



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
LEWIS COUNTY

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

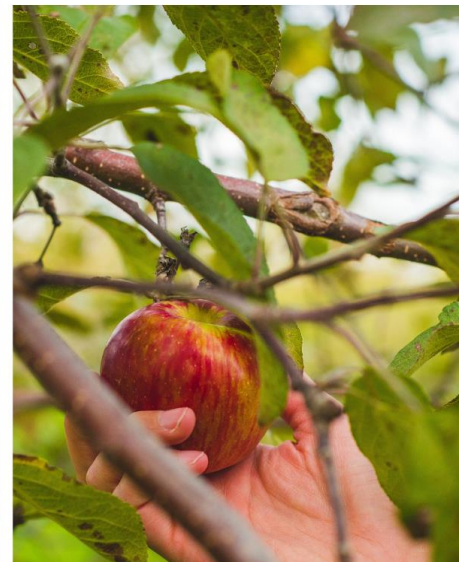
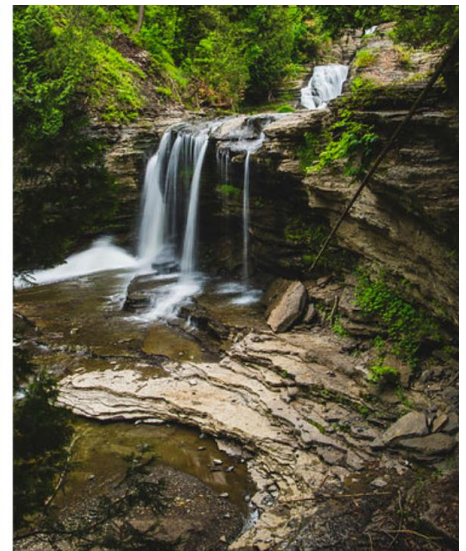


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Message from the Public Health Director



I am pleased to present the 2022 Lewis County Public Health Annual Report. 2022 was a year of constant change and learning for the health department. We started the year off with over 50% of our staff being new to Public Health or new to their role within the department. The COVID-19 response changed dramatically in the beginning of 2022. The health department transitioned from being responsible for testing, case investigations, isolation, and quarantine to empowering the residents of Lewis County to protect the health of themselves, their families, neighbors, friends, and coworkers.

This was a welcomed change after 2 years of enforcing public health orders and making thousands of phone calls to residents informing them of a positive test or an exposure and a need to isolate or quarantine. We transitioned to ensuring the vaccine, home tests, and personal protective equipment were widely available in the county, and the residents had the knowledge they needed to keep themselves and their fellow community members healthy.

Unfortunately, it wasn't long after this transition that not only one, but 2 additional Public Health Emergencies were declared with Mpox and Polio both being a cause for concern. Fortunately, in Lewis County, we only needed to educate ourselves about the situation and prepare to take action. We were fortunate enough to not have any Mpox or Polio cases in the county.

2022 was a year filled with training for our many new staff members. With new staff comes new ideas and innovation. We spent a lot of time improving our processes and rebranding ourselves here at Public Health.

With the assistance of community partners, we also completed the 2022-2024 Community Health Assessment and Health Improvement Plan. This updated plan came at the perfect time as our expanded population health team now has the training and skills needed to fully implement the new interventions addressing the health priorities in our county.

I am excited to see what our team can accomplish in 2023 as we continue to recover from the pandemic, build community resilience and reestablish ourselves within the community. I am amazed by the knowledge, dedication, and compassion shown by our staff every day. I thank each one of them for their commitment in promoting and protecting the health of our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ashley Waite".

Ashley Waite, RN, BSN, MPH
Director

Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles

Mission

To promote and protect the health of our community.

Vision

Healthy people living in a healthy community.

Guiding Principles



Integrity: We act with honesty and adhere to the highest standards of moral and ethical values and principles.



Teamwork: We have a commitment to reach common goals, leveraging the abilities of all team members.



Community Focus: We demonstrate a passion for community health and wellbeing.



Innovation: We creatively apply the most advanced technology, information, and research to be modern leaders in public health.



Excellence: We strive to provide the highest quality services through continuous quality improvement and learning.



Collaboration: We work collaboratively with partners and the community to improve health and support a strong public health system.



Accountability: We honor our commitments, put forth our best effort to meet goals and hold ourselves accountable for results.

Public Health Team

Director/ Early Intervention Official

Ashley Waite, RN, BSN, MPH

Medical Director

Shereen Palmer, MD

County Rabies Control Officer

Jennifer Nightingale, DVM

Managers

Anna Platz, MPH - Deputy Public Health Director

Marcia Ashline, RN, BSN - Supervising Public Health Nurse

Joseph Austin, BSEM - Fiscal Manager

Rebecca Kelly - Children with Special Needs Coordinator

Business Staff

Bernadette DeSantis – Senior Account Clerk

Erica Brown – Senior Account Clerk

Temperance Lyndaker – Account Clerk

Kim Gould – Administrative Assistant

Charla Main- Administrative Assistant

Prevent Staff

Maryann Vargulick, RN, BSN – Communicable Disease Nurse

Anna Birchenough, RN, BSN – Immunization Program Coordinator

Michelle Beyer-Zehr, RN - Nurse

Emily Ward, RN, BSN – Lead Poisoning Prevention Coordinator

Mary Kimbrell, RN – Per Diem Nurse

Ellen Scanlon, RN – Per Diem Nurse

Cheryl Kelly, RN, BSN – Per Diem Nurse

Daniel Moyer – Animal Control Officer, per diem

Population Health Staff

Stephanie Houser Fouse - Public Health Specialist

April Seymour Ritz - Public Health Specialist

Mary Lynn Fager- Public Health Specialist

Sierra Kempney – Public Health Specialist

Children with Special Needs

Cathy Dosztan - Service Coordinator

Erika Campeau - Service Coordinator

Health Services Advisory

Shereen Palmer, MD

Sarah Zeger, DVM, Rabies Control Officer

Lisa Virkler, Legislative Representative

Jennifer Jones

Jennifer Maracchion

Tammy Suiter, RN

Brian Roggie, MD, FACEP

Amy Marti

Essential Service 1: Monitor Health Status to Identify and Solve Community Health Problems

Essential Service 1 activities include assessing the health status of the community through formal and informal needs assessments and data analysis. Lewis County Public Health collaborates with a diverse group of community partners to address community health problems. In this section, community health improvement planning and leading health indicators are featured.

Health Indicators in Lewis County

A health indicator is a measurable characteristic that describes the health of a population. According to the United States Census Bureau’s Population Estimates Program, the population for Lewis County is 26,573. Public Health tracks health indicators for the population as data becomes available. County Health Rankings releases health outcome and health factor data annually. In 2022, Lewis County was **ranked 26th out of the 62 counties** in New York State for best health outcomes. In addition to the County Health Rankings, the New York State Department of Health’s Prevention Agenda releases data surrounding the health priorities in New York State as data becomes available. Below are some of the relevant health indicators for Lewis County.

| Health Indicator | Prevention Agenda Goal | Lewis County 2019-2020 | Lewis County 2018-2019 | Lewis County 2016-2017 | Tug Hill Region |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| % of Adult who are obese | ≤ 24.2% | 38.2% | 38.2% | 29.2% | 37.9% |
| % of Children who are obese | ≤ 16.4% | 23.3% | 23.3% | 22.2% | 21.7% |
| % of Adults who smoke cigarettes | ≤ 11.0% | 18.3% | 18.3% | 14.4% | 18.5% |
| % of Adults with poor mental health in previous month | ≤ 10.7 % | 9.0% | 9.0% | 11.7% | 13.2% |
| Suicide death rate | ≤ 7.0 | 22.0% | 14.0 | 18.3 | 13.4 |
| Overdose death rate | ≤ 14.3 | 20.5* | 19.9 | 53.2 | 9.0 |
| % of preterm births | ≤ 8.3% | 5.1% | 9.2% | 7.0% | 8.8% |
| % of children with recommended immunizations | ≥ 70.5% | 80.1% | 77.8% | 72.1% | 67.7% |
| % of deaths before age 65 | ≤ 22.8% | 24.1% | 16.0% | 22.8% | 23.9% |
| % of Adults with primary care provider | 86.7% | 83.3% | 83.3% | 88.5% | 78.0% |
| % of Adults with health insurance | 97% | 94.0% | 94.1% | 93.1% | |

Data from New York State Prevention Agenda Dashboard

Community Health Improvement Plan

2022 was a year of transition for the Lewis County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The population health team continued to implement the evidence-based programs identified in the 2019-2021 CHIP and in late 2022, completed the 2022-2024 Lewis County Community Health Assessment (CHA) and CHIP.

In the CHA/CHIP development process, Public Health Staff as well as many community partners reviewed data from the 2022 Community Health Survey of Adult Residents, New York State Prevention Agenda, 2022 Lewis County Health Improvement Survey, and 2022 Lewis County Prevention Needs Assessment. To identify and confirm existing priorities, as well as select new ones, health indicators for Lewis County were compared to the Tug Hill Region, New York State and the New York State Prevention Agenda goals.

The goals identified in the 2019-2021 Lewis County CHIP (reduce obesity in adults, reduce obesity in children, and prevent suicide), will carryover into the 2022-2024 CHIP, with the addition of three new goals: Reduce adult cigarette smoking, binge drinking and hospitalizations due to falls. New evidence-based interventions have been selected to address each priority.

As our response to the COVID-19 pandemic wound down, the population health team began to gradually implement the interventions identified in the 2019-2021 CHIP in early 2022. Evidence-based classes were scheduled, connections were made with local wellness committees, Complete Streets work picked up momentum, multiple gatekeeper trainings were offered and our postvention team continued to support suicide loss survivors.

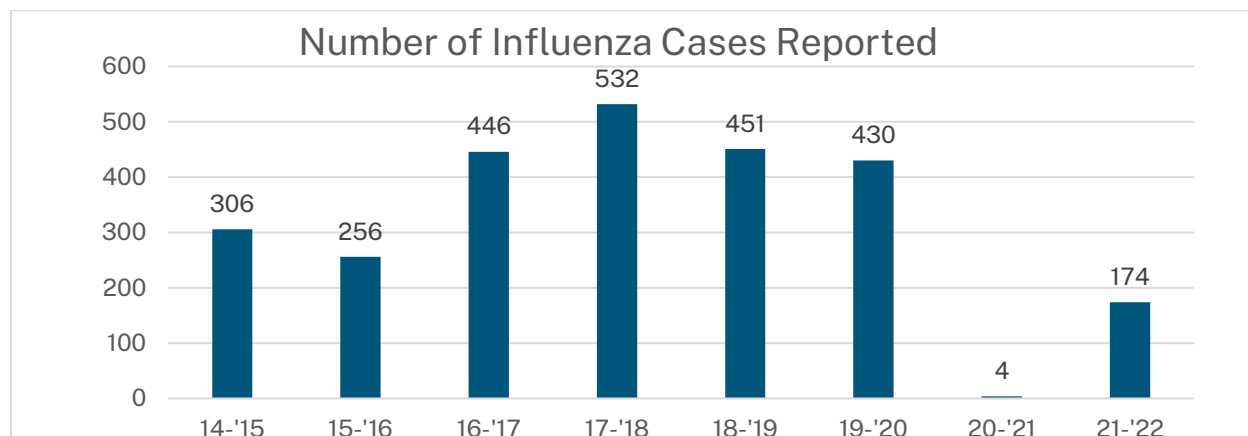
The work done around suicide prevention was again led by the Lewis County Suicide Prevention Coalition and Traumatic Loss Team. This work is highlighted under Essential Service 4.

Essential Service 2: Diagnose and Investigate Health Problems and Health Hazards in the Community

Essential Service 2 includes provision of epidemiological identification of emerging health threats, active investigation of infectious disease and human health hazards and prevention of vaccine preventable disease through immunization. The following programs/activities are highlighted in this section: seasonal influenza, communicable disease control, COVID-19 surveillance and control, rabies control, immunization program, and lead poisoning prevention.

Seasonal Influenza

In 2022, Lewis County Public Health administered **542 influenza vaccines**. There was a total of **174 cases of influenza** reported in 2022. Below is a chart showing the number of cases in past flu seasons compared to the 2021- 2022 season.



Communicable Disease Control

Surveillance, investigation, and follow-up of reportable communicable diseases are statutory responsibilities of local health departments. Lewis County Public Health nurses conducted a total of **579** communicable disease investigations in 2022. Below is a list of investigations by disease:

| Food and Waterborne Diseases | 2022 |
|---------------------------------|------|
| Campylobacter | 16 |
| Cryptosporidiosis | 2 |
| Cyclosporiasis | 0 |
| E Coli | 11 |
| Giardia | 16 |
| Salmonella | 13 |
| Shigellosis | 0 |
| Yersiniosis | 1 |
| Sexually Transmitted Infections | |
| Chlamydia | 32 |
| Gonorrhea | 10 |
| Syphilis | 15 |
| Arthropod Diseases | |
| Lyme Disease | 75 |
| Anaplasmosis/Ehrlichiosis | 8 |
| West Nile Virus | 0 |
| Other Diseases | |
| Hepatitis A | 0 |
| Hepatitis B | 48 |
| Perinatal Hepatitis B | 15 |
| Hepatitis C | 104 |
| Legionellosis | 2 |
| Viral Meningitis | 10 |
| Latent Tuberculosis | 96 |
| Other Investigations | 105 |

COVID-19 Surveillance and Control

2022 brought major changes in our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We welcomed a sense of calm these changes brought about for our health department. While we started 2022 out much like 2020 and 2021, doing 100s of case investigations a week and bringing on more staff to assist in the response, we quickly realized the case investigations and mandatory isolation and quarantine were no longer an effective or sustainable part of the COVID-19 response. We shifted in mid-January to individuals voluntarily self-isolating if testing positive for COVID and self-quarantining if being a known close contact to a positive case. This cut down on our workload significantly.

Home testing for COVID-19 became widely accepted in 2022 and the county saw the need to increase accessibility to home test kits. Together with community partners we **distributed 12,850 home tests** to schools, daycares, libraries, businesses, churches, and individuals in the community.



There were a total of **3,738 reported COVID-19 cases** in 2022. **139 individuals were hospitalized** with complications from COVID-19, which is down from 273 in 2021. Sadly, **18 Lewis County residents lost their life to COVID-19** in 2022, this is down from 25 in 2021.



We also continued our efforts to vaccinate the residents of Lewis County in 2022. Lewis County Public Health administered **1,517 COVID-19 vaccines and boosters** in 2022. Photos included are from the *BOO*ster clinics we held in October.

Immunization Program

Public Health strives to reduce or eliminate vaccine preventable diseases through administration of vaccines. In 2022, public health nurses vaccinated **344** individuals at our clinic. Public Health Nurses also administered **85** Tuberculosis skin tests. Our clinical staff routinely work with local providers to ensure their practice is following the highest practice standards for administration of vaccines.

Rabies Control

Animal bites are reported to the health department and follow-up is conducted to assure that measures are taken to prevent potential rabies transmission. The health department also works with Countryside Veterinary Clinic to vaccinate pets at clinics located

throughout the county at various times of the year. The chart below provides numbers for activities conducted in 2022:

| Rabies Prevention Activities | 2022 |
|---|------|
| Rabies Exposure Reports | 148 |
| Animal Specimens | 34 |
| Positive Specimens | 3 |
| USDA Wildlife Specimens | 14 |
| Individuals Completed Post Exposure Prophylaxis | 18 |
| Pets Vaccinated at Free Clinics | 770 |
| Pets Under Quarantine | 4 |

Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

This program not only educates the community and providers about getting children tested for blood lead at age 1 and 2, but also works with families whose child has an elevated blood lead level. Regulatory changes in late 2019 reduced the blood lead level of action to 5mcg/dL.

Any child who has a blood lead level of 5mcg/dL or greater requires a home visit by one of our nurses and an environmental sanitarian to perform assessments of the

| Blood Lead Level (mcg/dL) | 2022 |
|---------------------------|------|
| 0-<5 | 384 |
| 5-<10 | 16 |
| 10-14 | 1 |
| 15-19 | 1 |
| 20-44 | 1 |

child and the home. These assessments not only look for the source of the lead exposure but also provide direction for corrective action.

In 2022, there were a total of **403** children screened for elevated blood lead levels. There was a total of **19** children with blood lead levels 5 mcg/dL and greater that required home visits and further follow up from our Public Health Nurses.

Essential Service 3: Inform, Educate and Empower People about Health Issues

Essential Service 3 includes social marketing, targeted public communication and providing accessible health information resources to reinforce health promotion messages and programs. The following activities are highlighted in this section: evidenced based programming, general health education activities and Health Communication and Social Marketing planning.

Evidence Based Programs

Public Health offers a free Lifestyle Change Program (also known as the **National Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP)**) for Lewis County residents. This program is a proven way to prevent diabetes in people who have prediabetes or are at risk for diabetes, by making small lifestyle changes. The program runs for one year. During the first 16 weeks of the program, participants meet once a week. During the remaining months, participants meet once or twice a month. A trained lifestyle coach leads the sessions to help participants improve food choices, increase physical activity, and learn coping skills to maintain weight loss and healthy lifestyle changes.

| DPP | 2022 |
|--------------|------|
| Participants | 11 |
| Pounds Lost | 149 |

The agency also offers the **Diabetes Self-Management Program (DSMP)**, a Self-Management Resource Program with the Self-Management Resource Center (SMRC). This program is a 6-week workshop for people with type 2 diabetes and/or their caregivers. Participants meet in a community setting for 2.5 hours for six highly interactive weekly sessions that focus on sharing experiences and skills-building. Developed by Stanford University, this evidence-based program teaches the skills needed in the day-to-day management of diabetes and to maintain and/or increase quality of life. Public Health staff continue to educate the public and providers about these important programs and the success they have had in our community.

| DSMP | 2022 |
|--------------|------|
| Participants | 7 |

Health Communication and Social Marketing Plan

Health education continued to be a key component of our pandemic response in 2022. As we continued to adjust to living with the COVID-19 virus and new COVID-19 vaccines became available, it was critical that our community knew the latest guidance as well as when and how they could get their vaccine. Public Health worked hard to maintain the trust of our residents by communicating reliable and consistent information.

Social media is an important tool in our communication with the public. In 2022, Public Health staff worked hard to share the most current COVID-19 guidance and information, while gradually reintegrating messages about our other essential public health services. An overwhelming majority of our health education for the last several years has been COVID-19 related. In 2022, the Health Communication & Social Marketing Committee spent a lot of time and energy reeducating the community about **all** Public Health programs and services. Social media posts were viewed a total of **157,118** times with **28,093** likes, shares, or comments over the course of 2022.

In addition to our social media presence, Public Health updated our website daily to reflect the latest COVID-19 numbers, including number of new cases, recoveries, tests, current hospitalizations, and deaths. Public Health also maintained an updated COVID-19 Information and FAQ section on our website, that contained the most up to date information on isolation, quarantine, symptoms, prevention, testing locations and vaccine availability.

Mid-year, we partnered with the Lewis County Community Services Office and launched a Mental Health PSA Campaign. Several PSAs were shared featuring the stories of trusted local community members, encouraging their neighbors to seek help. The community's response to the campaign was overwhelming and collectively, the videos received over 10,000 views.



Health Education

Public Health provided health education at 12 outreach events in 2022. Our outreach efforts spanned the county and included venues such as farmers markets, community events, senior meal sites, the Lewis County Fair, and libraries. Topics of health education varied based on target audience, but included topics such as tick-borne diseases, rabies, infection prevention, immunizations, lead poisoning, emergency preparedness, and suicide prevention. We also sought to increase awareness of our evidence-based classes and our services for children with special needs.



During National Public Health Week, we worked to bring awareness to the many aspects of Public Health and just how important the work our department does is. We also highlighted the work of our many community partners because we cannot do our work alone and we rely on many partners to assist us in promoting and protecting health while also addressing the social determinants of health. To celebrate Public Health Week all staff wore blue.



Essential Service 4: Mobilize Community Partnerships and Action to Identify and Solve Health Problems

Essential Service 4 involves convening and facilitating community groups in undertaking defined preventive and population focused activities in order to capture the full range of potential resources to solve community health problems. Highlighted in this section is the work completed this year by some of our key community partners.

Public Health continued to collaborate with many sectors of our community including education, business, faith based, agricultural, and nonprofit agencies to ensure these groups were properly informed as the response to the pandemic shifted. We provided the latest guidance as well as ensured there was continues access to personal protective equipment, tests, and vaccine. Once again, in collaboration with the County's Office of Emergency Management, we worked to distribute home tests which became widely available and accepted in early 2022.

Lewis County Priorities Council

The priorities Council brings together all health and human service agencies that work in Lewis County. These 25 agency leaders and guests tackle issues held in common, particularly the social determinant of health and workforce concerns. This is the forum in which the Community Health Assessment was discussed, and key health issues were identified. The group also worked to decide upon the evidence-based interventions to be included in the Community Health Improvement Plan for the next 3 years.

Lewis County Local Early Intervention Coordinating Council (LEICC)

LEICC strives to provide an environment for parents and professionals to gather, discuss, and implement different ideas and services that will aid children with special needs to reach their personal goals, free of discrimination and regardless of ability. LEICC members agree that communication, family outreach, and public education are major factors in assuring that these goals are met. The EI Manager reports State Performance Measures and the Federal Outcomes Study as well as local statistics and referrals for the Council to consider. In 2022, there were 20 individuals who served on this council representing 15 community partners; 7 of the 20 individuals were parents of children with special needs. Two meetings were held in 2022. Both meetings were held via Zoom for social distancing and community safety due to COVID-19 and for the convenience of the participants.

Lewis County Suicide Prevention Coalition

The Lewis County Suicide Prevention Coalition continues to provide suicide prevention training to the community and coordinate suicide prevention resources. This year, the coalition focused on resuming gatekeeper trainings as well as fulfilling their NYS Infrastructure Opportunity objectives.



In 2022, the Lewis County Suicide Prevention Coalition applied for funding through the Lewis County Youth Bureau to bring “Gizmo’s Pawesome Guide to Mental Health” to local libraries and afterschool programs. This interactive book takes an upstream approach to supporting the mental health and wellness of youth by introducing the concept of mental health, sharing how one may care for their own mental health daily, identifying when one’s mental health needs attention and how to use healthy coping strategies, defining

trusted adults, how to connect with them and making a personalized mental health plan that can be used daily. **120 children** participated in a Gizmo read along and each one received their own copy of the book and a “plushie” (stuffed animal).

The Coalition also received Rural Health Grant funds from FDRHPO in late 2022. The funds were used to design and purchase magnets that have Lewis County mental health resources on them. These magnets are being distributed by coalition members, community partners and through a mass mailing. These are the same magnets that were purchased and distributed using the 2021 Rural Health Grant Funds that the Coalition received from FDRHPO. The 2022 magnets include one update: The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Number (1-800-273-TALK) was changed to ‘988’.



In January of 2019, the Lewis County Suicide Prevention Coalition (in partnership with the Jefferson and St. Lawrence County Coalitions) was awarded a three-year grant with a concentration in rural communities. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Coalition applied for a grant extension and reallocation of funds so that activities could be continued into 2022. In the last 10 years, firearms were used in more than 50% of Lewis County suicide

| Safety Measure | 2022 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| QPR Training | 105 individuals trained |
| Youth Mental Health First Aid | 6 individuals trained |
| Adult Mental Health First Aid | 0 |
| ASIST | 12 individuals trained |
| Gun Lock Distribution | 100 Gun Locks |

deaths. Based on this information, the Coalition decided to have more of a focus on safe firearm storage and means reduction. Funds from the infrastructure grant were reallocated so that the Coalition could purchase two large gun safes and raffle them off during September (Suicide Prevention Awareness Month). Community members could enter the raffle by liking the Coalition’s Facebook page (1 ticket), liking one of the suicide prevention-focused informational videos shared on the Facebook page during the month of September (1 ticket), sharing said videos (3 tickets), donating to the Coalition (\$1/ticket) and/or completing a firearm

safety course between 1/1/2022 and the drawing on 9/31/2022 (25 tickets). The Coalition is proud to report that they received **1,301 entries in the raffle!**

In June of 2022, the Lewis County Suicide Prevention Coalition launched the first ever Lewis County Suicide Bereavement Support Group. Sierra Kempney, who began her time at LCPH as an intern and then transitioned to Public Health Specialist, recognized the need for this kind of support for suicide loss survivors, and developed the group as well as an implementation and sustainability plan, as part of her internship requirements. She traveled to New Hampshire to participate in a Support Group Facilitator Training that was sponsored by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and trained a co-facilitator. The group meets monthly on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 6 pm, in the basement of the Lowville Free Library and has 5 consistent members. In-person and virtual participation is possible. The group welcomes suicide loss survivors from neighboring communities who lack their own support group, as well.

The Lewis County Traumatic Loss Team (TLT) (formerly known as the Community Crisis Response Team) continues to support those community members who have been impacted by a recent sudden or traumatic loss. The TLT is on call seven days a week throughout the year. Community members call (315) 376-9735 and speak directly with a member of our Team. Any member of the community, agency representative, police jurisdiction, fire department, hospital, school, or faith-based organization can call to invite a response by the team.

In 2022, the TLT welcomed five new volunteers to the Team. Starting January 1, 2023, when a Lewis County resident dies in a sudden or traumatic way, TLT members will be deployed to the scene of the accident to support loss survivors. This would take the responsibility of asking for help off the shoulders of the loss survivor. The Team sees this as an opportunity to connect with loss survivors earlier, exchange information, and receive their permission to contact them later to arrange for any desired debriefings or referrals.

| Traumatic Loss Team | Calls | Responses |
|---------------------|-------|-----------|
| 2022 | 8 | 4 |
| To Date | 35 | 20 |

Bridges Out of Poverty

Public Health has played an integral role in Bridges Out of Poverty work in Lewis County. Although much of this work was put on “pause” during the COVID-19 pandemic, by the second quarter of 2022, a member of our Population Health Team was able to resume her leadership role in Bridges Out of Poverty Lewis County.

Bridges brings people from all sectors and economic classes together to improve job

| | Participants |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Bridges 2-Day Training | 31 |
| Bridges 3-hour Training | 25 |
| Getting Ahead | 16 |

retention rates, build resources, improve outcomes, and support those who are moving out of poverty, through a multistep approach. One step is the Bridges Out of Poverty community support program, which provides a family of concepts, workshops, and products to help employers, community organizations, social services agencies, and individuals address and reduce poverty in a comprehensive way. The second step is Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin’-By

World (GA). GA is a book and a 16-session curriculum that helps individuals in poverty build their resources for a more prosperous life themselves,

their families, and their communities. Consistently offering both programs to employers and residents of Lewis County is integral to success.

Bridges Out of Poverty Lewis County looks forward to expanding their offerings in 2023, largely with the help of Health Disparities Small Wellness Program Grant that they received in late 2022. This grant will support the continuation of Bridges and GA, in addition to bringing national trainers from Bridges parent organization (aha! Process) to Lewis County for a Bridges to Healthcare and Tactical Skills Training Program.



Essential Service 5: Develop Policies and Plans that Support Individual and Community Health Efforts

Essential Service 5 involves providing leadership for systematic community and state level planning for health improvement; development and tracking of measurable health objectives as a part of continuous quality improvement strategies and development of codes, regulations and legislation to guide the practice of public health. Highlighted in this section are the emergency preparedness planning and response activities.

Emergency Preparedness Planning and Response

Public Health is responsible for the health and safety of all residents during a disaster. We take an all-hazards approach to planning for disasters. This means we plan for everything from natural disasters, bioterrorism, to mass fatalities and disease outbreaks. Public Health is responsible for having the following plans: Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan, Public Health Asset Distribution Plan, Medical Countermeasure Distribution Plan, Isolation and Quarantine, Continuity of Operations Plan, Ebola Response Plan, Zika Action Plan, 2019-Novel Coronavirus Response Plan, and a COVID-19 Vaccination Plan.

Public Health continues to keep lines of communication open with all community partners that are listed in our emergency plans. Regular communication is held regarding the deliverables and objectives in the annual work plan. Communication also occurs as Public Health staff sit on committees and participate in trainings and exercises held by other

community agencies. This allows partners to have an established rapport and an understanding of roles when needed for a real-life response.

One of the most important reasons for conducting drills and exercises is so that we can identify issues that arise that can be addressed before a real event occurs. One of 2022's drills involved setting up a Point of Distribution (POD) site, which we did in real time as a COVID-19 and flu vaccination clinic. Staff were pleasantly surprised by the community's response to the clinic and demand for both vaccines. In collaboration with the Lowville, Croghan and Constableville Volunteer Fire Departments, we were able to quickly schedule three additional vaccine clinics county using our POD model.

The year 2022 was one of transition. In general, local health departments and emergency preparedness teams began to shift back to regular planning activities as the COVID-19 pandemic response waned. Locally, a new PHEP Coordinator was appointed and continues to be trained. We continually analyze and update our plans and training to ensure that we are ready to respond in the event of any Public Health Emergency.

Essential Service 6: Enforce Laws and Regulations That Protect Health and Safety

Essential Service 6 involves full enforcement of sanitary codes, especially in the food industry; full protection of drinking water supplies; enforcement of clean air standards and timely follow-up of hazards. As a partial service health department we have little code enforcement activity. The code enforcement is done by the NYDOH Watertown District office for Lewis County. Highlighted in this section is the activity conducted by our Animal Control Officer.

Animal Control



When an animal bite occurs often Lewis County Public Health's Animal Control Officer will make a home visit. These home visits occur for a variety of reasons including:

1. Verify the location of the animal
2. Verify status of rabies vaccine
3. Ensure confinement is being done in accordance with guidance
4. Enforce laws when confinement is not being done in accordance with the guidance provided.

In 2022, the Animal Control Officer made **42 home visits** as part of our Rabies Prevention Program.

Essential Service 7: Link People to Needed Personal Health Services

Essential Service 7 involves assuring effective entry for disadvantaged people into a coordinated system of clinical care; linkage to services for special population groups;

ongoing care coordination; targeted health information to high risk population groups and technical assistance for effective worksite health promotion/disease prevention programs. Highlighted in his section are the Children with Special Needs Programs, and Free Clinical Services offered by the agency.

Children with Special Needs Programs

Lewis County Public Health provides services for children with special needs starting at birth through age 21 including developmental, behavioral, and physical through 5 distinctive programs.

The Child Find Program: A developmental surveillance component of the Early Intervention program. Children birth - age 2 years that may be at risk for developmental delay due to medical or environmental reasons are monitored. The Child Find staff works closely with a child’s primary care provider to monitor the child’s developmental progress. If a delay is identified, the child may be referred to the Lewis County’s Early Intervention program for evaluation. This program helps parents of children under three years of age and at risk for developmental delay, to track the development of their child through education and information about child growth and development. Referrals to other programs are made as needed. Services are free of charge to the family.

| 2022 | Children Served |
|---|-----------------|
| Child Find | 30 |
| Early Intervention Program | 116 |
| Preschool Special Education Program | 229 |
| Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs | 61 |
| Physically Handicapped Children’s Program | 20 |

The Early Intervention Program: A statewide program that provides many different types of services to infants and toddlers (birth – 3) with delays and disabilities including evaluations and therapies. Anyone can make a referral. Services are free of charge to families. Early Help Makes a Difference! 2022 Data for Early Intervention shows an increase of 28% compared to pre-pandemic numbers and an increase of 48% compared to 2021.

The Preschool Special Education Program: Provides evaluations and services to children three-five years of age. Eligibility and services are arranged and determined through the child’s school district of residence and in coordination with Lewis County Public Health. This program provides therapeutic and educational services for eligible children including special education preschool, speech, occupational and physical therapies, teacher services, and transportation. Services are free of charge to families. Preschool Special Education numbers for 2022 have returned to pre-pandemic numbers.

The Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs Program & Physically Handicapped Children’s Program: Assists families of children birth to 21 years who have or are suspected of having a serious or chronic physical, developmental, or emotional condition. Information and referral services are provided to help the family access community resources as well as appropriate health care. Financial assistance may be available with certain medical needs related to disabilities that are not covered by your insurance. This program helps families of children under 21 years to access available community resources and services, assists families with health insurance needs, and

provides information and referrals regarding disability and health topics. Services are free of charge to the family.

The Physically Handicapped Children’s Program has been renamed Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs-Supportive Services. We decided to discontinue this program in 2022. We are continuing to support our current cases until they phase out of the program. We are no longer accepting new children into this program.

Free Clinical Services

Laboratory Testing: Public Health offers free onsite testing for Blood Lead and Blood Hemoglobin levels in children. A shortage of lead testing kits from late 2021 through mid-2022 resulted in a pause on testing for childhood lead. Testing resumed during the second half of 2022. HIV and Hepatitis C testing was discontinued in early 2022 due to lack of demand.

| Laboratory Testing | 2022 |
|--------------------|------|
| Blood Lead | 25 |
| Hemoglobin | 24 |

Free Vaccines: Public Health also offers free vaccines to uninsured or underinsured children and adults. These vaccines are offered through the New York State Department of Health’s Vaccines for Children and Vaccines for Adults programs. Public Health is able to offer these important vaccines to individuals who may not be able to receive otherwise.

| Free Vaccines | 2022 |
|---------------|------|
| Adults | 17 |
| Children | 78 |

Maternal Child Health Home Visiting: An additional free service that is offered to the community is our maternal child health home visiting program. Public Health Nurses go into the home of high risk pregnant women, postpartum women, and infants to provide nursing care and education. Our numbers continue to decline as a result of community partners that provide the support and education needed during and after pregnancy.

| Home Visits | 2022 |
|------------------|------|
| Pregnant Woman | 0 |
| Postpartum Woman | 0 |
| Infant | 1 |

Essential Service 8: Assure a Competent Public and Personal Health Care Workforce

Essential Service 8 involves educating and training personnel to meet the needs for public and personal health service; adoption of continuous quality improvement and life-long learning; active partnership with academic institutions. In order to provide the highest quality services, the agency strives to ensure that all our staff possesses the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently. Highlighted in this section is the Workforce Development Plan.

Workforce Development Plan

2022 was a year of learning for Public Health. The pandemic truly showed the need for a well trained knowledgeable public health workforce. With over 50% of staff being new to Public Health or new to their role, training was a high priority for the year. Staff received job specific training as well as overall Public Health training, all staff meetings were used to cover broad topics such as Article 6 state aid reimbursement and staff roles and

responsibilities. 5 staff members participated in a comprehensive public health training program offered by Cornell University. Multiple training manuals were created, we transitioned our annual mandatory trainings to an online format, and staff were trained in evidence based programs in order to be able to administer these programs to the community.

All staff meetings were not only used to provide updates and training, they were also used for team building exercises. All well functioning teams have an understanding of team members and their role within the organization, they feel empowered to communicate their ideas and needs, they have a clear vision of the mission and goals of the organization, and they are able to resolve conflict with little disruption to the flow of work. With so many new staff, team building was and will continue to be an important part of the workforce development here at Lewis County Public Health.

It was not just the new staff learning in 2022. The COVID-19 response changed dramatically in early 2022. Public Health staff stopped doing case investigations on all positive cases, we stopped isolating cases and stopped quarantining exposures. We entered a new phase of the pandemic response, one in which the public was responsible for protecting their own health and the health of their community. Staff flexibility and knowledge of the latest guidance from NYSDOH and CDC was necessary with each new phase of the pandemic response.

Just as staff had a good handle on the latest with the COVID-19 response, we were hit with 2 additional Public Health Emergencies. Luckily we were spared from having actual cases in the county, but staff needed to educate themselves on the Mpox and Polio emergencies and be prepared should there be a case in Lewis County.



Lewis County Public Health is participating in the NYSDOH Fellowship program. This program was created to strengthen the Public Health Workforce by training a large group of people across the state in the basics of Public Health in order to have a highly educated and well prepared workforce to build community resilience and prepare for future Public Health Emergencies. Lewis County was granted 3 fellowship positions and we were fortunate enough to get 3 strong staff members with bright futures in Public Health.

Essential Service 9: Evaluate Effectiveness, Accessibility & Quality of Personal and Population Based Health Services

Essential Service 9 calls for ongoing evaluation of health programs to assess program effectiveness and to provide information necessary for allocating resources and shaping programs. Highlighted in this section is the work done toward meeting Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) standards.

Public Health Accreditation

Lewis County began the journey toward Public Health Accreditation in 2016 with the development of the Quality Improvement Plan. In 2017, the agency's strategic plan was developed bringing the agency closer to the accreditation goal. In 2018, the agency worked to meet some of the goals included in the strategic plan, from this the Health Communication and Social Marketing Plan was developed. In 2019, the agency developed the Workforce Development Plan to ensure we have a competent workforce to meet the accreditation standards. The Community Health Assessment and the Community Health Improvement Plan was updated in 2022. We have all of the necessary plans required for accreditation. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 response consuming most of our energy and resources for the last 3 years, Public Health did not make any new progress toward accreditation in 2022. We will be updating our strategic plan in 2023 and will continue our journey toward accreditation.

Essential Service 10: Research for New Insights & Innovative Solutions to Health Problems

Essential Service 10 includes continuous linkage with appropriate institutions of higher learning and research. Highlighted in this section is our partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and the New York State Department of Health as well as our participation in the Performance Incentive Program.

Performance Incentive Program

Lewis County has participated in the NYS Department of Health's Performance Incentive Program since its inception in 2013. In 2022, the Department focused on collecting experiences of local health departments with the COVID-19 response. There were several extensive surveys required as well as an infographic summarizing the response here in Lewis County. Lewis County completed all performance activities and was awarded **\$13,708.00**.