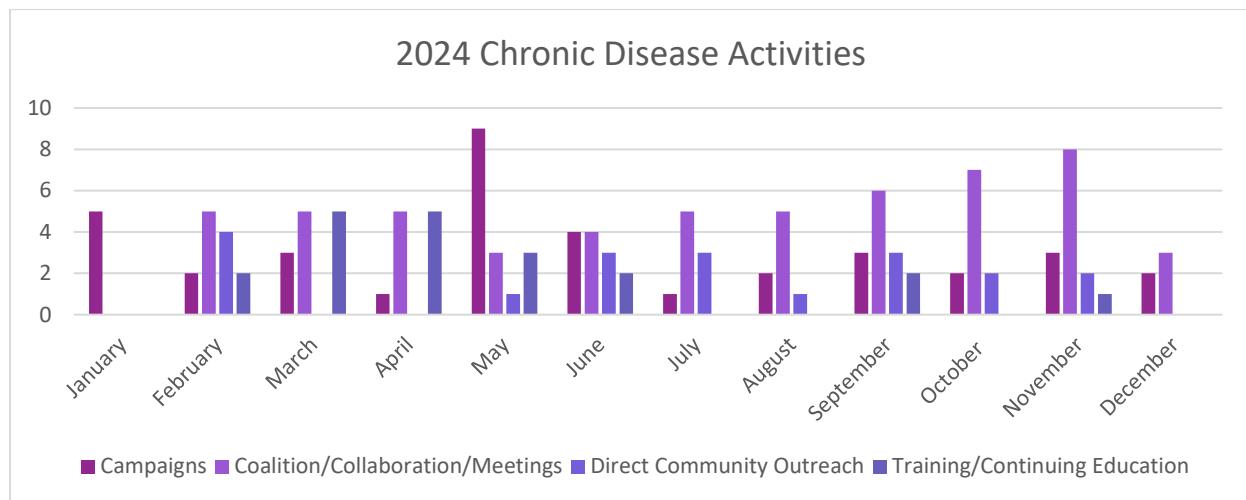
As a local health department, we are required to conduct an evidenced-based chronic disease prevention program that focuses on the prevention of these chronic diseases and their associated risk factors:

- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Tobacco

We do this by:

- Generating information for action
- Building health-promoting public policy
- Creating safe and supportive environments
- Strengthening community action
- Promoting delivery of clinical preventive services
- Reorienting health care to emphasize prevention and quality of care
- Promoting individual chronic disease self-management skills
- Organizing health care and community resources to provide on-going self-management support for patient populations

## What We Did in 2024:



## Why It Matters:

Chronic disease is critical to public health because it is the leading cause of illness, disability, and death in the United States and here in Essex County, accounting for the majority of healthcare costs and significantly impacting the quality of life for individuals and communities. Preventing and managing chronic diseases is a primary focus of public health efforts to improve overall population health.

## Family Health

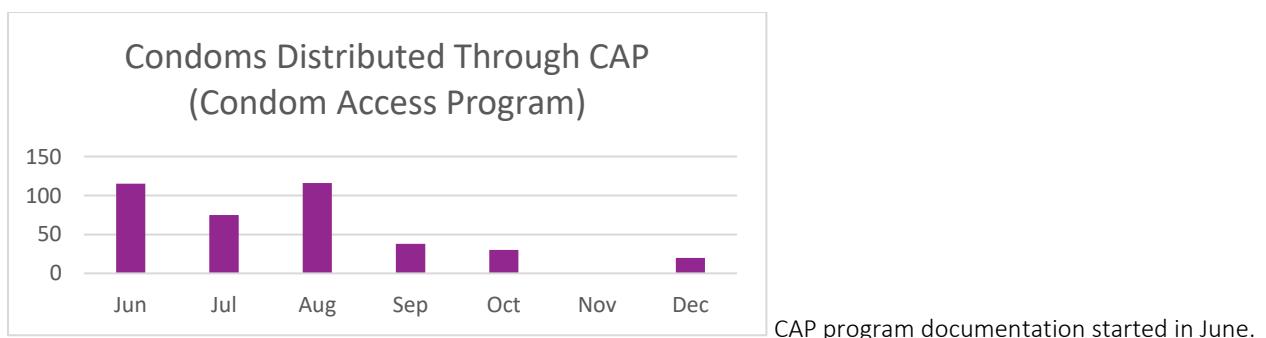
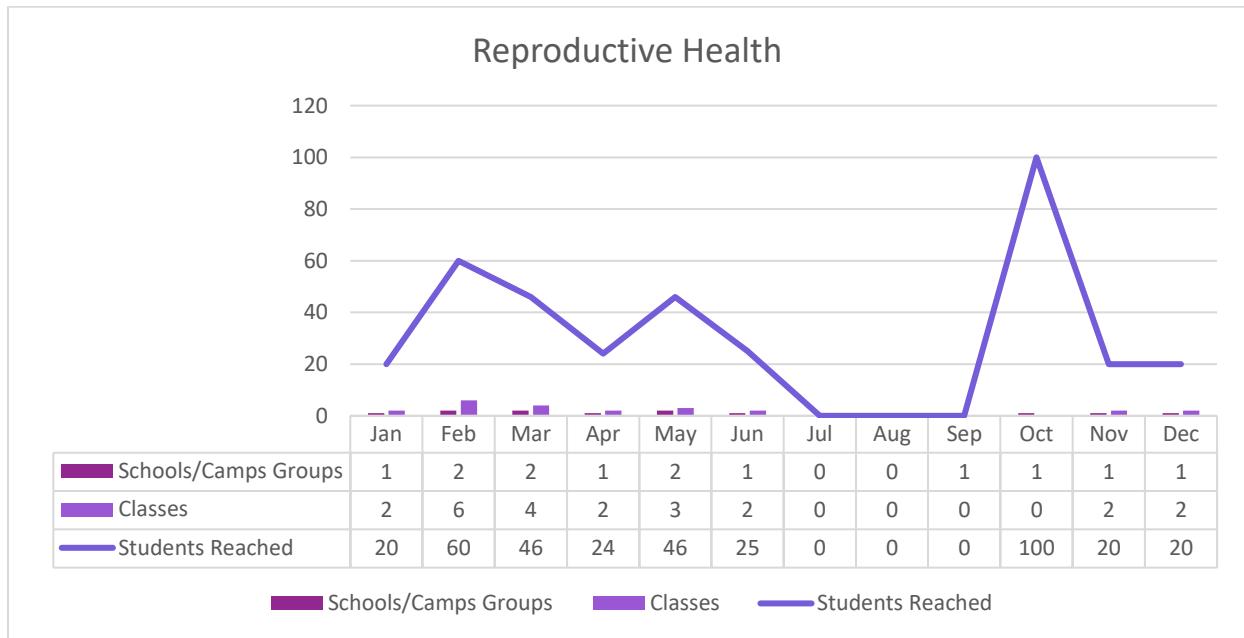
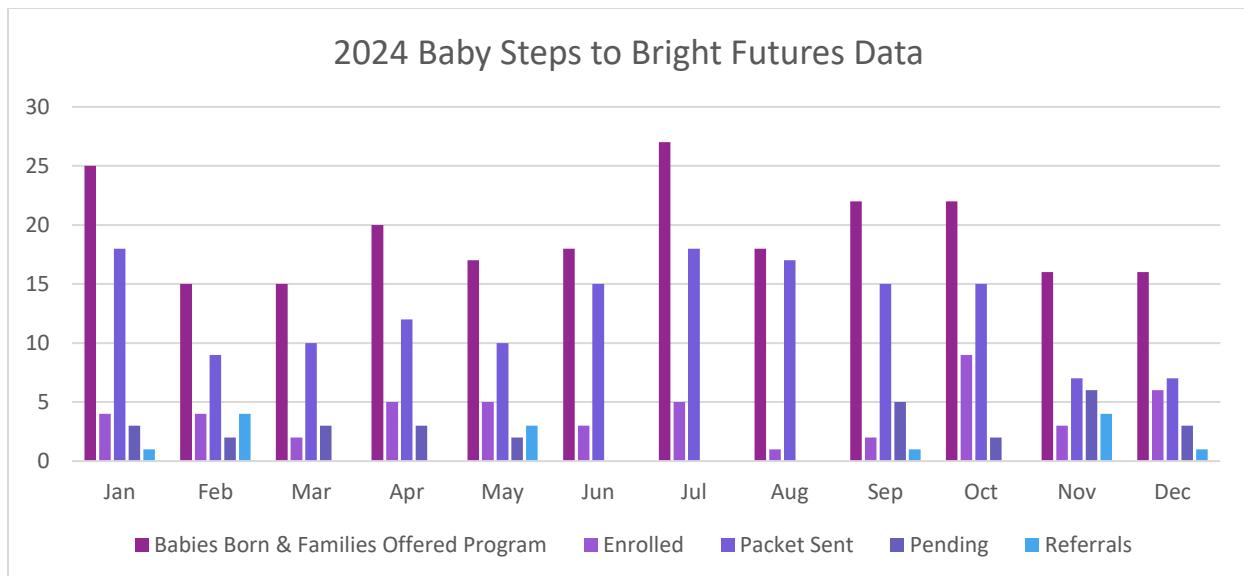


The Family Health program includes:

- Maternal and Infant Health
- Child Health
- Reproductive Health

## What We Have To Do:

- Use data to identify populations at risk & understand the local factors influencing the health of women, children & people of reproductive age;
- Develop or adapt public health marketing and communication educational messages, materials and campaigns to promote healthcare access, promote healthy behaviors & reduce risk factors for poor health outcomes or unintended pregnancy;
- Assist women and families in accessing health information, health insurance, health care and additional programs and services (such as early intervention, WIC, support groups and parenting classes);
- Conduct outreach for health and human service providers to share local data, identify populations experiencing disparities share information about local resources, programs & services to support families;
- Promote policy, environment and systems changes in early childhood education programs, schools & colleges; and
- Assist people in accessing health insurance enrollment and comprehensive health care services.



#### Why It Matters:

Family health programs in public health are crucial because they recognize the family unit as a central influence on individual health, allowing targeted interventions to promote healthy behaviors, prevent diseases, and improve overall well-being across generations by addressing the needs of the entire family simultaneously; this holistic approach can lead to significant positive impacts on community health outcomes.

Our Baby Steps to Bright Futures program ensures that we make contact with the families of every newborn baby in Essex County. Families who accept home-visiting services are connected to skilled public health professional who offers support with things like feeding, safe sleep, bonding and attachment, safe home environments, and referrals to crucial services for overall family health and well-being. These programs have demonstrated long-term benefits that go beyond just the first few weeks of life.

Our Reproductive Health program improves access to comprehensive sexual health education and resources, something that is critically important in many of our rural communities. The program provides individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions about their relationships and sexual health, which can help teens and young adults live healthier lives.

#### We also conduct these programs under Family Health:

- Lead Poisoning Prevention and Control
- Injury Prevention & Control

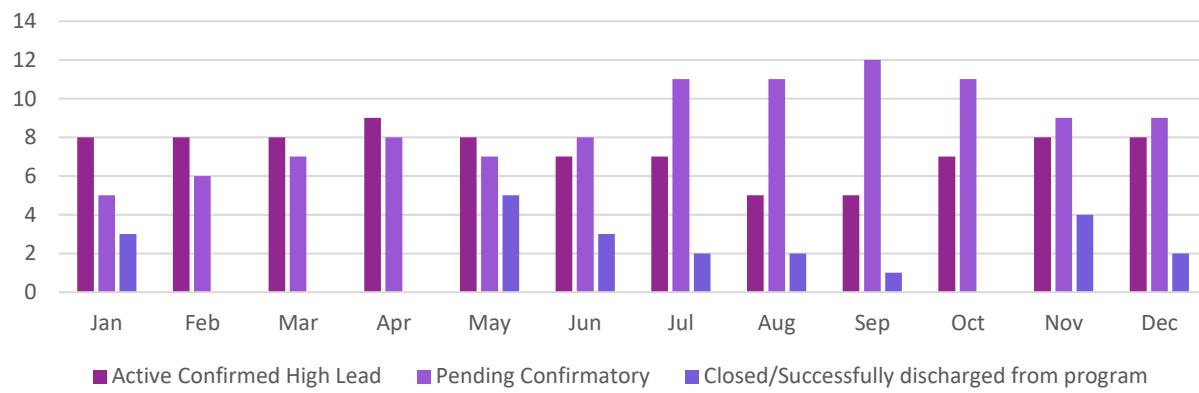
### Lead Poisoning Prevention

#### What We Have To Do:

- Ensure access to blood lead testing and serve as a safety provider for children under 2;
- Coordinate case care for children and pregnant women identified with elevated lead levels;
- Support renovation, reparation or removal of lead sources in the environment.

#### What We Did in 2024:

### Lead Poisoning Prevention Program



#### Why It Matters:

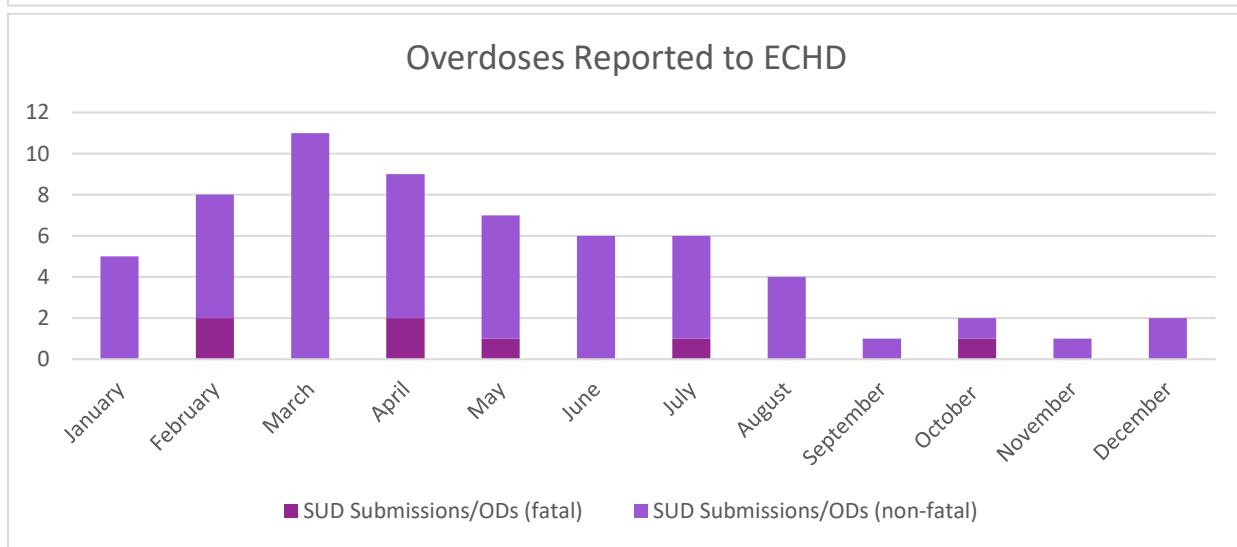
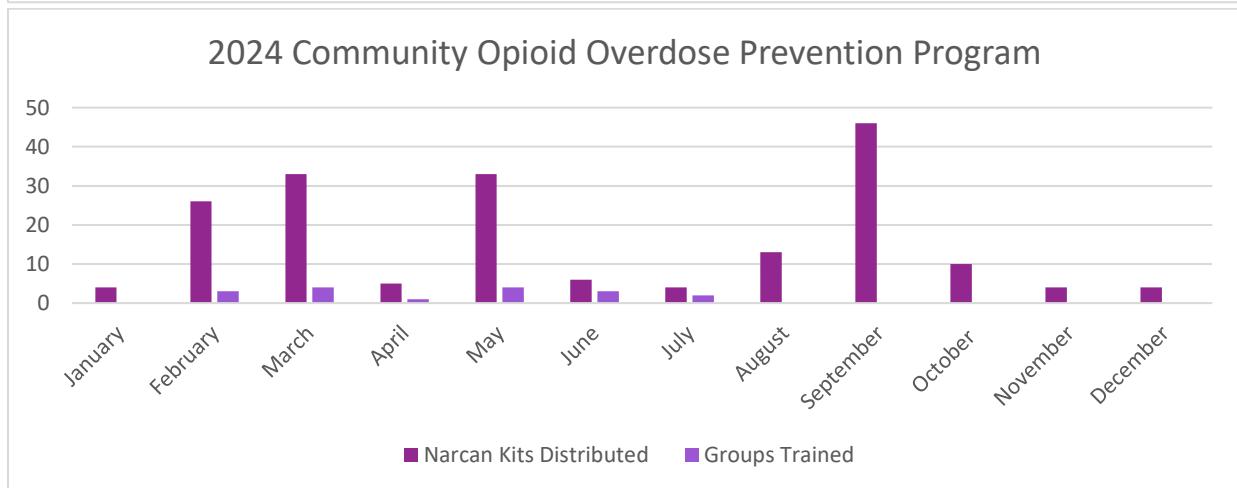
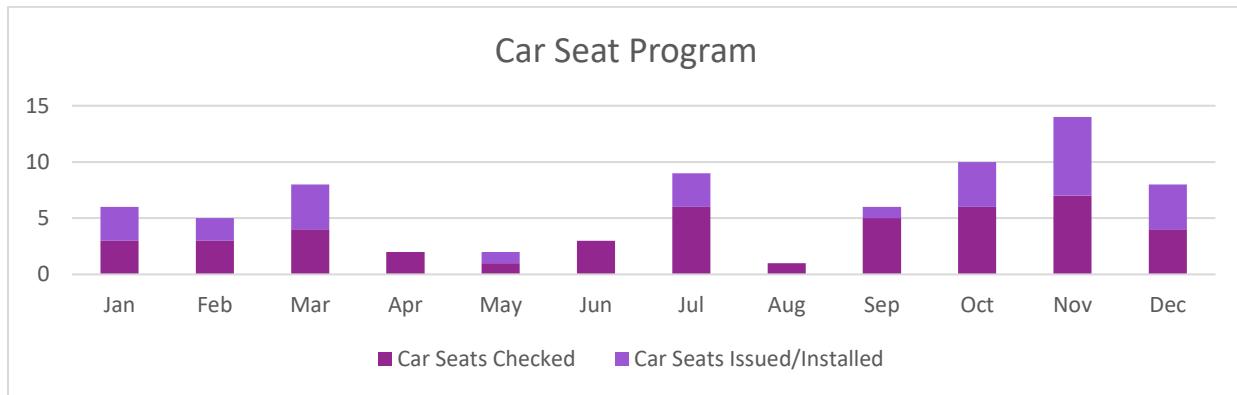
Lead poisoning prevention programs are crucial in public health because even low levels of lead exposure in children can significantly harm their brain development. Lead exposure can cause irreversible damage to a child's learning abilities, behavior, and overall cognitive function, affecting their lifelong health and potential. There is no known safe blood lead level for children; therefore, actively preventing exposure is critical for protecting future generations.

## Injury Prevention

### What We Have To Do:

- Implement activities to reduce hazards and risk factors for injuries, poisonings, drug overdoses & violence, (including gun violence);
- Facilitate distribution of safety devices (such as helmets, car seats, naloxone, etc);
- Support implementation of local laws, policy & environmental changes that prevent injuries; and
- Conduct education and awareness campaigns to reduce risk of injury.

### What We Did in 2024:



#### Why It Matters:

Injury prevention programs are an important component of public health because injuries are the leading cause of death and disability across all age groups. Most injuries are preventable through targeted interventions, significantly improving quality of life and reducing healthcare costs by addressing risk factors in communities and environments. Preventing injuries is a cost-effective way to promote overall population health.

*Because of the many overlapping aspects of Children's Services and WIC programs with the Family Health program – and often the same target population - it simply makes sense to discuss these programs together.*

## Children's Services

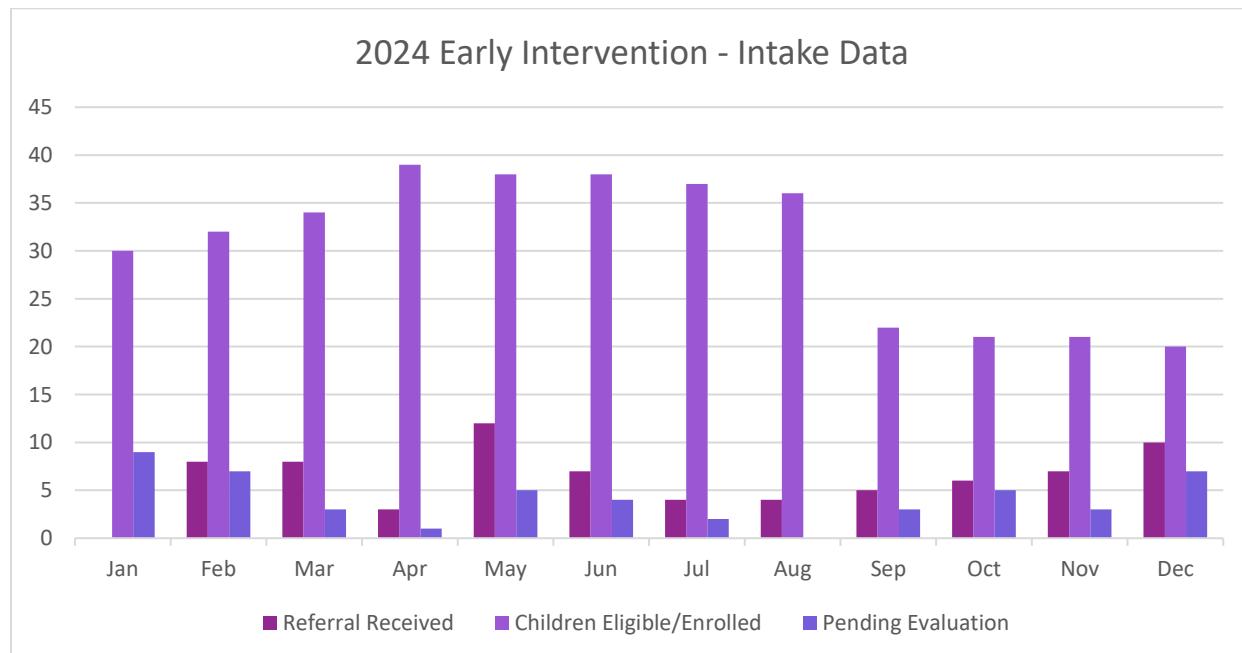
### Early Intervention:

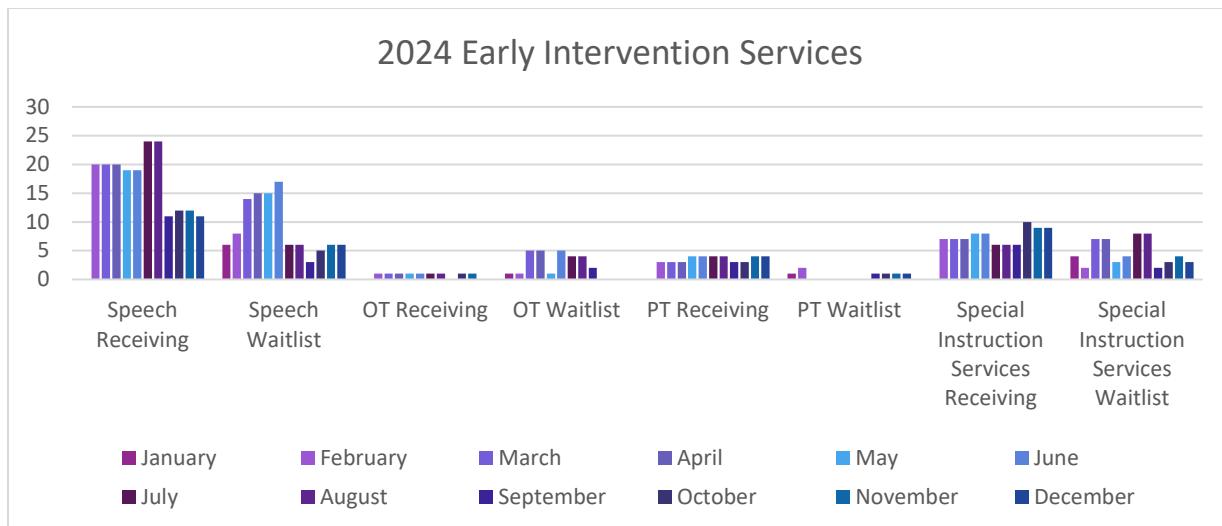
#### What We Have To Do:

The New York State Early Intervention Program (EIP) is part of the national Early Intervention Program for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. First created by Congress in 1986 under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the New York State Department of Health administers the EIP through the Bureau of Early Intervention. In New York State, the Early Intervention Program was established in Article 25 of the Public Health Law and has been in effect since July 1, 1993.

To be eligible for services, children must be under 3 years of age and have a confirmed disability or established developmental delay, as defined by the State, in one or more of the following areas of development: physical, cognitive, communication, social-emotional, and adaptive.

#### What We Did in 2024:





#### Why It Matters:

Early intervention is crucial because it allows children to develop critical skills and abilities during their most formative years, when their brains are most receptive to learning, significantly improving their chances of success in areas like communication, social interaction, cognitive development, and overall well-being. Intervening early potentially prevents more severe issues from developing later in life if left unaddressed; essentially, "the earlier the intervention, the better the outcome" for a child's development.

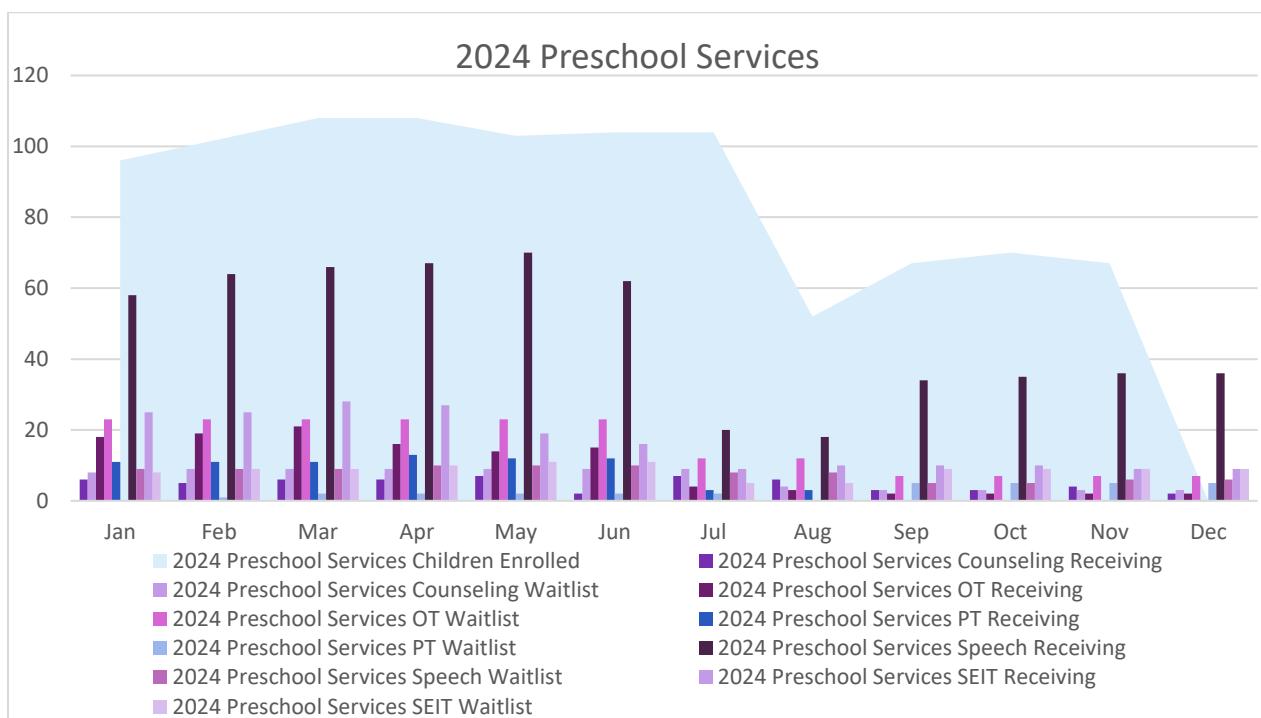
#### Preschool:

##### What We Have To Do:

The Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) is responsible for evaluating and identifying children ages 3-4 for disabilities and then arranging for the delivery of special education services.



##### What We Did in 2024:



\*Note: December 2024 data not available at time of report.

### Why It Matters:

Preschool special education programs are important because they provide free services to help children with disabilities or developmental delays learn and develop:

- **Support learning** by addressing delays in learning, speech and language, physical development, and social-emotional skills.
- **Inclusive environments** - Help children learn and socialize in inclusive environments with their typically developing peers. This can help promote academic growth, independence, and social-emotional gains for all children.
- **Individualized Education Programs** -, the school will work with the family to create an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP is a plan that outlines the services the school will provide to meet the child's unique needs.
- **Early identification** - preschool special education programs can help identify and assess disabling conditions in students early.

### Children & Youth with Special Healthcare Needs

The Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs Program (CYSHCN) seeks to improve the system of care for children and youth with special health care needs from birth up to 21 years of age. The Program helps to shape public policy so families can get the best health care for their children.

### What We Have To Do:

Serve children that have an illness or condition requiring extra health care and support services. These children might have a serious or long-lasting physical condition, intellectual or developmental disability, and/or behavioral or emotional condition.

Conditions include, but are not limited to, ADD or ADHD; allergies; anxiety; arthritis/joint problems; asthma; autism or autism spectrum disorder; behavioral/conduct problem; blood disorders; Cerebral Palsy; Cystic Fibrosis; depression; developmental delay; diabetes; Down syndrome; epilepsy/seizure disorder; genetic or inherited condition; head injury; hearing problem; heart problem; intellectual disability; learning difficulty; migraines, other mental health condition; muscular dystrophy; sickle cell anemia; speech or language disorder; substance use disorder; Tourette syndrome; or vision problems.

### What We Did in 2024:



### Why It Matters:

Programs for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) are important because they:

- Improve care systems by shaping public policy to improve the care system for children and youth with special health care needs.
- Provide resources by offering information and referrals to health services, insurance, and community resources. They also help families find doctors, specialists, and mental health resources.
- Address complex needs by ensuring they have access to care.
- Reduce negative outcomes by ensuring CYSHCN receive prompt, appropriate care.
- Support families by:
  - Providing advocacy
  - Offering transition information
  - Providing trainings and workshops
  - Helping states finance care-coordination services

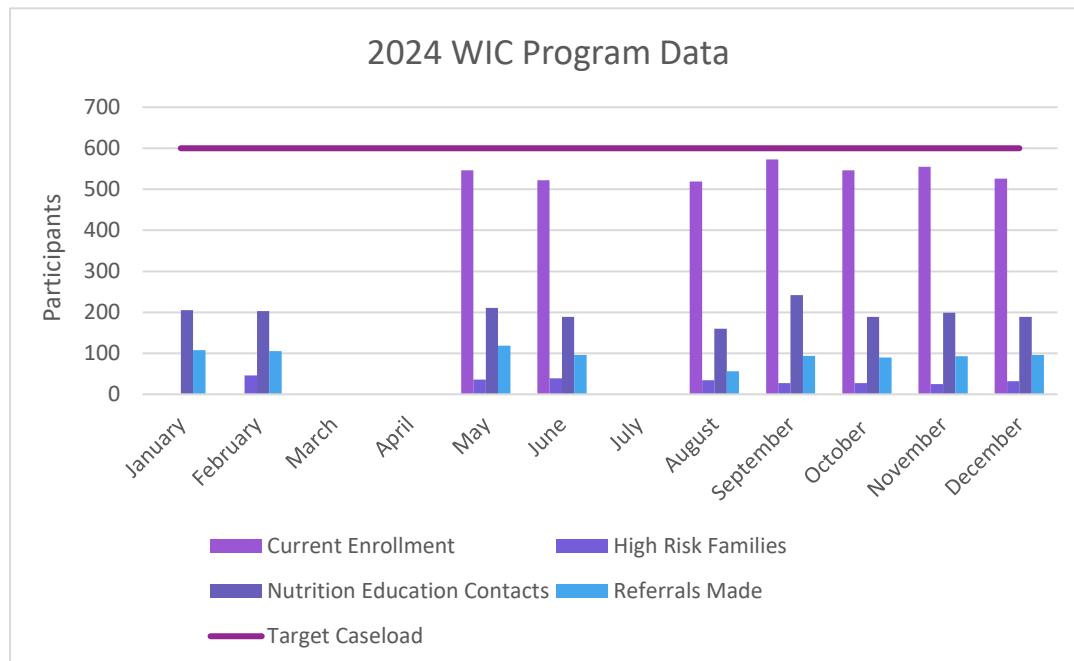
## WIC

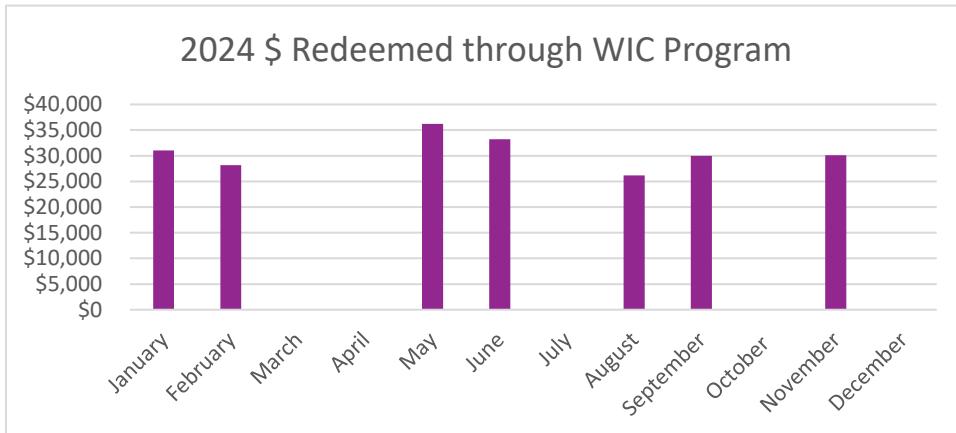
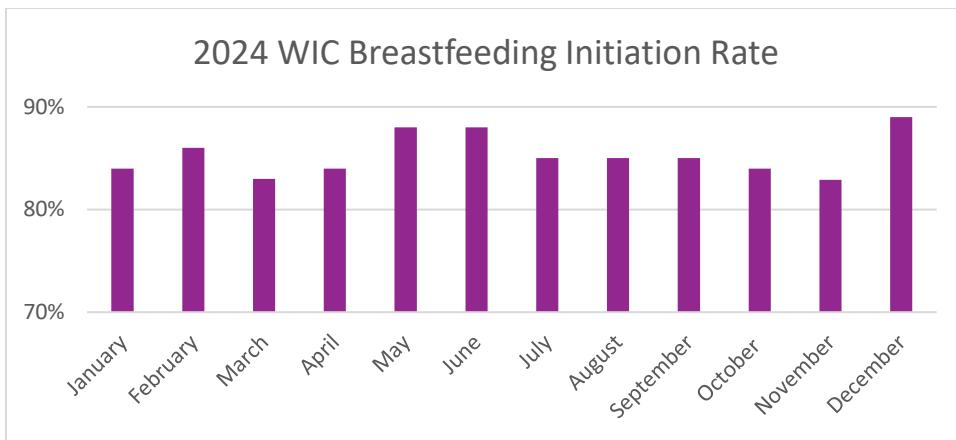
Did you know? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, seven of the ten (7/10) leading causes of death in the United States are linked to poor diets. That's why the federal government, NY and our Department invest strongly in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children known as WIC.

### What We Have To Do:

- Nutrition Education,
- Breastfeeding Support,
- Referrals, and
- Nutritious Foods

### What We Did in 2024:





Note: Dollars redeemed in Essex County data not available for March, April, July, October, and December.

Our WIC Program does even more!

**Health Monitoring-** We track the growth of our participants, check iron status, complete nutrition assessments, address substance use, and track developmental milestones to perform participant-centered counseling.

**Free Veggies-** Essex County WIC distributes Local Food Boxes to participants. **From March through December, approximately \$106,538 in additional food was provided to residents of Essex County.**

**Events-**Essex County WIC has events to bring families together and promote healthy nutrition, including our WIC n' Pick events over the summer, which give families a chance to visit local farms and pick produce.

**Support for Families-** We connect families to resources that help them thrive including--Thanksgiving meals, Christmas gifts, car seats, coats, diapers, clothes, food prep tools, books, and other necessary supplies.

This holiday season, with the help from the County Sheriff's, ZONTA club of the Adk's, and several private donors, WIC provided Christmas toys, food and clothing to 126 families throughout the county.

In December, WIC, in collaboration with the Essex Food Hub and Mother Cabrini, provided 20 Microwaves, 20 Air Fryers and 20 Insta-pots to our WIC families.

#### Why It Matters:

According to the USDA, research shows that WIC:

- Increases enrollment in prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy.
- Increases infant birth weight.
- Increases intake of iron and vitamin C during infancy.
- Increases intake of nutrient-dense foods.

- Decreases medical costs. **WIC saves the taxpayers up to \$8 in Medicaid expenses for every \$1 spent on pregnant women.**

Learn more about how WIC programs help your community: <https://www.wicstrong.com/community/wic-helps-your-community/>

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## Environmental Health

A NYSDOH District Office (covering Essex, Franklin & Hamilton Counties) conducts most of the required Environmental Health services for Essex County under the categories:

- Community Environmental Health and Food Protection
- Environmental Health Exposure Investigation, Assessment and Response
- Environmental Radiation Protection
- Individual Water and Sewage Systems
- Public Water Supply Protection
- Public Health Nuisances
- Realty Subdivision
- Tanning Facilities

The Environmental Health Services we conduct are:

- Communications/Updates on Air Quality, Blue Green Algae Beach Closures, Boil Water Orders
- Investigation of Foodborne Illnesses
- Mold & Health
- Climate & Health

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## Home Health Care

Home Care transitioned to using a new medical records system in 2024. This significant change yielded many benefits for the Home Care team in meeting mandates and will yield improved reporting for 2025.