

2024 Annual Report



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
LEWIS COUNTY

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Message from the Public Health Director



Ashley Waite

Public Health Director

I am honored to present Lewis County Public Health's 2024 Annual Report. This document reflects all the hard work done by Public Health staff, county leadership and community partners throughout 2024 to improve the health of our residents. Collaboration among our community partners including other government agencies, community based organizations, health care providers, and community members is crucial to our mission of promoting and protecting the health of our community.

Unfortunately our county was faced with multiple flooding events in the summer of 2024. Public Health assisted in the response by offering tetanus vaccines to those working in flood waters. The flood response was a prime example of community partners working together to protect the health and wellbeing of our residents.

While it had its challenges, 2024 was also an exciting year for Public Health. We were able to begin a renovation project to improve our office and bring all staff together in one space utilizing Public Health Infrastructure grant funding. This is a long awaited project as staff have been scattered in 3 different areas of the hospital for several years.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank our community partners, Health Services Advisory Committee Members and the staff here at Public Health for their tireless and dedicated efforts to improve the health of Lewis County residents. I hope you are inspired to engage with us beyond this report and learn more about how we promote and protect the health of our community through social media, our website, and various events we hold throughout the year.

Public Health Team



Ashley Waite, Public Health Director

Shereen Palmer, Medical Director
Sarah Zeger, Rabies Control Officer

Mackenzie Brayman Purcell,
Deputy Public Health Director



Stephanie Houser Fouse, Public Health Specialist
Allyson Petrus, Public Health Specialist
Jennifer Edick, Public Health Specialist



Marcia Ashline,
Supervising Public Health Nurse

Michelle Beyer-Zehr, Communicable Disease Nurse
Emily Ward, Immunization Nurse
Olivia Hamblin, Lead Poisoning Prevention Nurse
Maryann Vargulick, Per Diem Nurse
Mary Kimbrell, Per Diem Nurse
Dan Moyer, Animal Control Officer

Joseph Austin, Fiscal Manager



Bernadette DeSantis, Senior Account Clerk
Erica Brown, Senior Account Clerk
Temperance Lyndaker, Account Clerk
Charla Main, Administrative Assistant
Lisa Overton, Administrative Assistant



Rebecca Kelly, Children with
Special Needs Program Coordinator

Cathy Dosztan, Early Intervention Service Coordinator
April Seymour Ritz, Early Intervention Service Coordinator

Financial Highlights

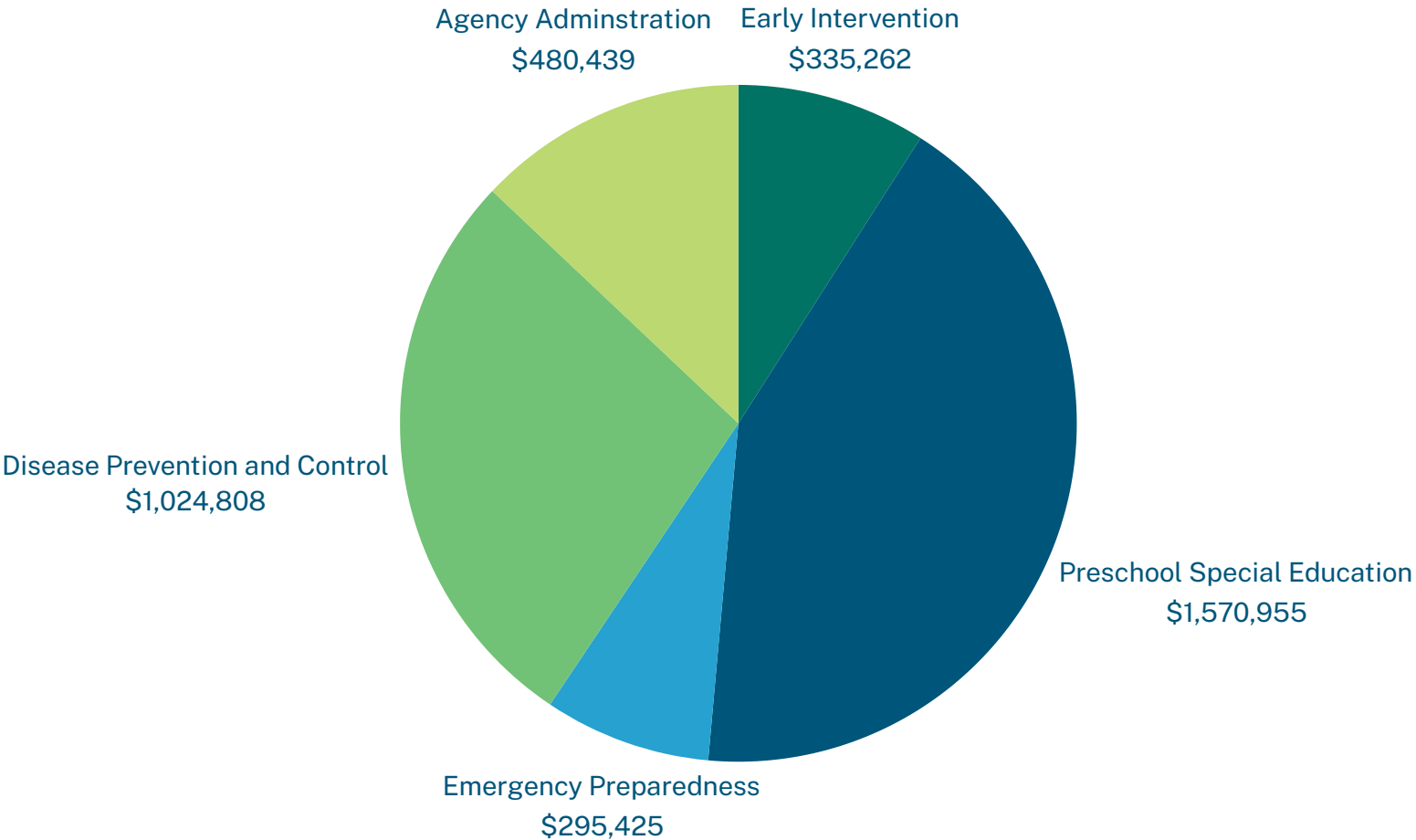
Revenue

\$2,140,894

Expenses

\$3,706,889

2024 Expense Breakdown



Public Health in Action

Communicable Disease Investigations



2022-579
2023-942
2024-1802

Immunizations Given



2022-2,403
2023-1,072
2024-925

Tuberculosis Skin Tests



2022-85
2023-151
2024-165

Rabies Exposure Investigations



2022-148
2023-160
2024-196

Pets Vaccinated



2022-770
2023-741
2024-581

Animal Control Officer Visits



2022-42
2023-63
2024-45

Evidence Based Program Participants



2022-18
2023-36
2024-28

Pounds Lost by DPP Participants



2022-149
2023-360
2024-120

Children with Elevated Blood Lead Levels



2022-19
2023-36
2024-40

Free Hemoglobin and Lead Tests



2022-59
2023-74
2024-60

Maternal Infant Home Visits



2022-7
2023-14
2024-43

Health Education Outreach Events



2022-12
2023-45
2024-51

Social Media Views



2022-157,118
2023-129,683
2024-216,016

Social Media Engagements



2022-28,093
2023-25,480
2024-48,613

Naturally Healthy App Downloads



2022-365
2023-435
2024-635

Public Health in Action



Public Health spent a portion of the year monitoring and preparing for H5N1. Lewis County was one of 11 counties in the state to receive free flu vaccine for farmworkers in response to the potential threat of H5N1. In collaboration with Cornell Cooperative Extension, New York Farm Bureau, and Lowville Producers Public Health held 5 clinics for the farm workers and their families. Staff even went to 2 farms and provided on the farm vaccination. Thankfully, NYS did not have a case of H5N1 in 2024. Pictures to the left show staff working at a variety of Flu and COVID clinics we had in the fall.

In July, Public Health assisted with the flash flooding response here in the county. Staff set up clinics for free tetanus vaccines to anyone working in the flood waters. An educational campaign was also conducted to ensure residents know the importance of staying up to date with tetanus especially during a flooding disaster.

Mosquito and tick activity was high in 2024. Public Health is notified of all mosquito and tick borne infections in the county. Public Health followed up on 154 tick borne illnesses in 2024. In September, the state declared an Imminent Threat to Public Health for Mosquito-Borne Diseases in response to the growing number of mosquito pools around the state with Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and a Human case of EEE in the state. Education is provided to the public throughout the year to protect themselves from tick and mosquito bites.

Public Health did a variety of health outreach events this year including Farmers Markets, The Fair, Senior Meal Sites, NRCIL Social Club, Farm Safety Day, Highway Safety Day, Mental Health Walk, Valley View Health and Safety Fair, National Night Out, OFA Senior Picnic, Fall Fest and others. Over 2,600 residents received education on a variety of important health topics. Ensuring our residents have the knowledge to do what is best for their health is one of the most important things we do here at Public Health. Pictures to the left show staff at a few of the outreach events we attended throughout 2024.

Public Health in Action



As a way to celebrate National Public Health Week, Public Health staff did a Park Clean Up Day. Staff went to the Lewis County Fairgrounds to clean up trash and sticks, rake, and work to beautify this space that serves as space for physical activity and socialization for our community.

As a way to celebrate World Mental Health Day, Public Health Staff wore green to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world. Mental health and physical health are deeply interconnected. At Public Health we not only prioritize physical health interventions but also work to improve the mental health of our residents.



Marcia Ashline and Anna Birchenough were able to attend the National Conference for Immunization and Coalitions and Partnerships. The two learned a lot about ways to improve immunization uptake and prevent the spread of disease as well as improve the work we do with our coalitions and partnerships.

Community Health Improvement



Getting Ahead

Two Getting Ahead cohorts graduated in 2024, with a total of 16 people completing the program and now living a more stable life. 75 professionals were trained in Bridges out of Poverty. This training provides professionals with a better understanding of poverty and how to help those living in poverty.

Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program

In partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension, the first round of Fruit and Vegetable prescriptions were distributed in 2024. This is a program that provides individuals with a chronic condition vouchers for free fruit and vegetables along with nutrition education. This education and access to healthy food helps residents live a healthier life.



Complete Streets

The first complete streets project in the county was wrapped up in 2024. Glenfield now has beautiful ADA compliant sidewalks, crosswalks, and street lights, making it more walkable, bikeable, and inviting for all residents.



Suicide Prevention



The Suicide Prevention Coalition had another year full of outreach and education in an effort to increase awareness and reduce stigma. The coalition focuses on training individuals in the community to be “gatekeepers.” This means individuals can recognize when someone is potentially struggling with suicidal thoughts and they can assist them in getting the help they need. Another focus area is reducing lethal means. Part of this work is distributing gun locks and medication lock boxes in order to increase access to these safety measures in the community.

The coalition also focuses on postvention. This is an organized response in the aftermath of a traumatic loss. The response facilitates healing and mitigates effects of the exposure to the traumatic loss. The Lewis County Traumatic Loss Team received the Healing Through Action Award from the Office of Mental Health and the Suicide Prevention Center of New York State for their innovation and exceptional work in postvention. Lewis County’s Traumatic Loss Team is a group of compassionate and dedicated volunteers and we would like to thank them for their service.



Traumatic Loss Team Calls

2022-8
2023-13
2024-7

Individuals Trained

2022-123
2023-133
2024-57

Gun Locks Distributed

2022-100
2023-300
2024-217

Children with Special Needs



The Children with Special Healthcare Needs program once again collaborated with the Lewis County Fair to offer the sensory room to fair goers. This year Eli's Pit Stop was a quiet space for overstimulated children and adults to take a break and reset from all the sights, sounds, and smells of the fair.

Preschool Special Education brought on 5 independent contractors in 2024 to address the growing wait list for services. Wait list numbers are down as a result.

The state launched a new documentation and billing system for the Early Intervention Program in October. There were many bumps in the road with the launch, but the state is slowly addressing all issues identified with the new system and we have fully transitioned to utilizing the new system. A huge thank you to the Early Intervention staff and our local providers for the extra work that went into this launch.

Preschool Special Education

2022-229
2023-266
2024-261

Early Intervention and Child Find

2022-146
2023-133
2024-158

Children with Special Needs

2022-61
2023-140
2024-71

Employee Spotlight

Maryann Vargulick

Public Health Nurse

Maryann retired in February after 35 years with the county. Maryann held many positions including a long time home health and hospice nurse. She was most recently in charge of our communicable disease and rabies program for the last 12 years. She cared for and helped many Lewis County residents in her time with the county. Maryann has transitioned to a per diem position here. We are thankful for her continued knowledge and commitment to protecting the health of our residents.



Stephanie Houser Fouse

Public Health Specialist

Stephanie Houser Fouse, Public Health Specialist, was nominated for the Public Health Equity Leadership Award for her work with Bridges out of Poverty in Lewis County. Stephanie, along with other community partners, are working to help residents of Lewis County build their own economic stability with the Getting Ahead program. Increased economic stability will lead to better health outcomes for our residents.

Anna Birchenough

Public Health Nurse

Anna Birchenough presented at the State Immunization Conference about improving access to vaccines in a rural county. Anna highlighted the Power to Protect campaign we did across the county to provide messaging about vaccines to all residents.



Engage with Us



SCAN

TO DOWNLOAD
OUR NATURALLY
HEALTHY APP



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