

ESSEX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

SEPTEMBER 2023

MONTHLY REPORT

DIRECTOR - LINDA BEERS, MPH



Director's Message

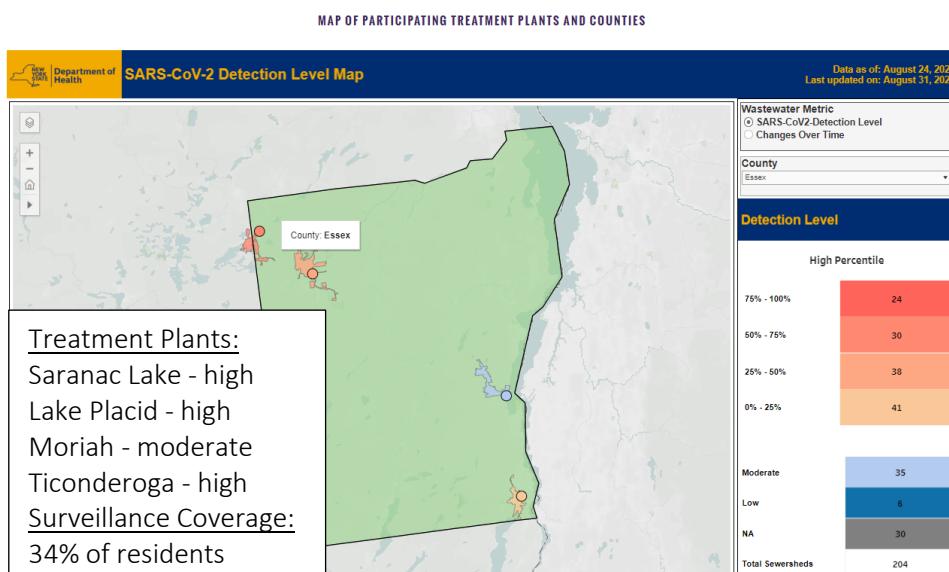
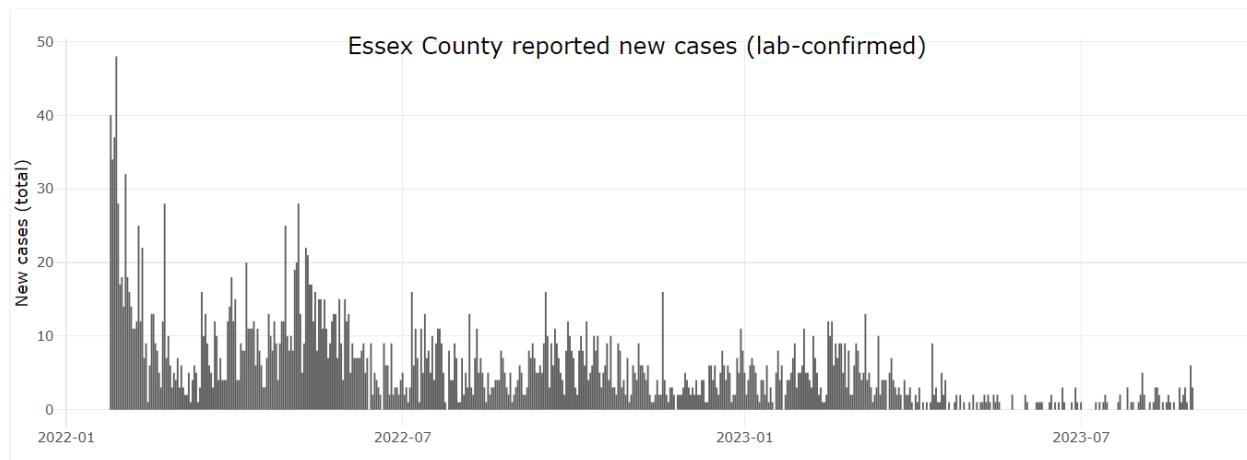
COVID Update

Autumn's approach has questions swirling about a reported uptick in COVID-19 cases throughout the US and more locally in Essex County. A new variant (BA.2.86) has been detected in five states, including NY. While still too early to make major predictions, experts believe this omicron variant will respond similarly to testing, treatment, and vaccination as other omicron variants. An up-to-date COVID-19 booster, targeting a common omicron variant, is expected begin rolling out in mid-September. While about 97% of Americans have some level of COVID-19 immunity through previous vaccination or infections, this can begin to fade in a matter of months, so remaining up-to-date with COVID-19 boosters is recommended.

What is the Current COVID-19 Picture in Essex County?

Reported cases are trending up in August; however, they remain below previous waves.

It is notable that testing and reporting of at-home positives is markedly lower.



Other indicators: hospitalizations in the North Country have also trended upward over the last few weeks and wastewater surveillance testing revealed increasing levels of virus detection in 3 out of the 4 areas being monitored in Essex County. This is a short-term trend. Participating Water

What is ECHD Doing?

- *Staff continue to conduct routine surveillance for all reportable communicable diseases, including COVID-19;
- *Statewide wastewater surveillance data is monitored weekly;
- *Schools, early childhood education centers, and daycares have been supplied with additional PPE and testing materials - and technical assistance is always available to decipher state and national guidance and recommendations;
- *Vaccination clinics for COVID-19, flu, and RSV will be offered throughout the fall and winter months to combat the three most common respiratory infections that circulate at these times; and'
- *Outreach and education to keep the public informed of new developments and remind everyone of the best ways to stay healthy and protected during flu and cold season.

ECHD Launches Naloxone Distribution

We've reported our steady progress toward becoming a Community Opioid Overdose Prevention Program, noting in our last report that we were approved as a registered site. We're now excited to announce that we've officially launched our program, allowing residents, community organizations, and businesses to request Narcan training or kits containing life-saving opioid overdose reversal medication. Anyone visiting our website will see a pop-up notification like the one pictured to the right. More information and requests can also be accessed directly at:

<https://essexcountyny.gov/Health/echo/>



August was National Breastfeeding Month!

This annual observance coincided perfectly with the launch of our Little Feeders Circle of Support groups. Our first group meeting convened in Elizabethtown on August 11 from 10-12pm. The group will meet at the same time on the second Friday of every month at the Elizabethtown Social Center. A second Little Feeders group will meet on the fourth Monday of every month from 10-12pm at the UVMHN-ECH Ti Campus Boardroom, starting on September 25!



In further support of making breastfeeding work for families, ECHD staff updated the Essex County Employee Lactation Policy and worked with Personnel and Department Heads on a list of available lactation locations.

Pictured left: ECHD Staff at a Little Feeders group meeting on 8/11.

WIC

Target Caseload-700

Enrolled-581

High Risk Participants-30

Nutrition Education Appointments-156

WIC food dollars spent in Essex County- \$32,655.52. *this does not include Farmer's Market Coupons*



Essex County WIC is proud to be receiving the USDA Gold Breastfeeding Award of Excellence. We are one of 10 awardees throughout the state. WIC has worked to create a safe and open environment that supports breastfeeding. We work as a team to guarantee open communication with our participants and each other. This has helped to ensure quality care for our participants and timely solutions if any problems arise. Essex County WIC has one Peer Counselor on staff who is available to our participants during and outside of regular operating hours. We also have one Designated Breastfeeding Expert on staff, who works closely with the Peer Counselor and each prenatal or breastfeeding participant. Essex County WIC has launched a summer Breastfeeding Basket campaign where anyone who gave birth in July and August received a basket filled with breastfeeding tools for success. This basket includes snacks, breastfeeding literature, and storage bags to help them through their breastfeeding journey. We look forward to learning new ways of supporting breastfeeding mothers and their families with future training opportunities and continued outreach.

Essex County Health
Department WIC
Program



Rabies

Three more wild animals tested positive for rabies in Essex County in August, including another gray fox in Ticonderoga, a raccoon in Schroon Lake, and a bat in Elizabethtown. Positive rabies cases in 2023 stand at ten, with the following breakdown:

Town	Species	Quantity
Crown Point	Raccoon	1
	Gray Fox	2
Elizabethtown	Small Brown Bat	1
Schroon Lake	Raccoon	1
Ticonderoga	Gray Fox	4
	Woodchuck	1
	Total	10

Positive specimens represent only a fraction of the animals submitted for rabies testing in Essex County. To date in 2023, ECHD (and our partner veterinary clinics) and the NYS DEC have submitted over 60 animals to Wadsworth Laboratory for rabies testing, including fox, skunks, bats, raccoons, woodchucks, and other mammals.

With the spike in cases this year, ECHD would like to emphasize that as a local health department of the NYS Department of Health, we must comply with NYS Public Health Law and other NYS codes, rules, and regulations. As such, ECHD is required to conduct activities and services with respect to rabies including:

- Follow up of potential exposure of persons to rabies;
- Follow up of potential exposure of domestic animals to rabies, including the investigation of incidents involving domestic animals exposed to or potentially exposed to rabies;
- Providing authorization for rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (RPEP), when indicated, and following up to ensure reimbursement for treatment for exposures that occur in Essex County;
- Reporting of all RPEP related to exposure in the county and creation of a case investigation for all instances where an animal is confirmed rabid by Wadsworth Lab;
- Rabies surveillance, prevention and control activities, including organizing and conducting pet vaccination clinics at least once every four months; and
- Rabies education and outreach, including public awareness campaigns to prevent animal bites and bat encounters and distribution of materials.

ECHD is not allowed to conduct the following rabies related services or provide reimbursement for the following:

- Expenses for wound care or other medical treatment outside of RPEP;
- *Nuisance animal control, such as stray dog and feral cat abatement and removal of wildlife from domestic property in the absence of a potential rabies exposure;*
- Boarding and other expenses to maintain and house an animal during confinement;
- Pre-exposure rabies vaccinations and subsequent serum sample collection and submission;
- Law enforcement related expenses other than for enforcement of 6-month quarantine and 10-day confinement; and
- Disposal of animal remains not confirmed to have rabies.

Essex County Fair



ECHD maintained an active presence at the Essex County Fair in August, highlighting our various programs, services, and resources – and introducing some of our newer staff to our outreach and education strategies.

Upcoming Events

ECHD staff have been mobile all summer, with more events lined up:

- September Family Health Fridays – check out our FB Page for dates/locations! →
- 9/3 – Port Henry Labor Day Parade
- 9/23 – Adirondack Harvest Festival in Westport
- 10/1 – Schroon Lake Distance Festival

Carve out some time to come see us this fall at Family Health Fridays

Learn what our family health program offers families in Essex County

Get a FREE Car Seat Check (by a certified technician)

Get Back to School Immunizations & have your questions answered. ECHD Nurses will be there!

Learn about our NEW Universal Newborn Home Visiting Program

Get Info on our Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

And more ECHD family Program Information!

Friday 9/1 10a-2p Walmart - Ticonderoga

Friday 9/8 10a-12p Etown Social Center

12p-1p Etown Stewarts

Friday 9/15 10a-2p Front Street/Keeseeville

Friday 9/22 10a-2p Lake Placid

Friday 9/29 10a-2p Stewarts - Port Henry

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Home Health

At-Home Adirondack Care, by Director Jennifer Newberry

I recently traveled to Newcomb to perform an employee evaluation and home visit with one of our amazing physical therapists. The drive there took about an hour, and we might have arrived sooner if we did not get behind a shiny airstream trailer with out-of-state tags. We drove through “malfunction junction” prior to getting on interstate 87 south to take the North Creek exit. The Blue Ridge road was speckled with the Frontier Town Welcome Center (an essential bathroom stop), a few scattered homes, a buffalo farm, Elk Lake Lodge, multiple hiking trailheads and a nicely kept cemetery. Luckily, the day remained sunny with bright blue summer skies and a few white fluffy clouds. Views of adjacent mountains and tall pines were all around, and at one point, I was at the elevation of the treetops. Its beauty was truly breathtaking.

Arriving at our destination and finding a parking spot included care to avoid trapping any of the home occupant's cars from leaving. With a rap on the door we were greeted by multigenerational family members who welcomed us inside their home. Washing our hands upon arrival is a must. A rule every clinician follows. The smell of breakfast, air freshener and fuel canvassed the surroundings. We met the intended occupant with a smile who cheerfully vocalized their accomplishments from previous visits. "I have been practicing – and I asked my doctor about walking with a cane instead of a walker," the occupant announced.

Therapy began in a usual fashion of intently listening to the speaker, and reviewing any new issues by asking detailed questions. A full assessment followed including testing muscles, strength, balance, and ability to walk to the bathroom, and training on how to get in and out of the bathtub. The therapist adjusted the tub bench so it was the right height and safe for use. A bit of furniture moving was required to ensure safe passage through doors and hallways. Walker and cane adjustments included removing and changing the wheels on the walker to the inside of the frame so it could fit through doors. A tool kit was a must for this visit.

Goals of care were identified by the occupant and new exercises were added by the therapist to a home exercise program. All of this will get the occupant closer to independence. A weight was obtained to identify if the diet was working or if there were needed adjustments. Then the occupant voiced a health concern and recommendations were offered and agreed to. A follow up call to the physician sealed the deal on the recommendations to improve the health concern. A nurse will follow up next to see if the recommendations were effective and to provide teaching reinforcement on the new treatment.

At the end the therapist cleaned the equipment prior to placing it back into the nursing bag, had the patient sign the computer verifying the visit, cleaned the computer and pen, then we washed our hands for 20 seconds, turned off the water using paper towels, and discarded the trash. Documentation of the visit took place in the car prior to taking off for the next home visit adventure. The visits can be miles apart, with or without cell service. Music stations are minimal so Spotify is what I recommend.

My day on the road was brief compared to what our home care clinicians do day in and day out. Traveling from house to house in the summer is really joyful on a beautiful warm August Adirondack day. In the winter, it can be really tricky. One time the therapist entered a home in Newcomb with a little dusting of white powdery snow. When the visit was over there was 8" of snow on the ground and the car. A snow broom was required to clean the snow off the car between each visit and of course, you would need to follow a plow at 35 miles an hour or less down the winding mountain snow-slick roads.

I always enjoy making home visits and watching with amazement our incredibly talented clinicians work their expertise improving patient's health and guiding them to independence. I feel privileged to always learn something new, either from the clinician, or the patient and their caregiver. We are all truly fortunate to have the dedicated home care staff in Essex County who improve the lives of our citizens and allow them to remain in their homes in the beautiful Adirondacks. This is where people want to be cared for the most – at home!