

The cover features a scenic photograph of a marshy area with a pond, green grasses, and trees under a blue sky with white clouds. The top and bottom of the image are framed by blue curved borders. The text is overlaid on these borders and the sky area.

**OCEAN COUNTY  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

**2023**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

*Promoting Healthy Lifestyles  
and a Clean and Safe Environment*



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**Ocean County  
Health Department**



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Ocean County  
Health Department



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

# *A Message from the Ocean County Health Department*

Community Members and Public Health Partners,

We are proud to present to you the Ocean County Health Department (OCHD) 2023 Annual Report. This year has been a tremendous success thanks to ongoing collaborations between OCHD staff and our community partners who have invested together with us in promoting healthy lifestyles, ensuring a clean and safe environment, and providing high-quality public health services to protect our present and future generations. During 2023, the OCHD's dedicated team of diverse public health professionals worked diligently to address a wide range of health issues while rebuilding the infrastructure of public health in Ocean County post-COVID-19.

First, we want to thank everyone who helped us weather the storm of COVID-19. We could not have accomplished our mission without the steady support of the Ocean County Commissioners, Board of Health, County partners, and the community-based organizations that labored alongside us. The pandemic has made us more resilient as an agency and a community. Together, we have learned many valuable lessons and identified opportunities to implement new public health practices. We have invested in recruiting and retaining a diverse public health workforce, deploying sustainable and innovative public health data infrastructure, and improving organizational processes that strengthen our foundational public health capabilities.

Building on its public health leadership, the OCHD also began its pursuit of National Public Health Accreditation in 2023. Working towards accreditation allows us to demonstrate alignment with national public health standards while building health equity and facilitating public health transformation to meet the needs of these changing times. This aligns well with community-driven strategic planning currently underway – Ocean County's next Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), Emergency Operations Plan, and Risk Communication Plan are all slated for release in 2024. Collectively, these plans lay out the framework for public health, safety, and preparedness for years to come.

As we say goodbye to 2023, and look ahead to the approaching year, we are excited that 2024 marks the 100th anniversary of public health in Ocean County. Since 1924, the OCHD has set the pace for public health leadership in our community and has strived to meet the changing needs of the public health threats and environmental issues impacting the residents and visitors of our great county. As you read about the work done last year, we invite you to learn more about what has been accomplished and join us in creating an even healthier future.

*John J. Mallon*

John J. Mallon  
Chairman of the Board

*Daniel Regenye*

Daniel E. Regenye, MHA  
Public Health Coordinator/Health Officer



## Guiding Principles

1. To assess public health priorities of the community through comprehensive health planning;
2. To inform and educate our community about public health issues and concerns;
3. To empower individuals to take responsibility for their health and wellness and that of their communities;
4. To utilize a systemic, team approach to effectively solve problems and achieve our mission; and
5. To promote a work environment which continually strives to incorporate our agency's values.

## Mission Statement

In partnership with our community, we are committed to serving as a leader to promote healthy lifestyles, ensure a clean and safe environment, and provide high-quality public health services to protect our present and future generations.

## Strategic Priority Areas

- Agency Engagement, Development, and Performance
- Community Collaboration, Assessment and Quality Improvement
- Emerging Public Health Threats and Response
- Maximizing Utilization of Technology and Innovation

## Values

- Integrity
- Diversity
- Adaptability
- Professionalism
- Respect
- Cultural Competence
- Compassion
- Innovation
- Equality

# The Public Health System

The Ocean County Health Department (OCHD) and its Board of Health are governed by the Public Health Practice Standards of Performance for Local Boards of Health in New Jersey, N.J.A.C. 8:52. Inherent duties and responsibilities are summarized in the three Core Public Health Functions and the Ten Essential Public Health Services outlined below and incorporated throughout the remainder of the Annual Report.

## Core Public Health Functions:

- Assess and monitor the health of communities and at-risk populations to identify health problems and priorities.
- Formulate public policies with community and government leaders to address local and national public health problems and priorities.
- Provide all populations with access and appropriate and cost-effective care, including health promotion, disease prevention, and follow-up evaluation.

## 10 Essential Public Health Services:

- Assess and monitor population health.
- Investigate, diagnose, and address health hazards and root causes.
- Communicate effectively to inform and educate.
- Strengthen, support, and mobilize communities and partnerships.
- Create, champion, and implement policies, plans, and laws.
- Utilize legal and regulatory actions.
- Enable equitable access.
- Build a diverse and skilled workforce.
- Improve and innovate through evaluation, research, and quality improvement.
- Build and maintain a strong organizational infrastructure for public health.

The OCHD worked diligently in 2023 to bolster our infrastructure for core public health functions while responding to novel communicable disease outbreaks (COVID, MPox), large-scale animal hoarding incidents, increases in substance abuse and overdose, and threats to maternal and child health (formula shortages, lead contaminants). Throughout the year, we consistently aligned our services with the core public health functions and services outlined above. We worked closely with community partners in strengthening the overall public health system demonstrating strengthened response protocols to overcome each of these challenges and risks, transforming operations rapidly and meeting the needs of our collective community.

The public health system includes a network of public health agencies at state and local levels, healthcare providers, public safety agencies, human service and charity organizations, education and youth development organizations, recreation and arts-related organizations, economic and philanthropic organizations, and environmental agencies and organizations. The OCHD remains committed to continue working in close collaboration with diverse community partners, and as members of local coalitions. The OCHD extends its deepest appreciation to our many community partners for serving alongside us in the effort to protect and promote public health for the residents and visitors of Ocean County.

# Community Partners

- Allies Inc.
- Beth Medrash Gevoha (BMG)
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Coastal and Northern New Jersey
- Caregivers of Central Ocean County
- Catholic Charities of Ocean County
- Centers for Health, Education, Medicine, and Dentistry (CHEMED)
- Central Jersey Family Health Consortium
- Chambers of Commerce:
  - Lakewood Chamber
  - Southern Ocean County Chamber
  - Toms River Chamber
- Children's Home Society of New Jersey
- Children's Interagency Coordinating Council (CIACC)
- Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- Community Medical Center Foundation
- Community Options Inc.
- County Animal Response Team (CART)
- County of Ocean
- DART Coalition
- Deborah Heart and Lung Center
- Easterseals
- Faith-Based Initiative of Ocean County
- Family Planning Center of Ocean County, Inc.
- Georgian Court University
- Governor's Council on Substance Use Dependence
- Hackensack Meridian Health
- Health Advisory Group for the Community Health Improvement Plan
- High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Program
- Humane Society of the United States
- Interfaith Hospitality Network
- Jay and Linda Grunin Foundation
- Juvenile Justice Committee
- L.E.A.P., Lakewood Head Start Program
- La Leche League of Ocean County
- LADACIN Network
- Lakewood Complete Town Committee
- Lakewood Emergency Preparedness Council
- Local Advisory Committee on Alcohol & Drug Abuse
- Local Emergency Planning Council
- Long Beach Island Health Department
- Monmouth Ocean Breastfeeding Coalition
- NAACP
- New Hope Foundation
- New Horizons in Autism Inc.
- New Jersey Action for Healthy Kids
- New Jersey BREATHEs
- New Jersey Comprehensive Cancer Control Comm.
- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
- New Jersey Department of Health
- New Jersey Department of Human Services
- New Jersey State Police
- NJ HealthEASE
- NJ Healthy Communities Network
- NJ SNAP-Ed
- O.C.E.A.N. Inc., Health Advisory Council
- Ocean County Association of School Administrators
- Ocean County Board of Social Services
- Ocean County College
- Ocean County Emergency Response Committee
- Ocean County Executive Superintendent's Office
- Ocean County Human Services Advisory Council
- Ocean County Library
- Ocean County Municipal Alliances
- Ocean County Office of Emergency Management
- Ocean County Office for Individuals with Disabilities
- Ocean County Office of Senior Services
- Ocean County Planning Department
- Ocean County Professional Advisory Council (PAC) Committee
- Ocean County Prosecutor's Office
- Ocean County Sheriff's Department
- Ocean County Special Needs Shelter Plan Working Group
- Ocean Health Initiatives (OHI)
- Ocean Mental Health Services
- Ocean/Monmouth Health Alliance
- Ocean's Harbor House
- Preferred Behavioral Health of New Jersey
- Providence House
- Providers Advisory Committee on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (PACADA)
- Public Health Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee
- Puerto Rican Congress of New Jersey, Inc.
- Rutgers University & Rutgers School of Public Health
- RWJBarnabas Health
- Seashore Family Counseling Services
- Southern Ocean County Coalition Against Substance Abuse (SOCCASA)
- Southern Regional Governmental Public Health Partnership
- St. Francis Community Center
- Stockton University
- The Arc, Ocean County Chapter
- Toms River Field of Dreams
- Toms River Mayor's Wellness Campaign
- Toms River United Sustainability Team
- United States Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)
- United Way
- YMCA
- Youth Services Commission



# Public Health Services and Statistics

The OCHD consists of numerous departments and divisions that provide diverse services to residents and visitors of Ocean County. While not inclusive of every service available, outlined below are some of the key programs provided. Note: some programs may require eligibility screening.

## Alcohol and Drug Services

- Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Committees
- Intoxicated Driver Resource Center
- Implementing Overdose Prevention Strategies at the Local Level (IOPSL)
- Municipal Alliances
- Treatment Coordination and Referrals
  - Treatment funding for eligible residents
- Ocean County Overdose Fatality Review
- Substance Abuse Prevention Education
- Narcan Education and Distribution

## Animal Shelters and Adoptions

- Northern Ocean County Animal Facility (Jackson)
- Southern Ocean County Animal Facility (Stafford)
- Services offered:
  - Pet Adoptions and Surrenders
  - Rabies Clinics – Animal Vaccinations
  - 24 Hour Receiving Area for ACOs

## Chronic Disease Services

- *Live Healthy Ocean County!* Program
- Blood Pressure Screening
- Cholesterol and Glucose Screening
- Diabetes Prevention and Control Services
- Eye/Vision Screening
- Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention
- New Jersey Cancer Education and Early Detection Program (NJ-CEED)

## COVID-19 Services

- Case Investigation and Contact Tracing
- COVID-19 Adult and Pediatric Vaccinations
- Health Education and Outreach Activities
- Long Term Care and School Outbreak Response
- Social Service Coordination and Referrals

## Emergency Preparedness and Planning

- Becoming a Fixed Facility in Ocean County
- COVID-19 Pandemic Response (Mass Testing and Vaccination Clinics)
- Expansion Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) Grant Management
- Health Alert Network (HAN)
- Health Preparedness and Planning Activities
- Home Preparedness Resources and Activities
- Local Information Network and Communication System (LINCS)
- Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)
- Strategic National Stockpile

# Public Health Services and Statistics

## Environmental Health Services – Consumer Health

- Body Art Facility Inspections
- Kennel/Pet Shop Inspections
- Proprietary Campground Inspections
- Public Health Nuisance Complaint Investigations
- Public Pool and Spa Inspection and Enforcement
- Recreational Bathing Beach Inspections
- Retail Food Establishment Inspections and Plan Reviews
- Septic System Installation Plan Review and Repair Inspections
- Site Plan and Subdivision Reviews for Local Planning and Zoning Boards
- Smoking Enforcement in Public Places
- Tanning Facility Inspections
- Wells and Septic Systems Certification Inspections
- Well Water Analysis Certifications for New Construction, Replacement Wells/ Re-sales
- Youth Camp Safety Inspections

## Environmental Health Services – Environmental Protection and Services

- Air Pollution Complaints
- Childhood Lead Poisoning Investigations
- Control of Rodent/Vectors of Disease
- Enforcement of State and Local Regulations
- Environmental Complaint Investigations
- Ground and Surface Water Investigations
- Hazardous Material Incidence Response
- Public Non-Community Well Inspections (Transient And Non-Transient)
- Noise Investigation and Enforcement
- Right to Know Program
- Solid Waste Facility/Complaint Inspections

## Health Education and Community Assessment

- Community Health Needs Assessment
- Community Health Improvement Plan
- Continuous Quality Improvement
- Public Health Accreditation
- Faith-Based Initiative
- Local and Annual Health Reports
- Strategic Planning and Policy Development
- Emerging Public Health Issues Education
- Dental Coordination and Education
- Health Education Programming
- Health Fairs and Tabling Events
- School Health Ambassador Program

# Public Health Services and Statistics

## Infectious Disease Services

- Animal Bite Investigations and Quarantine
- Bloodborne Pathogen Program
- Communicable Disease Investigations
- Domestic Animal Rabies Vaccination Clinics
- Epidemiology and Surveillance
- Foodborne and Other Infectious Disease Investigations and Education
- Hepatitis C Virus Counseling and Testing
- Hepatitis C Virus Treatment
- HIV/AIDS Care and Treatment
- HIV Counseling and Testing
- Monitoring of Emerging Infectious Diseases
- PrEP for HIV Prevention
- Rabies Control and Consultation
- School Immunization Audits
- Sexually Transmitted Infection Screening
- Tuberculosis Care and Treatment
- Tuberculosis Screening
- Vaccinations
  - COVID-19 – Adult and Pediatric
  - Occupational Hepatitis B Virus
  - Pneumococcal Pneumonia
  - Rabies Human Pre-Exposure
  - Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis)
  - Seasonal Influenza
  - Shingles (Zoster)

## Maternal and Child Health Services

- Breastfeeding Peer Counseling
- Childhood Blood Lead Prevention Program
- Community Outreach and Engagement
- Early Intervention Services
- Farmer's Market Voucher Distribution
- Hemoglobin Testing and Education
- Lactation Consultations and Support
- Nutrition Counseling
- Referrals for Health and Social Services
- Special Child Health Services

As outlined by the Public Health Practice Standards of Performance for Local Board of Health in New Jersey, N.J.A.C. 8:52., public health services shall include administrative services as set forth at N.J.A.C. 8:52-5, health education services as set forth at N.J.A.C. 8:52-6, public health nursing services as set forth at N.J.A.C. 8:52-7, and the three core functions of public health: assurance, assessment, and policy development. The Ocean County Health Department implements these practice standards within the array of various programs and services outlined above. Highlighted programs are addressed in greater length later in the Annual Report.

# 2022-2023 Comparative Statistical Data

<b>Animal Bites and Rabies Control</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Animal Bites – human incidents reported	959	985
Rabid/suspected rabid animal-bites-domestic animal incidents reported	19	27
<b>Body Art, Tattoo, and Permanent Cosmetics Safety</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Licensed body art establishments operating in area	70	78
Routine inspections of licensed body art facilities conducted	36	33
Non-routine emergency and complaint-related inspection of body art facilities	2	5
<b>Health Education</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Health education single sessions delivered by the OCHD	327	482
Health Education multi-session delivered by the OCHD	258	176
Participant education encounters	N/A	18,564
<b>Individualized Clinic Services</b> <small>(decrease in immunization and homebound services reflect reduced demand for COVID vaccination services)</small>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Clinic-based medical visits provided	3,063	4,479
Unduplicated individuals who received clinic-based medical services	1,587	1,584
Home-based nursing visits provided	865	600
Unduplicated individuals who received home-based nursing services	12	9
Immunizations administered to children 0 – 4	368	145
School age immunizations administered	950	350
Adult Immunizations administered	3,871	1,575
Older adult immunizations administered	4,981	1,478
<b>Clinic Screenings</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Childhood blood lead	0	0
Hepatitis B	39	36
STI, other than HIV/AIDS	2,925	2,553
HIV (through the HIV Counseling and Testing Program)	600	684
Breast Cancer	55	43
Cervical Cancer	55	43
Cardiovascular disease	540	801
Hypertension	752	986
Tuberculosis (unduplicated)	256	273
Vision (unduplicated)	174	238
Others	678	926
<b>Inquiries, Issues and Complaint Investigations</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Contacts received	709	713
Investigations	1,404	2,198
Enforcement actions taken by OCHD	126	92

# 2022-2023 Comparative Statistical Data Continued

<b>Kennels, Pet Shops, and Shelter/Pound Facilities</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Licensed pet shop facilities operations in the OCHD services area	25	29
Routine inspections conducted by the OCHD	25	29
<b>Rabies Vaccination Clinics</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
# of clinics other than at the OCHD animal facilities	19	19
# of clinics at the OCHD animal facilities	43	44
# of animals vaccinated	1,768	1,885
<b>Potable Well and Drinking Water Safety</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Potable well inspections conducted	547	463
Unduplicated potable wells inspected	547	463
Potable well investigations	4	3
<b>Proprietary Campgrounds</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Licensed/approved proprietary campground operations	0	0
Routine inspections of proprietary campground facilities	0	0
Non-routine emergency/complaint-related inspections of campground facilities	0	0
<b>Recreational Bathing Facilities – Number of Licensed Public Recreational Bathing Facilities Operating in the Service Area</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Year round facilities	50	50
Seasonal facilities	528	528
<b>Recreational Bathing Facilities – Number of Public Recreational Bathing facilities of Each Type in the Service Area</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Swimming/wading pool	25	25
Hot tub/spa	25	25
Bathing beach – bay/ocean	110	110
Bathing beach - river	85	85
Bathing beach - lake	15	15
<b>Recreational Bathing – Pre-operational Inspections</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Year-round facilities	36	32
Seasonal facilities	355	320
<b>Recreational Bathing – Routine Inspections</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Year-round facilities	38	40
<b>Recreational Bathing – Non-Routine Inspections</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Year-round facilities	0	0
Seasonal facilities	4	2

# 2022-2023 Comparative Statistical Data Continued

<b>Recreation Bathing - Closed Features/Facilities</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Swimming/wading pool	8	5
Seasonal facilities	0	0
<b>Recreational Bathing</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
CCMP sites in this services area	82	82
Sanitary surveys conducted on bathing beach – ocean/bay	15	10
Sanitary surveys conducted on river	12	8
Sanitary surveys conducted on lakes	6	12
<b>Retail food Establishment Safety – Processes – Licensed Establishment of Each Type Operating in this Area</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Permanent fixed Risk Level 1 (low risk)	828	584
Permanent fixed Risk Level 2 (medium risk)	1,850	1,957
Permanent fixed Risk Level (high risk)	920	998
Mobile	250	229
<b>Retail Food Establishment Safety - Inspections</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Retail food establishment plan reviews conducted	192	265
Pre-operational retail food establishments inspected	180	220
<b>Number of Routine Inspections Conducted</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Permanent fixed Risk Level 1 (low risk)	440	395
Permanent fixed Risk Level 2 (medium risk)	1,216	1,330
Permanent fixed Risk Level 3 (high risk)	843	665
Mobile	262	111
<b>Retail Food Establishment Safety – Investigations, Inspections/Enforcement</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Non-routine emergency and complaint-related investigations. inspections of retail food establishments	200	159
<b>School Immunization Record Audits</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Childcare/pre-K facilities operating in this area	183	201
Childcare/pre-K facilities that were audited	183	198
Kindergarten facilities in this area	106	129
Kindergarten facilities audited in the most recently completed school year	106	129
Grade 1 facilities in this area	102	127
Grade 1 facilities audited in the most recently completed school year	102	127
Grade 6 facilities in this area	76	96
Grade 6 facilities audited in the most recently completed school year	76	96
High school facilities operating in this areas	60	67
High school facilities whose transfer student recodes were audited in the most recently completed school year	19	3

# 2022-2023 Comparative Statistical Data Continued

<b>WIC – Women, Infants and Children</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Ocean County Certified WIC Clients	24,837	26,802
Pregnant women	2,136	2,367
Breastfeeding women	2,838	3,058
Post-partum women (up to six months)	560	608
Infants (unduplicated)	3,950	4,504
Children (unduplicated)	14,678	16,218
<b>Drug and Alcohol Coordinated Services</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Intensive outpatient new clients	56	31
Intensive outpatient new client sessions of service	1,385	761
Outpatient new clients	69	25
Outpatient session of services	517	339
Co-occurring new clients	14	23
Co-occurring new client sessions of service	757	750
Women's halfway house new clients	13	12
Women's halfway house new clients days provided	327	334
Men's halfway house new clients	13	13
Men's halfway house new clients days provided	400	462
Detox new clients	61	60
Detox new client days provided	361	329
Inpatient new clients	41	34
Inpatient new clients days provided	408	341
<b>Intoxicated Driving Resource Center (IDRC)</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
IDRC Attendance	895	884

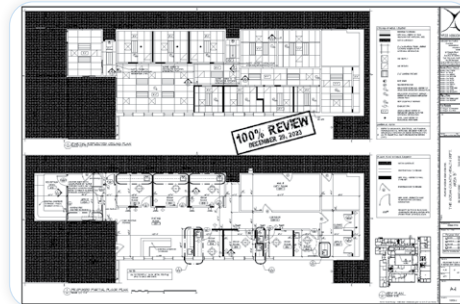
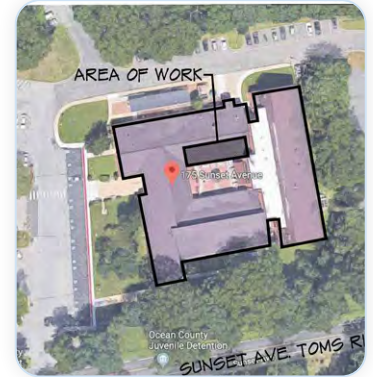
# Administration

## Office of the Public Health Coordinator

### Highlights

Through 2023, the Office of the Public Health Coordinator continued to coordinate activities between the County of Ocean and internal leadership to move capital projects along. All six locations operated by the Ocean County Health Department will have significant upgrades and building improvements conducted, including the potential for two new buildings (a 5,000 ft<sup>2</sup> receive/ stage/ storage building at Sunset Avenue and a new clinic and administrative space location in the northern part of Ocean County).

Thank you to all the staff that have contributed to the extensive planning and coordination of these efforts, it has not been easy. We extend our gratitude to all staff in advance, as there will certainly be disruptions and inconveniences at all sites as these projects get underway. Upon completion, the changes will enhance operations and efficiencies for both day-to-day operations and emergent matters that arise.



Blueprints of pending and proposed building renovations and expansion floor plans



*"A great level of thanks goes out to the Ocean County Board of Commissioners, County of Ocean Administrative team, Ocean County Board of Health, and the Ocean County Health Department management team, but most importantly the incredible staff that continue to work tirelessly day in and day out to accomplish the mission of the Ocean County Health Department. It is this collective pool of dedicated, talented people and resources that make Ocean County Public Health one of the best in the nation."*

– Daniel Regenye

### Looking Ahead

Looking ahead to 2024, in addition to making significant progress towards the planning and completion of the above projects, a significant amount of time and energy will be placed on connecting and communicating with staff to identify areas of improvement for the health department as it relates to structure, communication and overall culture of the agency. As an agency, staff feedback is highly encouraged and prioritized whether requests are made directly or anonymously through suggestion boxes or organizational surveys.

Finally, the post-pandemic concerns and health issues affecting the residents of Ocean County could not be greater. We will continue to work as an agency to identify and address these needs collaboratively with our diverse community partners.



# Office of the Assistant Public Health Coordinator

## Highlights

In 2023, the Office of the Assistant Public Health Coordinator oversaw more than \$12 million in new public health funding. With those funds, we worked collaboratively as an agency to fill gaps in personnel, emergency preparedness supplies, agency assessments, and innovative technologies to further strengthen the foundation of a timely, consistent public health response within our community. Since initiating these grants, the OCHD has made tremendous strides in hiring high-level public health personnel, acquiring robust data analytics software, bolstering communicable disease and health preparedness response infrastructure, and improving our information technology capacity.



Under the leadership of the Quality Assurance Coordinator, 2023 also marked the initiation of public health accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). A PHAB Accreditation Team, comprised of diverse agency staff across numerous divisions, began compiling necessary documentation for review and submission of the agency's application.

## Looking Ahead

Going into 2024, the Office of the Assistant Public Health Coordinator is looking to continue to assess opportunities for quality assurance and improvement across the agency, particularly as it concerns innovation, technology, accreditation, experience management, and the growth of grant-based programming. We look forward to expanding on the Enhancing Local Public Health Infrastructure investments (discussed in greater length in the Featured Public Health Infrastructure Section at the end of this report).

We anticipate the full submission of the PHAB accreditation application, a re-designed website, new agency branding, and updated information technologies.

## Information Technology (IT)

### Highlights

The IT Department accomplished many security goals this year, including firewall, camera servers, and door swipe upgrades. The team also led the agency-wide migration to Office 365 and installed 74 new computers, 20 networking switches, 150 workstation UPS units, 3 rack-mounted server UPS units, 10 TVs and wall-mounted computers, a new blueprint scanner, and a new phone server.

With a focus on enhancing productivity, the team also worked diligently on the development of new IT inventory and helpdesk ticketing software modules. To meet the increased communication demand over the past year, the IT department worked on phone communications, replacing 80 desk phones, enhancing cell signal, revamping voicemail management, and improving the call accounting system.

### Looking Ahead

In 2024, the IT Department will continue to focus on the increasing changes and evolution of technology by updating existing networks, hardware, and software to ensure reliable, responsive IT systems. To enhance security measures, the unit will implement endpoint detection and vulnerability scanning, and add security swipe capabilities at each of the OCHD's 6 offices. The unit will replace and update network and phone servers, utilize new ID card systems, and install new Outlook signature software. IT will seek innovative opportunities to support a dynamic technological workforce within the OCHD.

# Animal Facilities

## Highlights

2023 presented new challenges for the Ocean County Animal Facilities. The unit was overcome with two of the largest animal hoarding cases the OCHD has ever experienced. Before we could fully recover from the first hoarding situation, we were overcome with a second in early May 2023. It was in these challenging situations that our department rallied together, with the help of the agency overall, to successfully care for an additional 137 dog and 198 cat intakes received from the two hoarding cases. The animal facilities, health department staff, and local law enforcement dedicated significant time and effort to ensuring the successful care and adoption of these animals.

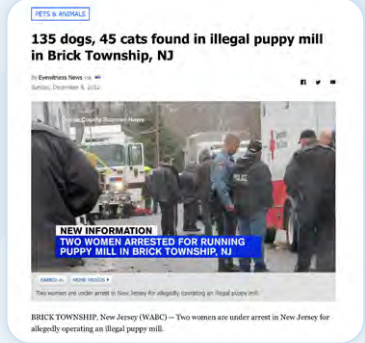
## Looking Ahead

In 2024, the Animal Facilities unit plans to reinstate staff and volunteer trainings, work on further developing our training materials, and conduct updates to our BARC impoundment and animal record system. Additionally, we hope to continue our annual in-house event, and attend several off-site events within the community to further expand our presence and visibility to the residents of Ocean County and neighboring communities.



### Animals From Brick Hoarding Turned Over To Ocean County

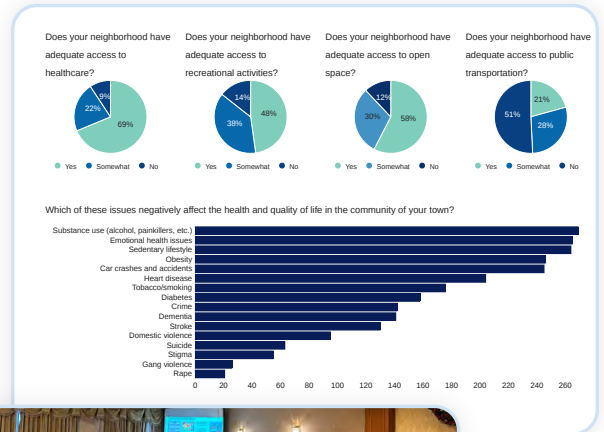
Ownership of the animals has been transferred, clearing the way for them to be adopted to permanent homes, officials said.



# Community Health Services

## Highlights

In 2023, Community Health Services embarked on planning steps for the agency's next Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CHIP focuses on assessing the health and well-being of the Ocean County community through partnerships with key community members, as well as military and veteran populations. We expanded these partnerships to new businesses serving our community in 2023 including the Causeway Family of Dealerships, Shop-Rite Supermarkets of Ocean County, and Ocean First Bank. Presentations were facilitated by CHIP staff at approximately seven municipal governing body meetings, which were recorded and televised, expanding the reach of essential public health information.



Additionally, the unit oversaw continued efforts to control childhood blood lead poisoning. In 2023, clinical and environmental staff partnered together on more than 40 home visits, about 300 ongoing lead case management clients, and 10 environmental home inspections. In December 2023, they responded to a national FDA lead recall on applesauce pouches impacting local businesses and Ocean County residents.

## Looking Ahead

In 2024, we plan to bring our *Live Healthy Ocean County! (LHOC!)* program to the community through the utilization of our mobile public health outreach vehicle. LHOC! community-based outreach allows us to dovetail nutritional counseling and clinical screening for cholesterol



and glucose with the health indicators established within our Community Health Improvement Plan.

To support the health of children within Ocean County, the unit is committed to continuing case management efforts to reduce the complications of childhood lead poisoning.

## Chronic Illness

### Highlights

Since January 2023, 35 Diabetes Self-Management, Education, and Support (DSMES) classes and 31 National Diabetes Prevention Program (NDPP) classes were held for community members. During the year, we had 24 participants graduate from our DSMES program with an average reduction in key diabetes measures (HbA1c) from 7.2 to 6.8%.



Additional success in preventing and controlling diabetes in Ocean County was seen among NDPP participants. From 9 graduating the NDPP program, they collectively lost a total of 80.5 lbs.



The DSMES and NDPP programs have been successful in improving the health of program participants. Increasing program access and availability to community members is essential to assure the expansion of resources to underserved communities. We have begun to apply for a Recognized NDPP program, which further enhances sustainability by allowing us to bill Medicare for services.

## Looking Ahead

In 2024, we will focus on increasing community outreach of the DSMES and NDPP programs. We will be working towards providing our LHOC! initiative to faith-based communities, senior living developments, and low-income communities.

We plan to recruit additional OCHD employees for our NDPP program. Since there is currently no available grant for diabetes prevention and control, we will maintain these important programs by billing insurance for services provided to community members.

# Health Education

## Highlights

The Health Education Department provides community-based education programs and services focused on essential public health needs within Ocean County. Through 2023, Health Education initiated activities to address health inequities for ethnically diverse populations, assisted in implementing public health infrastructure activity oversight, and working together with community partners to acknowledge disability and ableism in public health education practice.

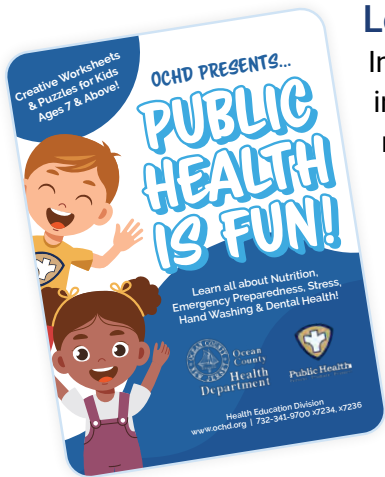
Additionally, we furthered efforts to innovate and improve communication with our community partners through satisfaction surveys and outreach. This allowed us to better evaluate health education program delivery and evaluate the needs of Ocean County community members. The Health Education unit developed a student Public Health activity book, finding great success in distributing the workbook throughout the county. The unit participated in, and hosted, numerous successful countywide health fairs, such as our Annual Hispanic Health Fair and inaugural Veterans Health Fair. Employee wellness initiatives were designed to empower employees and support workplace inter-professional collaboration.



## Looking Ahead

In 2024, Health Education will engage in additional outreach initiatives, expand innovative program development and facilitation, and increase coalition representation. Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) on existing health education initiatives will be maintained to streamline public health measures within Ocean County. The unit will host community health fairs at OCHD to increase public health education and services within Ocean County.

In celebration of 100 Years of Public Health, the Health Education unit recognizes all staff and public health professionals who continue to pave the way in providing essential public health services to community members.



# Communicable Disease

## Adult Immunization Services

### Highlights

The Adult Immunization Services unit continued to oversee COVID vaccination and testing services in 2023 and distributed rapid COVID test kits at diverse outreach events throughout the county. Additionally, they oversaw the seasonal influenza and pneumonia vaccination program, including clinics for first responders and the coordination of personal protective equipment



(PPE) based on approved requests. The unit took on agency-wide training opportunities for CPR/AED, Stop the Bleed, fit testing, and more.

Lastly, the unit played a major role in responding to the animal hoarding and rescue incidents in 2023 partnering together with Ocean County Animal Facilities as well as OEM, MRC, CERT, and CART.

## Looking Ahead

Moving into 2024, the unit looks forward to continuing the provision of adult immunizations and increasing county-wide access to vaccination and testing services and training opportunities.

## Communicable Disease

### Highlights

Through 2023, the Communicable Disease Unit (CDU) continued to serve as essential leaders in disease control, prevention, and outbreak investigation.

The unit welcomed two new Field Representatives, Disease Control and promoted another team member to Senior Field Representative, Disease Control. This has allowed us to add a layer of depth to our workflow and jurisdictional model with newer staff paired with senior team members.

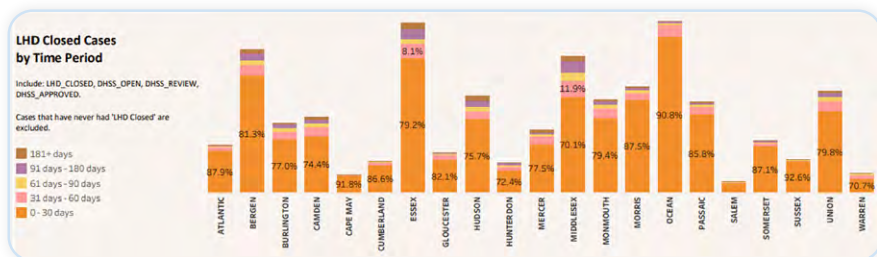
With the agency being able to take advantage of grant funds, staff members were given the opportunity to attend off-site training programs focused on building leadership skills, and one staff member was enrolled in the “New to Public Health” workshop, which will continue into 2024.

The CDU began holding monthly meetings with Dr. Isabel Guerrero, the Director of Infection Control, creating a workgroup for ongoing communicable disease trends, outbreaks/investigations being monitored, and providing an opportunity to address questions or concerns raised at community acute care settings. Dr. Guerrero identified an outbreak and conducted a joint investigation with the NJDOH for invasive group A Streptococcal disease (iGAS) in a long-term care facility as part of this new workgroup. This was the first investigation of this kind by public health in the State of New Jersey, which led to NJDOH reexamining iGAS investigations in residential healthcare facilities in consideration of CDC investigation best practices.

## Looking Ahead

With the function of immunization audits for daycares, childcare centers, and preschools returning to the unit last year, 2023-2024 will be the first full school year in which the CDU will be able to conduct the audits of standalone childcare and pre-schools in line with NJDOH Best Practices (between January 1st and March 31st to capture flu shot compliance). With 201 identified schools with this grade level, we look forward to undertaking this challenge.

Additionally, with the new staff expanding their knowledge base and skillsets, we hope to use this as an opportunity to re-establish regular meetings with infection control practitioners in our acute care facilities to further strengthen our working relationships and lines of communication.



OCHD's CDU closed more cases within 30 days than any other county in New Jersey in 2023.



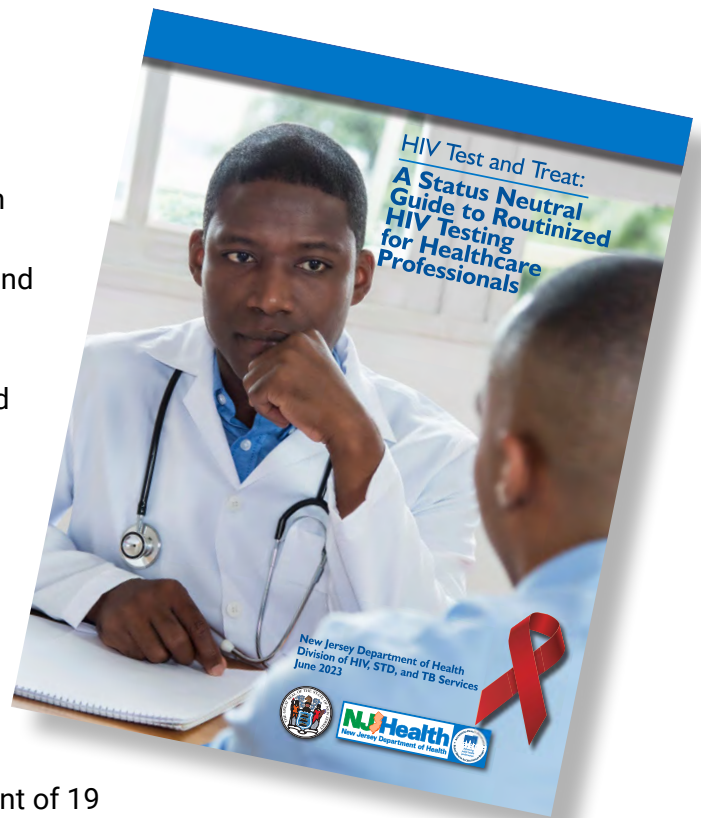
# Clinic Services

## Highlights

In 2023, Clinic Services responded to diverse challenges with tremendous success. Increases in new admissions across diverse programs required staff to develop new, innovative, and efficient practices for ongoing case management. This was seen in: 1) additional ELIXIR team members completing all state-mandated HIV/HCV testing and counseling training and certification; 2) the implementation of comprehensive HIV care continuum services successfully



maintaining an HIV viral load suppression rate of 95% for a caseload of over 230 HIV-positive clients; 3) the expansion of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) services to more than 65 active clients and the onboarding of 3 clinical practitioners with PrEP experience; 4) the curative treatment of 19 Ocean County residents with chronic hepatitis C virus; and 5) the recruitment of a new Masters-trained registered nurse to serve as our primary TB case manager.

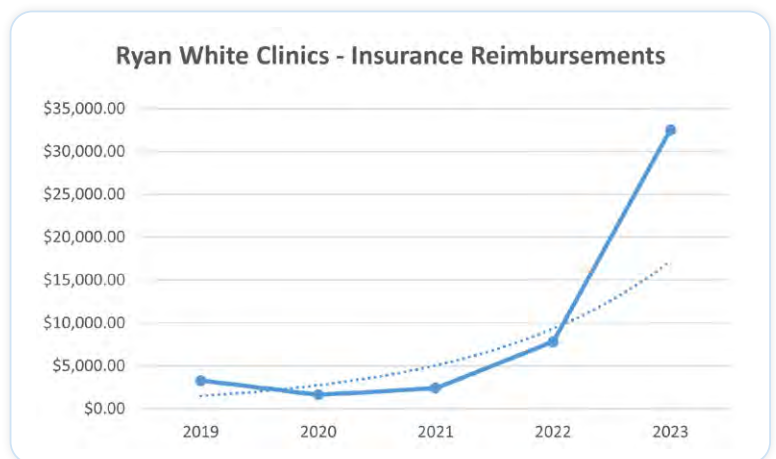


Additionally, an advanced nurse practitioner was recruited as a part of ongoing succession planning for clinic operations. She comes with tremendous experience and assists in the provision of HIV/AIDS care and treatment, PrEP, hepatitis C virus treatment, and cancer education and early detection screenings.

In 2023, the Ocean County Health Department continued demonstrating improvements in clinical sustainability with a 310% increase in revenue from insurers and third-party payers compared to 2022.

## Looking Ahead

In 2024, Clinic Services looks to increase access to care by providing services in Northern Ocean County and increasing clinic services throughout the week. We plan to focus on creating solutions for transportation challenges for Ocean County community members and clients through a new, innovative partnership with Uber Health and to continue to increase the number of clients provided with diverse clinical care, treatment, and curative services in 2024.



# UBER Health

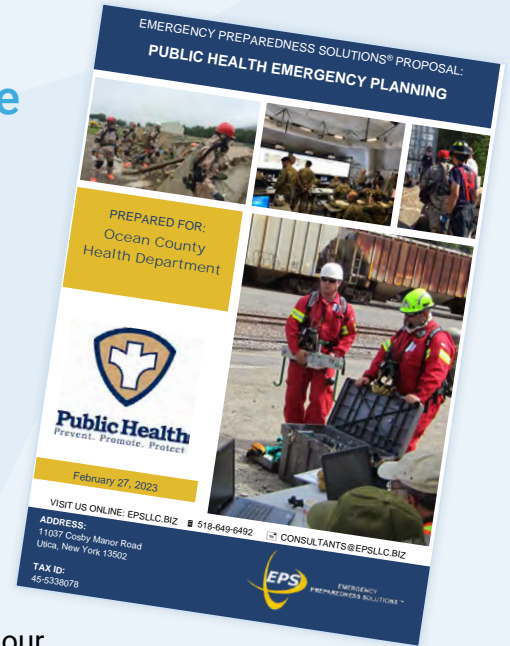
# Emergency Preparedness

## Health Preparedness, Planning, and Response Highlights



In 2023, the Health Preparedness, Planning, and Response (HPP) unit conducted a SWOT analysis with internal and external partners to assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The

unit focused on identifying internal and external gaps, recommendations for improvement, and missed opportunities that would strengthen future public health response preparation. Partnerships with key stakeholders in the county (i.e. elected officials, mayors, town administrators, Sheriff's/OEM department, faith-based organizations, and colleges/universities) were maintained to promote planning and preparedness awareness within our jurisdiction throughout the year.



### Looking Ahead

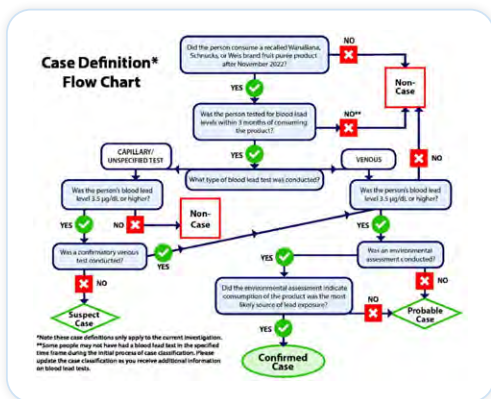
In 2024, HPP looks to offer more “live” training opportunities for MRC volunteers and partner with organizations to recruit volunteers. We plan to initiate tabletop exercises and After Action Reports (AAR) to support ongoing preparedness activities.



# Environmental Health

## Highlights

In 2023, Environmental Health monitored air quality from wildfires and investigated national outbreaks of severe lung injury associated with e-cigarettes and vaping products. The use of e-cigarettes or vaping products poses serious health risks and health consequences, particularly for vulnerable populations, teens, young adults, and pregnant individuals. We successfully enforced vaping regulations with the Point Pleasant Beach Police Department. Additional enforcement endeavors are currently pending.



Additionally, Environmental Health continued to monitor food safety recalls under the New Jersey Department of Health and ensured the health and safety of consumers within Ocean County. In 2023, a national FDA lead and chromium poisoning outbreak resulted in a recall of Cinnamon Applesauce Pouches sold by the following brands: WanaBana, Schnucks, and Weis. The Environmental Health Department monitored the situation and ensured the inspection of local businesses within Ocean County to enforce the removal of any remaining products that may have been linked to the outbreak.

## Looking Ahead

In 2024, the Environmental Health Department is looking to partner with Local Police Departments, the Sheriff's Department, and County Weights and Measures to implement a joint vape enforcement endeavor. The unit will focus on the use of all available resources from each agency to ensure the successful implementation of the ban on retail sales of flavored vape products.

# Maternal and Child Health

## Early Intervention

### Highlights

The OCHD's Early Intervention (EI) Program provides services to children under the age of three years who are experiencing a developmental delay or disability, or who have a diagnosis that is highly likely to result in a developmental delay. Evaluations for these services are provided at no cost to the family, and eligible children are assured access to individualized early intervention services.

In 2023, the OCHD's EI unit provided services to more than 2,000 children.

The EI service coordinators are happy to meet the needs of Ocean County residents by convening most meetings electronically at the families' requests. This adaptation gives way to easier scheduling and increased consistency of family participation, while also allowing greater flexibility in the service coordinators' schedules.

### Looking Ahead

The plans for EI in 2024 include expanding leadership opportunities within the unit to continue supporting caseload growth; we are expecting to see an 8% growth in caseload sizes from our previous fiscal year. With much of our work being recorded in the New Jersey EIS case management system, all other documents that need to be uploaded or filed can be done in OCHD.info, a continued investment in improving documentation and streamlining service provision. Furthermore, the unit will continue its efforts to update operating procedures as state policies change, and ensure that operations occur in accordance with the most up-to-date requirements and recommendations.



## Special Child Health Services

### Highlights

In 2023, the Special Child Health Services (SCHS) case managers successfully reached 890 new youth. Of these 890 youth, 366 children had a confirmed diagnosis of autism.

### Looking Ahead

In order to deliver services to the best of our abilities and remain diligent in service to the youth of Ocean County and their families, SCHS case managers will continue to focus on their professional development throughout 2024 by attending webinars and presentations to understand the impacts of COVID on the special needs population. Some of these public health continuing education opportunities include critical topics such as adverse childhood experiences, advocating for those with substance use disorders, understanding the impacts of pandemic stress, and more.



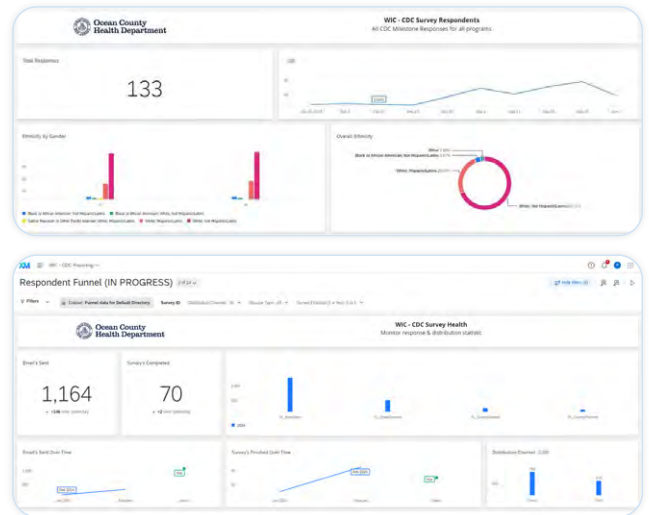


# Women, Infants, and Children – WIC Highlights

The Ocean County WIC program provides vital resources for income-eligible families and their children under the age of five. WIC supports qualifying families and their children in reaching essential developmental milestones by providing nutrition counseling and education, breastfeeding support, and other support services. WIC of Ocean County is the largest provider of WIC services within the state of New Jersey serving just under 30,000 residents. In 2023, the Ocean County WIC Program worked diligently to fill staffing vacancies, promote internal staff into new positions of leadership, grow program enrollment and participation and increase the number of staff trained as Community Health Workers, and bolster access to certified lactation consultants. We were able to further grow new advancements in supportive technology and identify a new clinic location for lease anticipated for occupancy in 2024.

## Looking Ahead

The Ocean County WIC Program has been identified for a Proof of Concept pilot project with the New Jersey State WIC Office and the Office of Family Health Services to improve the coordination of referrals between WIC and Early Intervention. This is done through automated CDC Developmental Milestone emails through Qualtrics. We look forward to further enhancing and streamlining WIC activities through Qualtrics to create appointment reminders for clients, missed appointment emails, celebrate developmental milestones, and improve participant experience management. Additionally, creating automated notifications of key events, such as Farmer's Market considerations and upcoming community events, will increase community engagement and awareness of services. 2024 marks 50 years of WIC services available for our nation's most vulnerable populations. Ocean County WIC looks forward to celebrating this milestone together with our community.



**Automating WIC Referrals with FQHCs: A Quality Improvement Project on Improving WIC Enrollment and Participation in Ocean County, New Jersey**

*Data Linkages to Enhance Recruitment and Retention*

Kristie Fawkes, MS, IBCLC; Patricia High, MHS, CIC, MCHES, Lic. HO; Samantha Foster-Tiso, CPHQ

**OBJECTIVES**

- Integrate a health-based WIC eligibility assessment into the EHRs of Ocean County FQHCs to automate referrals for estimated eligible.
- Increase Ocean County WIC enrollment by 10% over 15 months.
- Increase Ocean County WIC participation by 10% over 15 months.

**BACKGROUND**

Prior to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, nationwide the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) experienced declining rates in enrollment and retention since 2010. Ocean County, New Jersey also fits that decline. The Ocean County WIC Program experienced an average annual reduction in participation of 5.7% from FFY 19 through FFY 21. The goal to reverse this trend was recognized. Following concerted efforts to bolster a diverse outreach plan and strengthen community partnerships from FFY 19 through FFY 21, the need to innovate remained.

In January 2022, the Ocean County WIC Program initiated steps to cross-sector, technological engagement with federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) to streamline and increase program recruitment and retention. Partnership with the FQHCs, covering Ocean County enabled the creation of an agency-specific, automated report from their Electronic Health Records (EHR) to identify clients likely eligible for WIC services based on participation in other federally funded government programs, household income, and/or social determinants of health.

**AIM STATEMENT**

For Ocean County residents receiving services from a FQHC, the Ocean County WIC Program aims to increase WIC enrollment and participation by 10% in 15 months by installing an integrated referral system that automates EHR reports identifying potential non-participating eligible individuals for WIC recruitment and retention.

**METHODS**

Under an Operational Adjustment grant from the New Jersey WIC Program, the Ocean County WIC Program received automated referrals from the individual EHR reporting system for each FQHC. The criteria, automated reports were developed to identify residents likely qualifying for WIC based on demographic, insurance, household income information, and/or social determinants of health. Referral information provided through the EHR pathway identifies clients that may have never or not currently receiving WIC benefits despite eligibility to do so.

**METHODS (continued)**

Identification fields were standardized to include first and last name, date of birth, phone number, and preferred language. Estimated eligibility centered of logic matrices based on the individual's age (children and 6 years pregnant), status based on established EDI-10 codes), insurance status, household income, and food insecurity/social determinants of health assessment. This data was provided biweekly and electronically compared against existing WIC enrollment data and processed FQHC referral data.

**Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) Logic Questions Evaluated:**

Answered "statement was often true" OR "sometimes true" for the below food insecurity/social determinants of health questions:

- "We worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more."
- "We did not have enough food to eat even if we had money to buy more."
- "The food that we bought didn't last and we didn't have money to buy more."
- "We did not often, sometimes, or never use the food pantry in the last 12 months."

**Confidentiality Report Logic Example Used in Development of Report:**

Positively identifies estimated-eligible child for referral:

- "Children age 0-5 years of age as of assessment date that meet one of the below criteria:
- AND
- Insurance: All NJ FamilyCare, Medicaid, uninsured
- OR
- Household income: below 187% of the federal poverty level
- OR
- SDOH: answered "sometimes true or often true" OR "sometimes true" on food insecurity question"

The Ocean County WIC Program measured the process and outcome data to determine the impact and effectiveness of the project on WIC participation and enrollment data.

**RESULTS**

Baseline data was collected in January 2022 and evaluated through March 2023. In total, 29 EHR reports were provided with 9398 residents identified for potential WIC eligibility - 6278 residents were electronically filtered and excluded based on active WIC participation or non-eligible age, and a total of 1656 residents in WIC certification (8% of eligible individuals). Of those that were eligible, 499 additional individuals never previously receiving WIC services, 222 completing an initial certification as prior WIC participant (i.e. non-participating status or pregnancy), and 833 re-certifying eligible. WIC individuals eligible for certification (i.e. re-certification). Among those that did not certify, 784 reported not being interested in receiving WIC services and 226 were contacting and wanted to connect further with their spouse/partner.

**RESULTS (continued)**

As of January 2022, the Ocean County WIC Program had 24,130 residents enrolled in WIC and 23,208 participation. By March 2023, enrollment totaled 24,070 and participation totaled 26,068 - an increase of 16.37% and 19.82% respectively. Further, the gap between enrollment and participation also decreased over the same period from 7,976 to 5,226%.

**CONCLUSION**

WIC programs nationwide are challenged to integrate innovation and technology to improve adoption of WIC eligible families to WIC services. The Ocean County WIC Program benefited significantly from implementing this promising practice by streamlining eligibility screenings and automating referrals for residents through the FQHCs when they routinely receive care. Implementing a change in the EHR technology utilized by the FQHC was a necessary process and active reporting of data sharing options within mainstream EHRs allow for comparatively simple and replicable activities helping not just FQHCs, but primary care, pediatric, and obstetric practices as well as virtually any additional care.

With recent shifts in our food landscape created by the global pandemic and rising food costs, expanding access to WIC-supplemented nutrition services through automated technology is an important as a cost and may aid in reducing disparities in health care access and outcomes.

Figure 1: Ocean County WIC-QA Grant Implementation Process

Figure 2: Identified QA Grant Process and Outcome Evaluation Measures

## Help Keep WIC Strong for Another 50 Years

# Substance Abuse and Addiction

## Department of Substance Abuse, Addiction, & Opioid Dependency

### Highlights

As the initial year of the Opioid Advisory Council, meetings were held monthly to plan for the utilization of received funds. Two open public meetings were held to work with community partners and answer questions on the funding. The Council meeting was held regularly to discuss the funding allocation for both Ocean County and the participating municipalities.

It has been difficult to schedule older adult-specific programs. In an effort to meet the needs of the older adult population, the OCHD facilitated 5 Older Adult Health Fairs in 2023 (Berkeley 2, Toms River, Lacey, Plumsted) to bring resources into local municipalities.

The OCHD funds 5 innovative programs for Ocean County: Recovery Housing, Recovery High School, Stigma Reduction Events, Transportation Study and enhancements to Recovery Support Services. The Municipal Alliance utilized county-wide training funds for an educational opportunity for Ocean County providers.

Further, GCADA continues to provide supplemental funding for municipal alliances titled, "Youth Leadership Grant" which falls under the facilitation and supervision of the Ocean County Municipal Alliance Coordinator. This opportunity began October 1, 2023, and is a pilot, for not only Ocean County but for the state and nation, as no other projects like this exist. The OFR continues to be a leader in New Jersey and the United States.

The Overdose Response Plan and Summer Spike Toolkit were two successful initiatives in 2023. The AD Comprehensive Grant continues to fund a full continuum of care for residents in need. The IDRC developed a seamless way for paperwork to be submitted between agency and client, resulting in improved client engagement.

### Looking Ahead

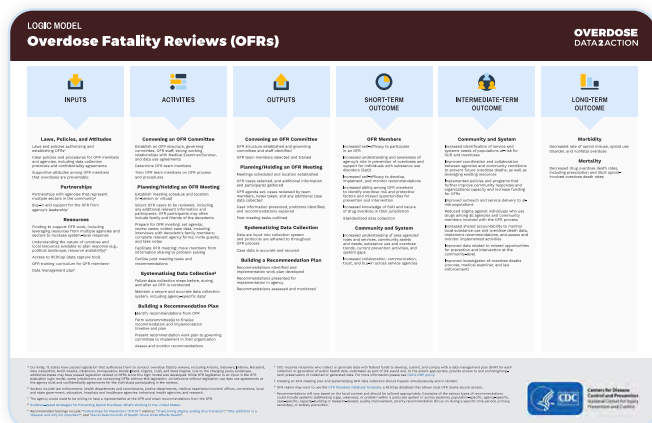
The OCHD is submitting a proposal for prevention and early intervention services from the Opioid Advisory Council RFP request. Award announcements are to be made in November 2023 with a January 1, 2024 start date. OCHD plans to hire two full-time Field Representatives, Health Education to provide "We Are Not Buying It 2.0", an evidence-based program, to all 6th grade classes in Ocean County.



The OCHD will continue to organize Older Adult Health Fairs in 2024 in partnership with the Municipal Alliances and any other municipality that may be interested. These fairs have been successful in providing Alcohol and Drug information, specifically DeTerra bags and Narcan kits. The Municipal Alliance submitted a proposal in Fall 2023 for a grant opportunity through GCADA/DMHAS, in which a prevention media campaign was

proposed with a potential budget not to exceed \$700,000. The department is looking forward to the delivery of this program and the anticipated success in building relationships with Ocean County businesses and reducing overdose in our county.

The OFR looks forward to adding themed decedent case review in 2024 to obtain data about specific sub-populations within New Jersey. IDRC will continue to offer classes to residents convicted of a DUI inclusive of ongoing options for special accommodations for individuals that are deaf or hard of hearing.



PUBLIC HEALTH

# Infrastructure

**HEALTH  
INSURANCE**  
RISK ADVISORY  
FIRST AID  
MONEY MANAGEMENT  
EXAMINATIONS

# Public Health Infrastructure

Historically, the importance of public health has often been recognized during or, as a result of, major tragedy or illness. In the last 2 decades, this has been seen with anthrax attacks (2001), SARS virus (2003), H1N1 influenza pandemic (2009), Superstorm Sandy (2012), Ebola (2014), Zika virus (2017), and COVID-19 (2020). These events have raised awareness of what public health practitioners have known for years – there remains a significant need for fully-funded, flexible and sustainable public health infrastructure.

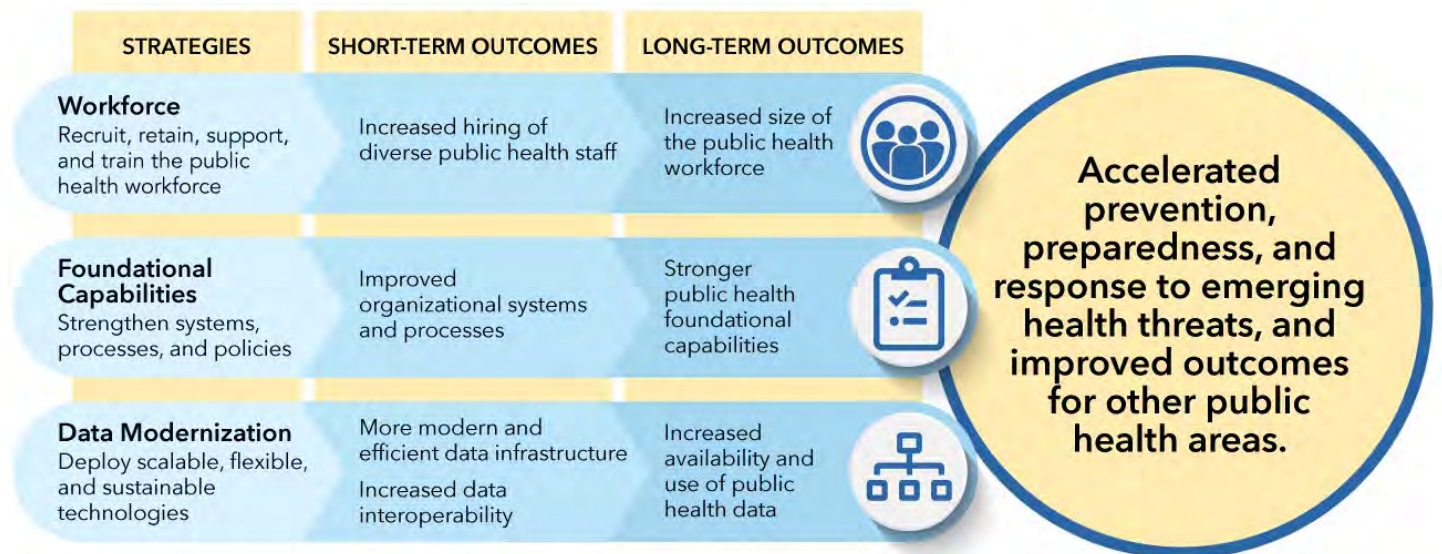
## Overview of Public Health Infrastructure

Public health infrastructure comprises the foundational workforce, systems, policies, and technologies that improve our overall public health capacity and prepare us to investigate the critical issues of today and tomorrow, whether they be emerging infectious diseases, terrorist attacks, or chronic illnesses.

Through federal public health grants arising from the shortcomings identified during the COVID-19 pandemic response, groundbreaking investment that supports critical public health infrastructure needs of health departments has begun. In Ocean County in 2023, three public health infrastructure grants were awarded to the Ocean County Health Department – Enhancing Local Public Health Infrastructure (ELPHI), Strengthening Local Public Health Capacity (SLPHC), and County Health Infrastructure Funding (CHIF).

## Enhancing Local Public Health Infrastructure (ELPHI)

The Enhancing Local Public Health Infrastructure (ELPHI) grant was made possible through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New Jersey Department of Health. The ELPHI grant uses three strategies - Workforce, Foundational Capabilities, and Data Modernization – to accelerate prevention, preparedness, and response to emerging health threats.



The OCHD is working diligently to put the ELPHI grant to work for the residents of Ocean County. Outlined below are some of the highlights to date of our agency’s Workforce, Foundational Capabilities, and Data Modernization initiatives undertaken with ELPHI funding.

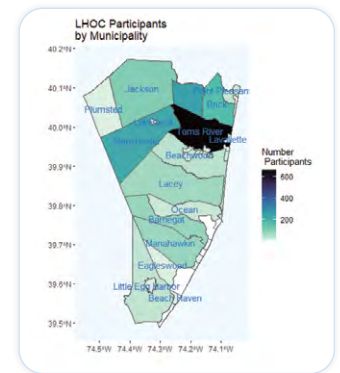
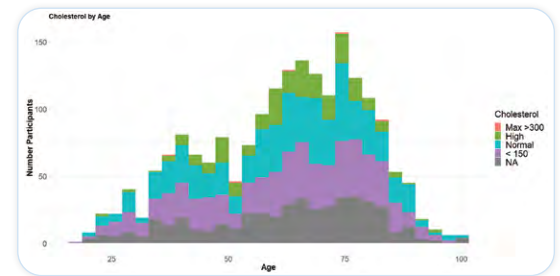
## A. Workforce

For many local governments, understaffing in the local health department posed many problems during the pandemic. While the OCHD, with tremendous support from our County Commissioners, was able to rapidly increase public health responders during the COVID-19 pandemic response, it was evident that long-term investment in key, skill-based positions was still needed. Public health positions filled under ELPHI include a chronic disease epidemiologist, an experienced grant manager/Qualified Purchasing Agent, and additional communicable disease investigators.

### 1. Chronic Disease Epidemiology

Currently, chronic diseases are the leading cause of death and disability in Ocean County. In the past, the primary cause of morbidity and mortality was infectious diseases, but with improvements in public health and clinical science, people are living longer. As people live longer, they are affected by lifestyle factors such as dietary choices, exercise frequency, and tobacco use that may contribute to an array of chronic diseases.

Under ELPHI funding, the OCHD bolstered a science-driven approach to addressing these chronic diseases, beginning with the addition of a Masters-prepared chronic disease epidemiologist, Gunnar Jacob. Mr. Jacob joins a team of clinical nutritionists and nurses to deliver evidence-based diabetes prevention and control programs. Using population research and statistical data, the team works together to identify characteristics of communities, individuals, risk factors, and interventions to provide optimal diabetes education. This education is available for pre-diabetics in the National Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) and for type 2 diabetics in the Diabetes Self-Management, Education, and Support (DSMES) program.



### 2. Grant Management

Grants enable public health practitioners to reach underserved populations, address disparities in receiving public health services, and improve overall population health. As federal and state funding is made available, it allows the OCHD to launch new initiatives, maintain existing programs, and invest in overdue infrastructure improvements. The identification of a grants specialist and Qualified Purchasing Agent (QPA), Andrew Coppola, was essential for coordination and compliance across programmatic and financial management processes.

### 3. Communicable Disease Investigation

After the COVID-19 pandemic, the OCHD has worked diligently to build our capacity to respond to infectious disease outbreaks. The agency enhanced communicable disease mitigation efforts under ELPHI to include funding for: seven communicable disease investigators, six seasonal staff members to support ongoing COVID response activities, laboratory testing services for uninsured and underinsured residents, and social services for isolation and quarantine interventions.

Additional investments were made in ongoing training opportunities in foundational and advanced public health capabilities to expand shared knowledge. This included, but is not limited to, New to Public Health Residency programs, leadership training courses, ArcGIS and Tableau data programming, and Certified Infection Control (CIC) certification.

## B. Foundational Capabilities (Systems, Processes, Policies)

Local public health expertise helps ensure an adaptable, resilient, and better-coordinated system to respond to outbreaks and emergent threats that our communities encounter. Building on an existing foundation of public health capacity and preparedness, the OCHD worked to expand the implementation of key public health standards – health equity, strategic planning, and institutionalizing lessons learned.

 <p><b>Build the right foundation.</b></p>	 <p><b>Accelerate data into action.</b></p>	 <p><b>Develop state-of-the-art workforce.</b></p>	 <p><b>Support and extend external partnerships.</b></p>	 <p><b>Manage change and governance.</b></p>
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### 1. Health Equity

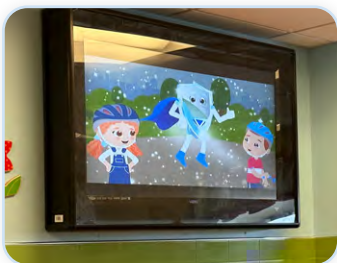


Minorities and impoverished Americans often have the most limited access to public health services and infrastructure. Using ELPHI funding, the OCHD has built on existing initiatives to increase health equity for disproportionately affected populations and to develop multilingual, culturally appropriate communications and public health campaigns.



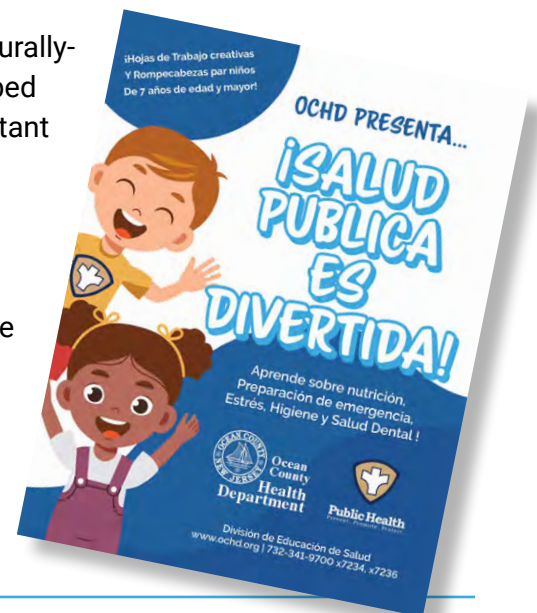
In coordination with the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) process, diverse focus groups were held with community members representing senior, disabled, Hispanic, and black communities. Key public health topics were discussed to determine the strengths, weaknesses, challenges and threats to our public health system. These topics included access to care, mental health, barriers to health care services, transportation, insurance, obesity, and substance use and abuse. The data gleaned from these conversations has helped

inform the agency’s community health needs assessment and will be used in the development of new public health initiatives.



Within the Health Education Division, two culturally-tailored health education videos were developed to reach elementary-aged children with important information on staying healthy. These videos include messaging on healthy eating, active living, handwashing, hygiene, age-appropriate vaccination, and the importance of sleep. As

the OCHD works to close racial and cultural health disparities, we recognize that our programs are most effective when they are developed by and tailored to the communities they aim to reach. The “Stay Healthy” videos have been adapted for both Hispanic and Orthodox Jewish populations to date. Similar efforts were made with the “Public Health is Fun! / ¡Salud Publica es Divertida!” Student Coloring Book.

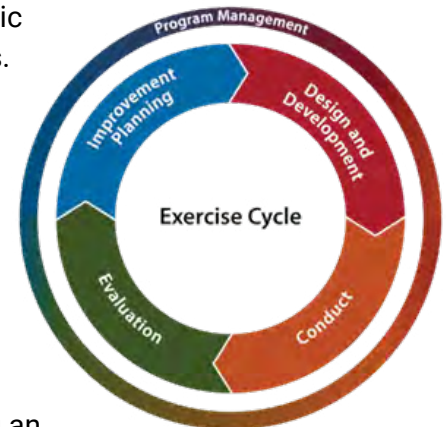


## 2. Improve Local Health Department Strategic Planning

A key component to ensuring a timely and robust public health response is investment in strengthening organizational capacity to drive progress on public health priorities. The Personnel Department has worked diligently to identify vendors that implement technologies to streamline government processes and automate local health department workflows to improve agency communication and information.

Under the OCHD Strategic Plan 2020-2025, the agency identified four strategic priority areas focused on activities that matter most to our agency’s success. These priority areas are:

1. Agency Engagement, Development, and Performance
2. Community Collaboration, Assessment, and Quality Improvement
3. Emerging Public Health Threats and Response
4. Maximizing Utilization of Technology and Innovation

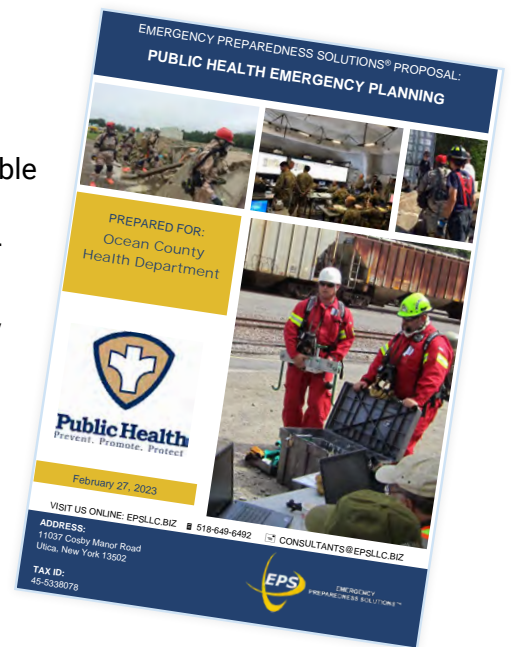


Within the funding available through the ELPHI grant, additional strides were made in advancing “Agency Engagement, Development, and Performance” through assessing administrative and human resource functions, developing an internal employee portal, redesigning the agency website, developing standardized agency branding and visual identities, and renovating existing facilities to better support clinical and programmatic service delivery.



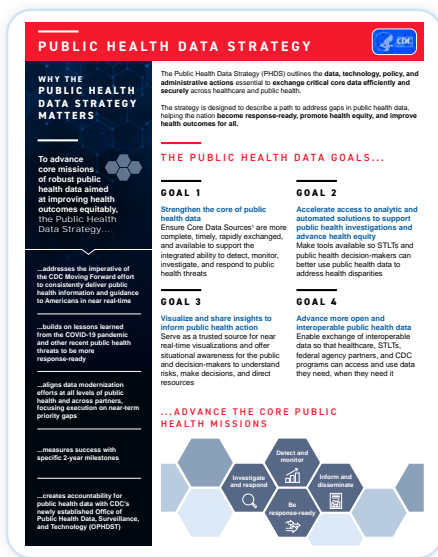
### 3. Apply Lessons From the Pandemic

The OCHD is working to further strengthen institutional knowledge and public health response lessons learned to support ongoing communicable disease mitigation efforts. To this end, we've bolstered infrastructure for the provision and distribution of vaccines, COVID-19 tests, and other critical clinical services to community members and codified lessons learned from stakeholder reviews into After Action Reports. The agency has upgraded drive-thru vaccination site infrastructure, purchased new lab-grade vaccine storage units, enhanced remote temperature monitoring systems, obtained emergency response gear including respirators and personal protective equipment, and consulted with experts and stakeholders on Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Programs.



### C. Data Modernization

As the trusted source for public health response in Ocean County, data modernization and improvements were necessary to ensure the ability to maintain and provide situational awareness for the public and decision-makers to understand risks, make decisions, and direct resources. This was seen early in the pandemic with novel vaccination databases and web-based COVID data dashboards, however, more was needed.



In 2023, the OCHD invested in innovative technologies to accelerate our access to analytic data and automated solutions to support public health investigations and advance health equity so that we can continue delivering guidance the public can trust. Software and cloud-based programs including Qualtrics, SilverHammer, ArcGIS, and Tableau were deployed or expanded. Information technology and communication hardware was enhanced. Electronic medical record and revenue cycle management services were implemented. Long-term investments were made to ensure real-time response to emerging threats wouldn't be hampered by limitations in accessing data or communicating with local partners and residents.



## Strengthening Local Public Health Capacity

The Strengthening Local Public Health Capacity grant – Pathway B further supports public health capacity by strengthening agency accountability and performance management through accreditation under the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). Accreditation efforts help improve organizational competencies addressing information technology, human resources, financial management, contract, and procurement services. It provides guidance to enhance local health department communications capabilities, policy development, and community partnership development and engagement. It also allows us to improve equity and organizational competencies addressing leadership, governance, and strategic planning.



For all of the PHAB Accreditation Standards and Measures, we welcome you to review the domains at <https://phaboard.org>.

## County Health Infrastructure Funding

The County Health Infrastructure Funding (CHIF) Grant Program provides additional funding to New Jersey's 21 county health departments to continue their efforts in addressing and responding to complex public health emergencies, such as COVID-19 and monkeypox (hMPXV), emerging local needs, and other key public health priorities.

Under this program, funding was used to reimburse COVID-19 response efforts, a key issue that needed to be addressed. Future funding will be applied to improving our physical infrastructure, renovating clinical service spaces, and supporting enhanced services for years to come.

## Conclusion

Throughout history, tragedy has increased people's recognition of public health. Our goal is to create a scalable, flexible public health infrastructure in Ocean County that will last beyond the recent crises and equip us to effectively and rapidly respond to the next public health threat or disease. It remains imperative that we continue to link our public health preparedness needs with the growing national concern of novel viruses, bioterrorism, natural disasters, and environmental accidents.

# THANK YOU!

Public health touches our lives every day. Throughout this past year, we've seen the critical role each one of the staff comprising the OCHD has played in preventing and responding to emerging public health threats and delivering high-quality health care services.

As we look ahead, we are incredibly excited by today's public health workforce and the opportunities we have to further the work we have started. Whether you work in departments delivering public health services directly to the public or behind the scenes to ensure we're all equipped to accomplish the task, you are making a difference. Thank you for your dedication, your service, and your commitment to saving and improving lives.

The Ocean County Board of Health extends its sincerest thanks to the incredible work you display. We recognize that we are unable to name every staff member, partner and volunteer that has been instrumental in our efforts to serve the residents of Ocean County – we are incredibly grateful for each one of you!







# **Ocean County Health Department**

175 Sunset Avenue  
P.O. Box 2191  
Toms River, New Jersey 08755  
732-341-9700 • [www.ochd.org](http://www.ochd.org)