

# ESSEX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

JUNE 2023

MONTHLY REPORT

DIRECTOR - LINDA BEERS, MPH



## PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT

### Director's Message

#### **Public Health Infrastructure Grant**

Last year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced [Strengthening U.S. Public Health Infrastructure, Workforce, and Data Systems](#), a new, flexible funding opportunity that will provide nearly \$4 billion over five years to improve critical public health infrastructure to health departments across the country. Funds will be issued to states and then on to local health departments based on a formula of population size and community needs/resilience factors.

Health Research Inc. / New York State Department of Health (HRI/NYSDOH) is awarding funding totaling \$43.1M to local health departments as part of this infrastructure improvement initiative.

#### Funding Details:

- 5-Year grant period: December 1, 2022 through November 30, 2027.
- Essex County Health Department's 5-year award total is \$619,863

#### Proposed Budget Allocations:

- Extending (1) Communications Specialist and (1) Nursing position once current grant funding expires;
- Funding ½ of an Outreach Coordinator position;
- Purchasing 1 workstation in full for the Outreach Coordinator;
- \$5,000 towards professional development, workshops, etc.

**Public Health Infrastructure**  
is made up of the people, services, and systems needed to promote and protect health in every U.S. community



#### **Second rabid fox in Ti – Residents urged to check rabies vaccination status for pets and keep them UTD**

In late May, an individual in the town of Ti was attacked and bitten by a grey fox. The individual's dog fought with the fox and was also bitten. A NYS DEC officer was dispatched to the scene to retrieve the fox and the animal specimen was subsequently submitted to the NYS Wadsworth Laboratory for rabies testing.

The specimen tested positive for rabies, making it the second grey fox specimen to test positive from the Ticonderoga area in 2023. ECHD followed up with all appropriate treatment and monitoring protocols for person and pet.

A press release was issued on June 1 to call attention to the incident, share prevention and mitigation strategies, promote our upcoming FREE RABIES VACCINATION CLINIC at the Highway Department in Ticonderoga on June 14 from 6-8pm, and remind residents how to handle bat encounters, which also increase rabies exposure risk.

---

## Summer is Here!

**Did you know** that the summer months are some of the health department's busiest months? Here are just a few of our current and upcoming activities:



### Vax Impacts

- Outreach for J-1 workers and school-aged children who have immunization needs.

### Tickborne Disease

- Marketing, communication, and community education through sharing tickborne disease data, prevention messaging, tick removal kits, etc.

### Cooling Center Locations

- Coordination and awareness of township Cooling Center locations in Essex County.

### Sunscreen Promotion

- NYSACHO grant awarded to our Chronic Disease Program. Public beaches and locations with existing sunscreen dispensers will be targeted for more supplies and education.

### Camp Outreach

- Coordination with the Saranac Lake District Office of Environmental Health to ensure camps in Essex County have information and resources to prevent, manage, and report various health and safety issues that may arise.

### Baby Steps to Bright Futures

- Staff are meeting with birthing hospitals, working on increasing referrals, stocking our Kinder Closet, and building our electronic case management database.

### Lead Poisoning Prevention

- Public Health detailing with local healthcare providers to highlight actionable lead levels and lead testing recommendation.

### COVID School Grant

- Approaching the end of the 2-year grant period. Staff have been distributing test kits, PPE, and air purifier units, as well as retrieving equipment. Working with ACAP and early childhood education centers to supply them with air purifiers and antigen test kits.

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES

---

### Early Intervention:

Our Early Intervention (EI) numbers have been on the rise the last 3 months and we are getting back to a pre-pandemic caseload. We currently have 40 children enrolled with Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPS). 19 of those are on a waitlist for one or more services.

In May, staff attended the Early Intervention and Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs (CYSHN) Annual Conference. It was a great opportunity to get our voice heard with the struggles we face with provider shortage in the North Country. We collaborated with other counties across NY state and brainstormed solutions and what we would like to see happen to create a positive change and try to bring more providers to the program.

The Bureau of Early Intervention has created a marketing campaign that they shared with counties aimed at current and future EI providers for LHD to use. Flyer is attached.

We continue our search to hire someone to work under the CYSHN grant (this is a FULLTIME Position shared with the Public Health unit) to increase referrals and connect families to resources. This is an integral part of the program and the work is currently being done but not to the extent that we know that there are families in need. Having a dedicated person to this task would increase the reach of the program. Please help spread the word!!!

## JOIN OUR TEAM!

### Public Health Outreach Coordinator

Work within the Children's Services & Family Health Programs at the Essex County Health Department to:

- \*Positively impact the lives of children, youth & families in Essex County
- \*Ensure the coordination and delivery of medical, educational, and community-based services to improve health & quality of life outcomes for children up to age 21
- \*Support activities of the Baby Steps to Bright Futures program - a first of its kind universal home visiting initiative for **ALL** families bringing home babies in Essex County

## HOME HEALTH UNIT

---

Essex County Home Care Unit has utilized *Home Solutions* as their Electronic Medical Record (EMR) for over 15 years. It has failed to progress with federal and NY State regulation updates over the past 3 years. Currently, it is failing with many essential functions including the simple task of printing the patient medical record. This has been discussed with Linda Beers who has brought our failing medical record system to the attention of Mike Mascarenas. We have dedicated funds to replace our EMR.

The medical record, *Home Solutions*, is no longer meeting the needs of Essex County Home Care Unit. The medical record software is putting the agency at risk of non-compliance with both federal and NY State regulations. We currently have 4 additional software programs trying to support this EMR for billing, auditing, patient satisfaction surveys and verifying clinical visits. *Home Solutions* is a fragmented system that requires contracts with additional software systems which are not interoperable and are just an added expense. If auditors came into the Home Care Unit, the agency would be expected to immediately print a requested medical record, which we cannot do as a result of our failed EMR system.

The EMR has caused multiple fatal errors while submitting required patient assessments to Medicare and Medicaid. To date, ALL these issues (billing, visit verification, assessment submission, auditing and printing) have not been corrected by Home Solutions despite multiple requests to their customer support team over the past 3 years. Or staffing is already taxed and when the EMR is unresponsive to system errors and failures, the staff become stressed, inefficient, ineffective and discouraged.

We are aware of EMR software programs that can improve clinician workflow, simplify complex documentation, increase efficiency, meet regulatory requirements, respond to changes in reimbursement, and provide for transition in care. They also include interoperability of patient records for billing and revenue cycle management and consistently update in response to regulatory changes both federally and in NY State.

We would like the board to approve for the Home Care Agency to move forward with an RFP for a new and improved electronic medical record software system. After the RFP is awarded for the new EMR software, the agency will be able to discontinue the 4 contracts required to support our current EMR at the cost of \$3590 per month. We expect the new EMR to cost \$15,000-\$20,000 to implement, which we will fund with DSRIP account money. The monthly fees will be a negligible change compared to our current costs and will be \$4,000-\$5,000 monthly.

## WIC

---

### May

Target Caseload - 700

Enrolled - 652

#### Participation

Women - 147

Infants - 128

Children - 365

Nutrition Education Appointments - 199

Referrals made - 65

High Risk Participants - 35

Breastfeeding Initiation - 80.2%



WIC Food dollars spent in Essex County - \$34,121

This summer, Adirondack Action is providing CSA Farm Shares (a value of \$8,000) to 20 WIC families throughout Essex County. This is an increase from 10 provided last year. Those participants that can't get to a Farmer's Market will have a box delivered to them each week.

Please join WIC staff and families at DaCy Meadow and Craigardan this summer. See WIC-n-Pick save the date above!

# The NYS Early Intervention Program Needs **YOU!**



The NYS Early Intervention Program serves infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities and delays from birth to age three and their families in their own homes and communities statewide.

## Why our current providers work for NYS Early Intervention (EI):

I consider it an honor to empower EI families to become their child's best role model and advocate."

— From a Speech-Language Pathologist.

It is amazing to be a part of our children and families' journey while helping pave the way for a successful future!"

— From an Occupational Therapist.

Working with EI children and their families answers our desire to help change the path of a human being immediately, while representing 'what can be' to the families who are desperate for your help and guidance."

— From an EI Administrator.

## If you choose to work in NYS Early Intervention, you can:

### HELP CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- Witness many of the "firsts" that infants and toddlers reach (first steps, first words)
- Help set the educational foundations for lifelong learners
- See the results of your work – sometimes instantly!
- Develop close partnerships with families
- Help parents see the beauty in their child's strengths and possibilities

### JOB PERKS

- Flexible work schedule (part-time/full-time, evenings/weekends, choose your caseload size)
- Many agencies across the state are accepting new providers and you could work with multiple agencies
- Use your imagination and creative skills to plan activities
- Build a large professional network
- Grow and gain professional knowledge by collaborating with families and other professionals

## We currently have a shortage of qualified providers to deliver services to children and families.

We are seeking providers with the following New York State certifications and licenses:

• Audiologists	• Nutritionists/Dietitians	• Social Workers
• Behavior Analysts (LBA/CBAA)	• Occupational Therapists	• Speech-Language Pathologists
• Mental Health Practitioners	• Physical Therapists	• Teachers (special education, vision, hearing, speech and language)
• Nurses	• Psychologists	

If interested in a job opportunity in The NYS Early Intervention Program, visit our website at <https://health.ny.gov/EINeedsYou> or email us at provider@health.ny.gov or by calling 518-473-7016 (Option 1 - Provider Unit).

