



Tioga County Public Health Department

Health & Human Services Building | 1062 State Route 38, Owego, NY 13827

Phone: 607-687-8600 | Fax: 607-223-7030 | ph.tiogacountyny.gov
Heather Vroman, MEd., Public Health Director



INTERNAL MEMO

TO: **Marte Sauerbrey; Chair, Tioga County Legislature**

FROM: Heather Vroman, MEd.; Public Health Director

DATE: February 6, 2024

RE: **Public Health Report 2023**

Attached is our agency's report for 2023 which includes bulleted highlights. The information includes 2023 successes and challenges, as well as 2024 goals.



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2023 Highlights Summary

2023 was a year of resetting, renewal, and growth for Public Health and our team. Driven by the theme of *Reset, Renew, Reimagine*, the goal was to build a better Public Health for our community. Beginning the year with a transition in new administration, we were also successful in building back our workforce and reestablishing mandated programs that are essential for the public, such as immunizations. We re-enacted a quality improvement program which resulted in streamlining many of our processes/procedures, and re-allocated staffing resources into new areas for staff to grow and excel while improving the program areas. We renewed our partnerships with organizations throughout the County, surrounding Counties, and New York State that we had historically collaborated with, and needed new embracing. We accomplished all the goals we set for 2023 and more! By the end of the year, we had developed our own Strategic Plan that will guide our work in the coming years, where all staff will play a vital role, contributing to the success of our agency. Our culture has changed for the better, we are on a united front; with a focus on quality improvement in what we do and how we do it. As we look to the future our focus is on how we will Reimagine Tioga County Public Health into a more efficient, better serving organization for our community. I believe we have the team in place to accomplish great things!

- With the return of previous employees and the hiring of new employees, we became fully staffed, and everyone has settled in their roles.
- The return of a full nursing staff has allowed us to resume providing mandated public health services, such as immunizations and internal communicable disease investigation.
- We hosted a Public Health Open House in April, celebrating Public Health staff and programs. Over 100 different agencies attended including representatives from the New York State Department of Health and New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO). Also entertained County Legislators and Board of Health members during Public Health Week to help build better relationships with our governing bodies.
- Tioga Smiles Dental Van celebrated its 20th year of serving the community. Over 1,500 clients received dental services in 2023.
- Renewed our relationships with community partners through collaborative projects: Van Etten Elementary Dental Day, meetings with Rural Health Network & Tioga Opportunities, and outreach activities such as healthcare provider visits for immunization administration and lead testing rates improvement.



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Successes

- We completed all our 2023 goals! In review, they were:
 - Reestablished our Quality Assurance Committee and returned to auditing our programs.
 - Completed all 2022 Article 28 audit corrective actions, which included various policy updates along with the re-establishment of quality assurance.
 - Built back our workforce (including a full nursing staff) by hiring new and previous employees returning.
 - Created a Strategic Plan for Public Health.
- We reviewed and updated various policies and procedures to help streamline processes, one of which included our Rabies Prevention and Control Policy. With this policy update, we also created a new online Animal Bite Reporting Form that is now located on our newly designed website for user-friendly public use.
- In Public Health Emergency Preparedness, we have revised and updated our Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and Pandemic Plan. We also conducted internal and external interviews to create a COVID After Action Report that will be finalized in early 2024.
- We have reestablished our Welcome Baby Outreach program to new mothers and babies, making outreach calls to high-risk mothers and first-time mothers, and sending all new mothers in the County informational baby booklets.
- Continued work in the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities Program and Wellhead Protection Program. Both assisted municipalities and homeowners with resources providing essential funding through grants and creating a healthier community.
- With many hours of hard work and follow-through we were approved to receive a five-year Public Health Infrastructure Grant, which included incentive funds for staff this year.
- Public Health played an active role in the Remote Work Pilot Program becoming available for all County Employees.
- Conducted a multifaceted outreach campaign to ensure optimal school immunization rates through school nurse education, media advertisements, signage at local school districts, and creation of our first television commercial promoting “Back-to-School Vaccines.”
- The Board of Health was engaged with staff, actively involved with the department/programs, and assisted in the update of the By-Laws and Tioga County’s Rabies Control Order. Also, hosted Amish guest speakers at a meeting



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to help build connections with the Amish community, to assist us in providing services.

- We established a contract with a pharmaceutical consultant as a requirement of our Article 28 Clinic and interviewed potential medical consultants in advance of the new year.

Challenges

- Retaining staff is always a challenge. By the end of 2023 we filled all necessary positions but not without losing seasoned employees in Environmental Health and Early Intervention to higher paying wages outside the county.
- Rebuilding the community's perception of Tioga County Public Health as an agency that protects their health and prevents the spread of disease.
- Early Intervention continues to struggle with the provider shortage, with children on waitlists and less providers to complete eligibility evaluations. Our EISCs worked tirelessly to find providers and keep families engaged while waiting for services.
- Dental decay continues to be an increasing problem among those seen on the Dental Van. By the end of 2023 our dental team saw over 1,000 patients who had some form of dental decay (ranging from low-high risk decay).
- Saw an uptick in number of children with elevated blood lead levels that need continued case management from 2022 to 2023 at 14 and 31 respectively. As our Child Lead Program has been revamped, we are also completing provider outreach to make sure proper lead testing is being completed at child milestones.

2024 Goals

- Retain current workforce through engagement satisfaction activities, and enhanced training opportunities.
- Complete an assessment of what public health services are needed in the community and implement priority programs, including utilization of our new "Public Health on the Go" mobile trailer.
- Provide greater access to public health services/programs by leveraging technology; to specifically accept credit card payments and Environmental Health Permits on-line.
- Continue to expand the Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement program to include additional program auditing, project improvement, and creation/update of work procedures.