

2024

Annual Report



Striving Toward a **Healthier** Community.



A Message

from
the

HEALTH COMMISSIONER



Kirkland K. Norris, REHS, MPH
Health Commissioner

It is with great pleasure and honor that we present the 2024 Annual Report for the Stark County Combined General Health District. This report highlights the exceptional work and unwavering dedication of the hardworking professionals within the Stark County Health Department. Each member of our team has contributed to advancing the department's mission: to promote and improve the health and well-being of all Stark County residents.

Through their commitment, expertise, and collaborative efforts, we continue to make strides toward a healthier and stronger community.

The collaborative effort between the department, townships, cities, and villages has led to significant strides in improving the overall health and safety of our community. Through the joint initiatives, such as the coordinated efforts to abate unwanted public health nuisances, ensuring safe and healthy living environments, providing overdose prevention education, increasing access to crucial resources, and providing health screenings and clinics, we have witnessed measurable improvements in public health outcomes. The commitment from the townships, cities, and villages has been instrumental in these successes, ensuring that vital public health services reach those in need and fostering a stronger, more resilient community.

Additionally, the department successfully implemented its updated strategic plan, which outlines three key priorities: Intentionally Improve Public Image to Build Community Trust, Improve Workforce Retention, and Increase and Sustain Funding to Meet Community Needs. These priorities serve as the foundation for the department's long-term goals, ensuring that our services are not only effective but also responsive to the evolving needs of the community.

In alignment with these priorities, the department also introduced new Core Values, which include Sustainability, Transparency, Accessibility, Resiliency, and Knowledge. These values reflect our commitment to fostering an inclusive, equitable environment where trust is built, resources are effectively allocated, and the workforce is supported and empowered. Through these guiding principles, the department is better equipped to address current challenges while planning for a healthier, more sustainable future.

On behalf of the Board of Health, our dedicated staff, Medical Director, and myself, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the townships, cities, villages, and the entire Stark County community for your continued support. Our partnerships are vital in advancing the health and well-being of our community, and together, we are making meaningful progress. The commitment and collaboration we have shared are key in driving positive change, and we are proud to work alongside such a dedicated and engaged community. Our health department team remains steadfast in its mission to ensure a healthier and safer Stark County for all.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kirkland K. Norris
Health Commissioner



GETTING TO KNOW CHWs

Stark County is home to over 30 Community Health Workers (CHWs) actively serving the community. With support from a grant provided by the Ohio Department of Health, the Stark County Health Department partnered with Access Health Stark County and the Stark County Community Action HUB to create videos highlighting



the role of CHWs and their impact on the community. You can access these informational videos using the QR code.

Community Health Workers



Improving health outcomes and reducing health disparities among vulnerable populations.

STARK COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT RECEIVES REACCREDITATION STATUS FROM PHAB



The Stark County Health Department is pleased to announce it has achieved reaccreditation for the next five years through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) in March of 2024. While the health department submitted all required documentation in 2023, the site visit was scheduled for Tuesday, January 9th and Wednesday, January 10th of 2024.

The site visit provides PHAB with a comprehensive understanding of the health department. The two day virtual event included discussion on specific predetermined measures, a governing entity session, a health department staff session, an executive session and an exit conference. The findings from the site visit were documented in a report, which includes the overall impression of the health department along with greatest strengths and opportunities for improvement.

PHAB's overall impression of the department is that we clearly demonstrate capacity as a convener and leader in the community, which is evident in the way we work with partners and engage with the Board of Health. The greatest strengths include our strong relationships with partners, emergency response and staff engagement. Over the next five years the department will work to increase community member engagement, further expand non-emergency communication and enhance analytical processes when making decisions and drawing conclusions from data.

Moving forward the Stark County Health Department will submit annual reports to PHAB ensuring the department remains in conformity with the standards and measures and continues to advance quality and performance.

SERVICE DIRECTORS



Kay Conley, MPA, CHES
Administration
& Support Services Director



Paul DePasquale, REHS, MPA
Environmental Health
Services Director



Amanda Uhler, MPH, RN
Nursing Services
Director



Maureen Ahmann, DO
Medical
Director

MISSION: "To promote and improve the health of all Stark County residents."

VISION STATEMENT: "Striving toward a healthier community with public health excellence."

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INFECTION

PREVENTION EXPANDED with Project First Line

NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

The Stark County Health Department's (SCHD) communicable disease team has applied for

and been awarded a National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) grant the past several years to expand infection prevention and control (IPC) work within the community, with a focus on long term care facilities (LTCFs).

NACCHO funding through the previous projects allowed the SCHD to build the capacity for communication between our department and the LTCF's. SCHD has been able to establish relationships with the LTCFs to create a process for outbreak and disease response reporting and updates. This process includes the ability for facilities to report disease results to SCHD and for SCHD to be able to assist facilities with IPC resources and information.

SCHD continues to work with the Ohio Department of Health Healthcare Associated Infection and Antimicrobial Resistance (ODH HAI/AR) program and joined in the Northeast Ohio Multi-Drug Resistant Organism (MDRO) work group. SCHD continues with these relationships to review activity being seen in the region, continues with open communication, coordination of IPC related trainings and for guidance on conducting Infection Control and Assessment Response (ICAR) activities.

SCHD was trained by an Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) consultant on conducting ICARS. During these ICARS, SCHD has been able to assess and observe IPC activity with the facilities and offer resources and education. This year, SCHD has focused education sessions on handwashing and isolation protocols.

SCHD is continuing LTCF collaboration calls to discuss local activity, updates, statistics, education and resources. Within the current NACCHO grant, SCHD is tasked with implementing Project First Line (PFL) materials created by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), within LTCF's to help educate staff and improve IPC efforts. SCHD will review these materials on the LTCF collaboration calls as well as develop a county-wide newsletter to go out to the LTCFs. SCHD will also be visiting some of the LTCFs in person to roll out PFL activities and education.

Harm Reduction Efforts Continue to Expand in 2024

The Stark County Health Department has been increasing its harm reduction initiatives in 2024, focusing on combating opioid overdoses and supporting community health. Key components of these efforts include the distribution of Project DAWN kits, educational outreach via the HealthMobile, and the placement of naloxoboxes throughout the community.

PROJECT DAWN

Project DAWN (Deaths Avoided With Naloxone), Ohio's statewide naloxone distribution program, plays a critical role in harm reduction. In 2024, the Stark County Health Department:

- Trained over 850 individuals on naloxone administration.
- Distributed over 1,300 naloxone kits directly to the community.
- Supplied over 400 kits to first responders.
- Provided 325 naloxone kits for naloxoboxes.

THE HEALTHMOBILE

The HealthMobile has participated in 67 community events, a notable increase from 40 events in 2023. During these events, over 1,300 naloxone kits and more than 1,000 COVID-19 Care Kits were distributed. Attendees received vital education on overdose prevention, naloxone usage, and safe medication storage. The HealthMobile remains committed to expanding its outreach and is actively seeking additional partners to enhance services in 2025.

NALOXBOXES

Naloxoboxes, strategically placed throughout the community, ensure emergency access to naloxone for those in need. In 2024, the department added 32 naloxoboxes across its jurisdiction, bringing the total to 67. Additionally, 25 AED (Automated External Defibrillator) boxes were equipped with Project DAWN kits to further expand access.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Stark County Health Department remains dedicated to advancing harm reduction in 2025 by broadening partnerships and increasing the availability of life-saving resources. These efforts are vital in addressing the ongoing opioid crisis and fostering a healthier, safer community. The department was recently awarded a grant from the OneOhio Recovery Foundation to continue these efforts into 2025. This includes – increasing the number served on the HealthMobile, increasing the number of project dawn kits distributed to the community, and increasing the availability of naloxone through additional naloxoboxes throughout our health jurisdiction.

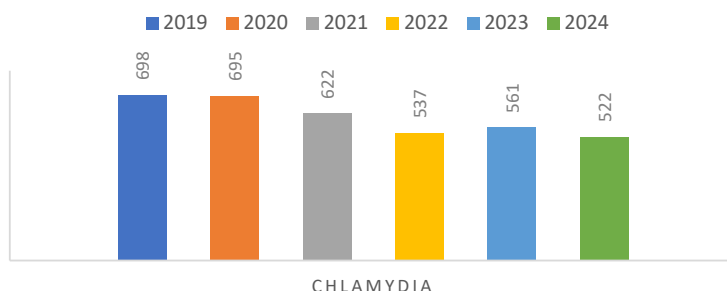


STI Rates Begin to Stabilize

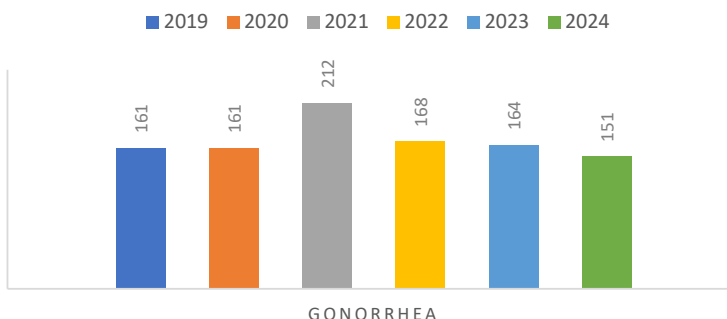
During the pandemic, disruptions to care existed on all levels. Testing and treatment services for sexually transmitted infections (STI) suffered greatly, continuing to fuel the STI epidemic that had already started (STI Surveillance data, CDC, 2024). Initially, STI rates dropped when stay-at-home orders were active, but then began to climb. In 2021, Stark County Health Department jurisdiction saw a sharp increase in both gonorrhea and syphilis cases from 2020. When this occurred, we took a reactive approach to increase STI awareness and offer people expanded access to care. We expanded our reproductive health and wellness services to offer walk-in STI testing during all normal office hours and partnered with the Ohio Department of Health to help connect those diagnosed or exposed to STI's to treatment if needed.

Currently, the Ohio Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data sources indicates that STI rates may be stabilizing. Stark County Health Department jurisdiction is beginning to see the same trend, and our efforts to improve rates continue. Recently, we partnered with Canton City Public Health to create an STI awareness campaign focusing on the adolescent and young adult population. Approximately half (48.2%) of all nationally reported cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis in 2023 was in those aged 15-24 years (STI Surveillance Data, CDC, 2024). This digital campaign provides awareness information and where to find care, with positive messaging on improving health and addressing relevant issues surrounding seeking care. The majority of messages will be found on platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, and other platforms commonly used by this demographic.

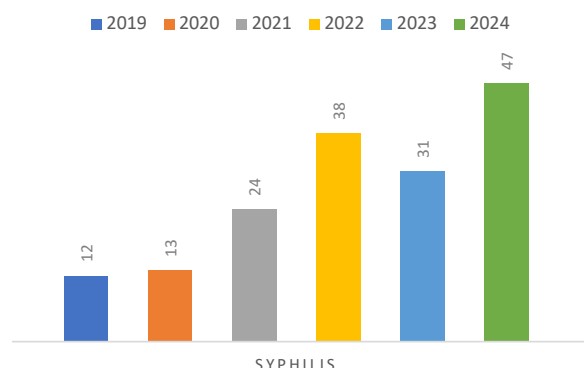
CHLAMYDIA CASE COUNTS SCHD JURISDICTION



GONORRHEA CASE COUNTS SCHD JURISDICTION



SYPHILIS CASE COUNTS SCHD JURISDICTION



Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sexually Transmitted Infections Surveillance 2023. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2024/p1112-sti-slowng.html>

Ohio Department of Health. Sexually Transmitted Disease Data and Statistics, 2023. <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/std-surveillance/data-and-statistics/sexually-transmitted-diseases-data-and-statistics>; 2024.

STARK COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT 2024 ADMIN & SUPPORT AT-A-GLANCE

- **1,300:** Total Covid care kits distributed
- **140:** Car seats distributed
- **1,340:** Total Project Dawn Kits distributed

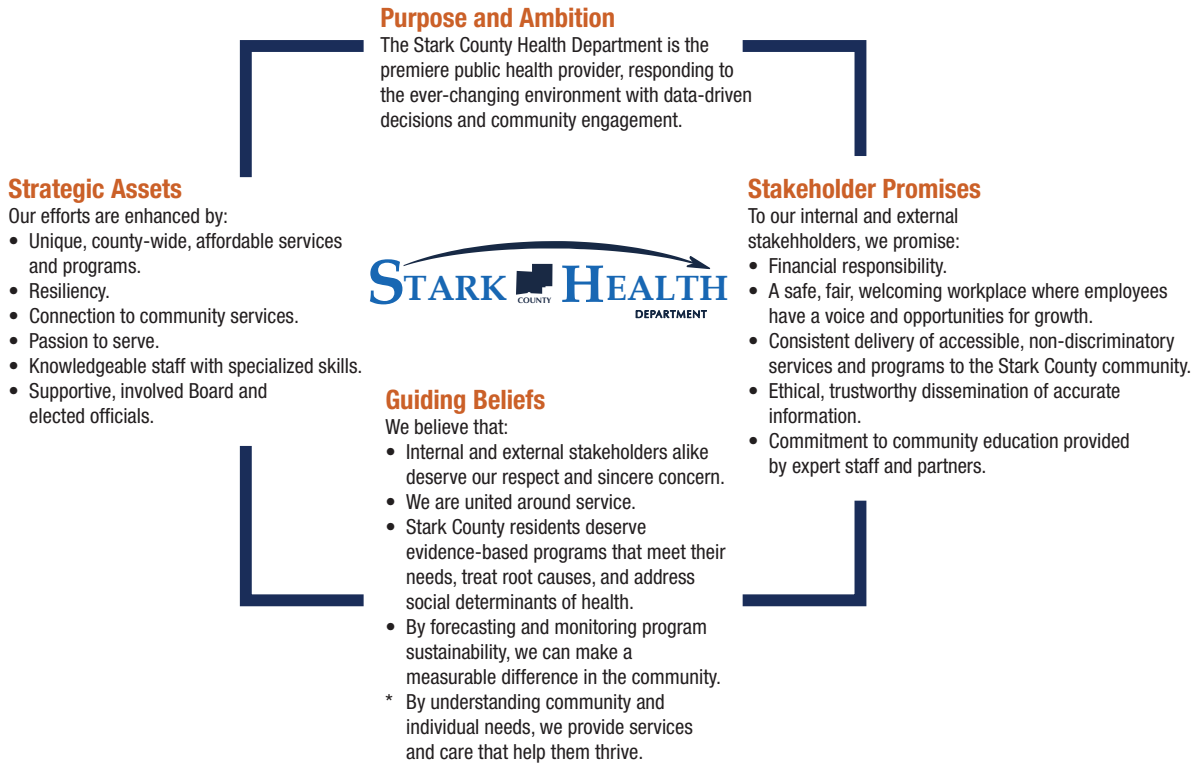
- **9,250:** Total number of death certificates issued
- **3,297:** Total number of birth certificates issued

STARK COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

2024 - 2028 Strategic Plan Update

The first year of our five-year Strategic Plan Cycle has come to a close. The team remains committed to the four elements of the Strategic Frame and the three top priority areas.

Stark County Health Department Strategic Frame 2024-2028



Priority Areas Update

Increased Funding

- Developed a tool to track programmatic funding
- Researched methods for financial transparency
- Monitored public health trends and community needs
- Secured 4 new funding opportunities (STI Education, 2 for overdose prevention and 1 for communicable disease)
- Initiated the 2023 cost benefit process
- Secured public health intern to assist with activities

Employee Satisfaction

- Included new employees in Student Academic Orientation
- Clarified education stipend allowances
- Added additional TVs for internal communication
- Implemented platform for employee feedback and recognition
- Began implementation of mentorship program
- Streamlined new employee training requirement communication
- Communicated DEI Workforce plan to all staff

Public Image

- Implemented staff communication survey
- Surveyed jurisdictional partners
- Implemented texting appointment reminders
- Signed MOU with Akron Canton Regional Food Bank for community education for outreach/resource partnership
- Began using DocuSign for contract process
- Expanded online payment and permit request portal
- Created social media toolkit for political subdivision use



2024 PROPERTY TRANSFER SUMMARY

2024 PROPERTY TRANSFER INSPECTION BREAKDOWN

A total of 801 property transfer septic system inspections were conducted in 2024, lower than 2020, 2021 and 2022, but up 10 from 2023. The 2024 property transfer program statistics are listed below, sorted by township. Overall, 16% of the systems inspected were considered failing. This number stays within a few percentage points each year. "Failing" means that the system is causing a public health nuisance, which is defined in Ohio Revised Code 3718.011. The statewide fail-ure rate is estimated to be around 30%. An additional 11% of inspections found improperly discharging gray water. Each inspection is submitted to the Health Department for review; when the review is completed, additional information and education is provided to the buyer and seller on how to properly maintain the system to maximize its life span. All public health nuisances are required to be corrected, whether the system is failing, gray water is being improperly discharged, or both.

Township	Total Inspections	Septic Failure		Gray Water	
BETHLEHEM	23	1	4%	1	4%
CANTON	43	11	26%	4	9%
JACKSON	72	6	8%	4	6%
LAKE	148	14	9%	6	4%
LAWRENCE	65	12	18%	8	12%
LEXINGTON	31	10	32%	6	19%
MARLBORO	34	5	15%	5	15%
NIMISHILLEN	62	10	16%	6	10%
OSNABURG	33	9	27%	5	15%
PARIS	24	6	25%	4	17%
PERRY	30	7	23%	4	13%
PIKE	13	1	8%	2	15%
PLAIN	94	15	16%	14	15%
SANDY	17	4	24%	3	18%
SUGARCREEK	26	4	15%	3	12%
TUSCARAWAS	38	7	18%	6	16%
WASHINGTON	48	10	21%	8	17%
Totals	801	132	16%	89	11%

2014 THROUGH 2024 PROPERTY TRANSFER INSPECTIONS COMPLETED

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
809	857	917	967	945	922	1013	970	842	791	801

AT-A-GLANCE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

- 7,945: Total Environmental Health Inspections
- 2,652: Total Food Safety Inspections
- 1,440: Total out-of-office Environmental Health Consultations
- 38: Total Environmental Health Inspections and out-of-office consultations per business day

2024 LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH OF STARK COUNTY RESIDENTS

CAUSE	COUNT	CAUSE	COUNT
Heart Disease.....	1,010	Diabetes Mellitus.....	123
Cancer.....	919	Accidental Drug.....	97
Alzheimer's Disease/Dementia.....	270	Diseases of the Liver.....	79
Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases.....	234	Pneumonia/Pneumonitis.....	76
Cerebrovascular Disease.....	209	Sepsis.....	66
Accidental.....	148	Suicide.....	65
Kidney Disease.....	148	*Other.....	1,035
		TOTAL.....	4,479

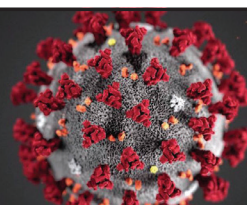
**This total represents any category not listed above and cause of death not provided by ODH at the time this report was completed.*

Data in this table is preliminary and includes residents of Stark County, regardless of which jurisdiction the person lived in or where death occurred. Data from 2024 should not be compared to previous years due to a change in the data collection methodology. The 2024 data includes all Stark County residents, encompassing the jurisdictions of Alliance, Canton and Massillon Cities as well as the Stark County jurisdiction. In contrast, data from previous years only represented residents of the Stark County Health Department jurisdiction. As a result of the change, the overall count of deaths in 2024 is higher and comparisons to previous years may lead to misinterpretations of the data. Data for the report was accessed 1/17/2025 through the Ohio Department of Health's Mortality Protected Dataset Reports** on the DataOhio Portal. The report utilizes the CDC's list of 113 Selected Causes of Death to create counts based on the underlying cause of death assigned on a death certificate. Selected report output categories and their respective counts are combined to create the generalized cause list above. The data above is intended to demonstrate which causes of death are the most common among Stark County residents.

***The Ohio Department of Health specifically disclaims responsibility for any analysis, interpretations, or conclusions.*

REPORTABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASE SUMMARY

Stark County Health Department Jurisdiction



DISEASE	2024	2023	DISEASE	2024	2023
Amebiasis	0	0	Listeriosis	2	1
Anaplasmosis	2	1	Lyme Disease	161	184
Babesiosis	2	0	Malaria	0	0
Brucellosis	0	0	Measles	0	0
C. Auris + Colonization Screening	2	0	Meningitis – Aseptic/Viral	10	11
Campylobacteriosis	79	73	Meningitis – Bacterial (Not N. Meningiditis)	0	1
Chlamydia	522	561	Meningococcal Disease-Meningiditis	0	0
Coccidioidomycosis	2	0	MIS-C associated with COVID-19	0	0
COVID-19	3,450	5,949	Mpox	1	0
CPO + Colonization Screening	34	37	Mumps	1	0
Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease	1	2	Pertussis	18	13
Cryptosporidiosis	13	12	Psittacosis	0	0
Cyclosporiasis	2	1	Q Fever	0	0
E. Coli, Shiga Toxin-producing	17	17	Salmonellosis	53	33
Ehrlichiosis	2	2	Shigellosis	5	6
Giardiasis	21	11	Spotted Fever Rickettsiosis (including RMSF)	0	0
Gonorrhea	151	164	Streptococcal – Group A Invasive	19	30
Haemophilus Influenza	7	8	Streptococcal-Group B Newborn	1	1
Hepatitis A	3	4	Streptococcal Toxic Shock Syndrome (STSS)	0	0
Hepatitis B – Acute	0	1	Streptococcal-Invasive Pneumoniae	31	24
Hepatitis B – Chronic	24	23	Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS)	0	1
Hepatitis B – Perinatal infection	3	0	Tuberculosis	1	1
Hepatitis C – Acute	3	3	Typhoid Fever	0	0
Hepatitis C – Chronic	39	50	Varicella	8	6
Hepatitis C – Perinatal	1	1	Vibriosis	0	2
Hepatitis E	0	1	West Nile Virus	1	2
Influenza-associated Hospitalization	163	106	Yersiniosis	12	6
LaCrosse Virus Disease	0	2	Zika Virus Disease	0	0
Legionellosis	26	13	TOTAL	4,893	7,364

*This report includes confirmed, probable, and suspect cases reported 01/01/2023 – 12/31/2024

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2024 COMMUNICABLE DISEASE HIGHLIGHTS

Microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, parasites, or fungi can cause communicable diseases (also known as infectious diseases). A person can contract a communicable disease from an infected person, an infected animal, and/or another infected source such as water or food. The Stark County Health Department (SCHD) communicable disease staff keeps track of the number of persons infected by different communicable diseases throughout the year. They also conduct follow-up investigations on all reported diseases by collecting demographic and clinical information, as well as exposures to potential sources of disease. By collecting this data, we are able to determine potential sources of disease, quickly implement control measures, detect trends and outbreaks, and create targeted policies and programs to protect or improve the health of the community.

This annual summary represents the 2024 communicable disease data required by Ohio law reported to state and local health departments. Only those communicable diseases determined to be of public health importance are reportable, therefore, this summary does not reflect all communicable diseases in our community. Additionally, the summary represents only cases of disease for residents of Stark County Health Department jurisdiction, therefore, does not include disease data for the cities of Alliance, Canton, or Massillon.

1) In 2024, SCHD reported and/or investigated several communicable disease outbreaks. Among these were:

- 1 outbreak of RSV
(associated with a long-term care facility)
- 1 outbreak of conjunctivitis
(associated with a school)
- 2 outbreaks of *Mycoplasma Pneumoniae*
(associated with schools)
- 3 outbreaks of Influenza
(associated with long-term care facilities and a school)
- 3 outbreaks of Fifth Disease/Parvovirus B19
(associated with schools)
- 4 outbreaks of Norovirus
(associated with long-term care facilities and a school)
- 35 outbreaks of COVID-19
 - ✓ 34 outbreaks associated with long-term care (skilled nursing), assisted living, or senior living facilities
 - ✓ 1 outbreak associated with a daycare

Each of these outbreaks were managed utilizing the guidelines and regulations developed by the Ohio Department of Health, and in conjunction with other health departments when necessary.



2) During 2024, several reportable infectious diseases increased in the number of cases reported in the Stark County jurisdiction compared to that of 2023. A few of these diseases are as follows:

■ Coccidioidomycosis

Also known as Valley Fever, this is a lung infection caused by breathing in spores of the *Coccidioides* fungus. In 2024, there were 2 cases compared to no cases reported in 2023. This is unique since the *Coccidioides* fungus is typically only found in the southwestern United States including, but not limited to, California, Nevada, Arizona. Ohio is not considered to be in the potential range of the *Coccidioides* habitat, which makes cases among Ohio residents uncommon. Most individuals will experience symptoms mimicking many other respiratory illnesses including fatigue, cough, fever, and shortness of breath, and these symptoms will resolve on their own in a few months for most people. Some people who are immunocompromised may experience more severe illness requiring treatment with antifungals, and a very small percent of those infected will develop disseminated infection. Seeing cases in Ohio is not uncommon, and are presumed to be associated with travel to regions where cases may be exposed to fungus-containing dust or soil.

■ Giardiasis

Giardiasis is the illness caused by the parasite *Giardia duodenalis*, and with 21 cases in 2024, there was increased activity compared to the 11 cases in 2023. Giardiasis symptoms can include diarrhea, stomach pain, fatigue, nausea, and others. *Giardia* lives in the body of affected people and animals and is shed in stool and can even live for weeks to months in the

2024 COMMUNICABLE DISEASE HIGHLIGHTS

environment such as soil and water. Accidentally swallowing either untreated drinking water or water from other sources such as lakes, pools, and splash pads is a common source of exposure to *Giardia* along with contact with infected animals or their stool. Some prevention strategies are hand hygiene, avoiding swallowing non-potable water, safe food handling, and avoiding contact with stool of ill animals and people.

■ Legionellosis

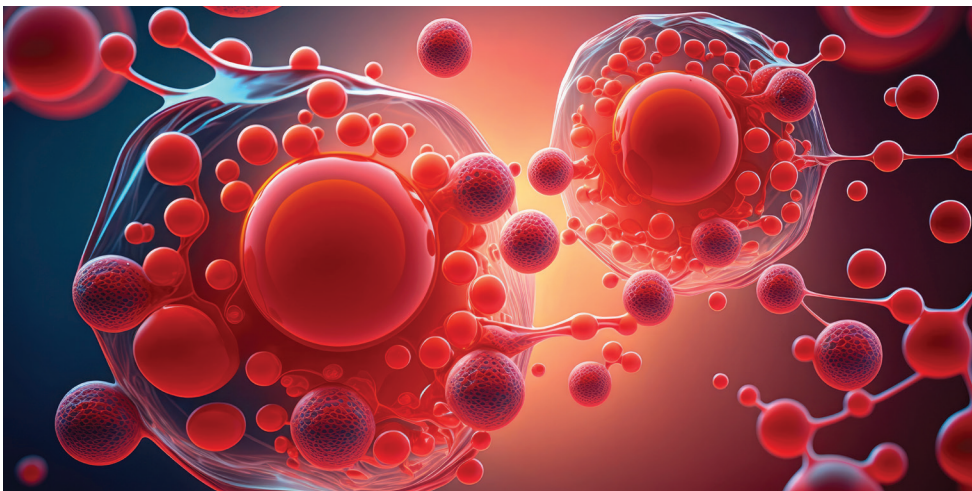
The *Legionella* bacteria is the causative agent of legionellosis which most commonly presents in the form of Legionnaires' Disease, a pneumonia illness, and Pontiac Fever, a mild respiratory disease. The number of cases in 2024 doubled from 2023, with 26 and 13 cases, respectively. It is rare for cases of Pontiac Fever to be identified, as it lasts only a few days and resolves without medication, whereas Legionnaires' Disease is a severe pneumonia that requires antibiotic therapy to resolve. *Legionella* is found in water and soil, and infects people when it is aerosolized in water droplets and inhaled. Sources of exposure can include healthcare facilities, homes, occupational exposures, and others. Large, complex buildings are at risk of *Legionella* in not only water systems, but also heating/cooling systems when cooling towers are used to cool large buildings including industrial spaces, places of worships, and healthcare facilities. Prevention is water-focused as the disease is not spread person-to-person and strategies include adequate water management plans at healthcare facilities, proper maintenance plans, and ensuring water is not stagnant in pipes to prevent *Legionella* growth and biofilm formation. These bacteria continue to be a challenge, as identifying exposures among cases can be difficult and again, prevention relies on water management practices, many of which are the responsibility of healthcare facilities or other property owners, not the responsibility of the cases themselves.

3) Influenza season stretches from October of one year until May of the next. Thus far in the 2024-2025 influenza season there have been 113 cases of hospitalized influenza for Stark County health jurisdiction. At this time in the 2023-2024 season there were 121 cases reported. The predominant strain for this season is influenza A, which is common as influenza A normally predominates in the beginning half of the season. The influenza vaccine remains the primary and most effective form of protection against the influenza viruses circulating this season. Common symptoms of the flu include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headaches, chills, and fatigue. Complications may include conditions such as bronchitis or pneumonia and may make chronic health problems, such as asthma, worse. Staying home while sick and practicing proper hand hygiene are the best ways to stay healthy this season.



The Communicable Disease Unit continues to provide information and resources to schools, healthcare facilities, and the community regarding infection prevention and control. Common topics that foster significant public interest include influenza, scabies, head lice, Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), tuberculosis, enteric (intestinal) illnesses, sexually transmitted diseases, and COVID-19.

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2024 COMMUNICABLE DISEASE HIGHLIGHTS

NEW INITIATIVES FOR THE COMMUNICABLE DISEASE TEAM:

The Communicable Disease (CD) team had many training and educational opportunities in 2024 spanning many different topic areas. Each one was unique but relevant to the work done by the members of the communicable disease team and allowed currently existing programs, knowledge, and initiatives to be built upon.

Below is a list of a select few of the training and educational opportunities attended by members of the Communicable Disease team in 2024.

- The Ohio Department of Health held their World Tuberculosis Day conference in person and all members were able to attend and hear from physicians, laboratory employees, nurses, and more about a number of topics in the world of Tuberculosis.
- Two members attended the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Summit held by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) in Chicago and were able to hear from infection preventionists, other local health departments, and more on topics related to IPC. The CD team was able to take those learning outcomes and use them in local IPC work and also share with other LHDs and staff that were not able to attend the summit.
- Two members attended the annual Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) conference where topics spanned from One Health prevention and control strategies for multi-drug resistant organisms, to testing chick paper for enteric pathogens, and infectious disease modeling and visualizations.
- The epidemiologist attended a Disaster Readiness Training hosted by ODH and the CDC. The conference focused on disaster epidemiology activities including identifying and responding to

toxicological outbreaks, natural disaster response, and radiation emergencies. Speakers were those with field experience and sessions had both educational components and activities to reinforce learning outcomes.

- The CD team had the opportunity to study for, and take, the Associate – Infection Prevention and Control Exam to earn their entry-level certification in the area of IPC. These activities were supported by the NACCHO Build HAIAR grant and included studying materials, consultations/preparation sessions with infection preventionists working with the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC), and finally taking the certification exam itself.
- All members of the CD team attended a training hosted by ODH on how to properly sample for ticks in the environment. The sampling, also known as tick dragging, is done to estimate population density of ticks in the sampled areas, and can identify species, sex, life stage, and if certain requirements are met, ticks can be tested for pathogens such as Lyme disease. The training took place in Mohican State Park and consisted of explanations, a demonstration, and an opportunity to practice in the park. The CD team now has a better understanding of the entire tick drag process and all of the steps to drag and submit ticks to ODH. These new skills will be used to start sampling in various locations around the jurisdiction and further characterize the distribution of ticks and potential risks to those living in Stark.



Striving Toward a **Healthier** Community.

ADDRESSING **Dangerous Structures** in Stark County

Stark County is witnessing an increase in dangerous structures, commonly known as blighted homes. A definition of a Dangerous Structure being: a building, house or other structure so out of repair and dilapidated by way of want of repair, defective drainage, plumbing, lighting, ventilation or construction, as to be declared insecure, unsafe or structurally defective. When Political Subdivisions within the Stark County Health District raise concerns about dangerous structures, we often have to refer them to their legal counsel due to the Health District's limited authority. To help clarify this issue, we will explain what constitutes a public health nuisance below.

WHAT'S A PUBLIC HEALTH NUISANCE?

A **Public Health** nuisance is any condition that is likely to cause the spread of disease or is further defined by Ohio codes. However, the Stark County Health Department (SCHD) does not handle complaints related to housing aesthetics, conditions inside a private home, motor vehicles, agricultural pollution, improper pesticide use, drainage, or bedbugs. Furthermore, the SCHD does not handle issues with manufactured home parks or hotels/motels, which are regulated by other state agencies. Each public health nuisance is managed differently, depending on the relevant laws and codes.

*The SCHD has the authority in the listed programs below to address various **public health** nuisances:*

- General Public Health Nuisances (Revised Code Section 3707.01)
- Rabies Prevention and Unvaccinated Pets
- Solid Waste Disposal
- Construction and Demolition Debris Disposal
- Sewage Disposal
- Food Safety Complaints

The goal of the Public Health Nuisance program is to hold property owners accountable for resolving public health nuisances, which may include:

- Open dumping of trash & garbage
- Raw sewage spills & sewage system malfunctions
- Rodent & insect infestations
- Mosquito breeding
- Mold (in rental properties)
- Improper storage of scrap tires

The main point is not all nuisances are considered **public health nuisances**. The key distinction lies in whether the condition directly causes the spread of disease.



The SCHD does not have the authority to address Dangerous Structures (blighted Homes/structures) throughout the Stark County Health District. Political Subdivisions, please consult your legal counsel with questions regarding dangerous structures in your jurisdiction.

2024 NURSING AT-A-GLANCE

- | | |
|---|---|
| ■ 1,140: Total Number of Immunizations Administered | ■ 4,914: Total Number of Infectious Diseases Reported |
| ■ 581: Cribs Distributed | ■ 877: Reproductive Health and Wellness Visits |
| ■ 879: Nursing Services Home Visits Completed (CMH/Public Health Nurse, CHW) | ■ 8,591: Number of Clients/Families Who Visited Nursing Services |
| ■ 98: Baby and Me Tobacco-Free Sessions Completed | ■ 18: Number of High Lead Level Cases Followed |
| ■ 1,900: Average Number of Active WIC Clients Each Month | ■ 116: Direct Observation Therapy Visits (TB Control) |
| | ■ 210: Number of TB Tests Completed |

CHILD INJURY PREVENTION 2024: A YEAR IN REVIEW

INJURY PREVENTION GRANT

In 2024, the Injury Prevention Grant through the Ohio Department of Health focused on three key PSEC (Policy, System, Environmental Change) strategies: Car Seat Basics, the Booster Seat Evaluation Campaign, and Ruling Our Experiences (ROX).

Car Seat Basics is an interactive virtual training program that guides participants through each stage of child passenger safety, from infant seats to seat belts. This year, the Stark County Health Department (SCHD) partnered with Stark County Job and Family Services (JFS) to ensure their employees who work with or transport children completed the training. In total, 12 employees participated, and starting in 2025, all new hires at Stark County JFS will be required to complete this training as part of a systemic change.

For the **Booster Seat Evaluation Campaign**, staff collaborated with four key partners: East Canton Elementary, North Canton YMCA Child Development Center, Stuckey Family Interfaith Child Development Center, and the Boys & Girls Club of Massillon. The Injury Prevention Coordinator and Coalition volunteers conducted booster seat observations during drop-off and pick-up times to evaluate whether booster seat-aged children were properly restrained. Educational materials were distributed to families, followed by car seat checkup events. These efforts resulted in the inspection of 20 car seats. Additional activities, including a follow-up observational survey, are planned for 2025.

Ruling Our Experiences (ROX) is an evidence-based program designed to address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). It was implemented with 5th and 6th grade girls at Osnaburg Local Schools (East Canton Elementary) and Plain Local Schools (Glenwood Intermediate). The program helps participants build confidence, develop strong relationships, navigate social media challenges, and make informed decisions. In 2024, 24 girls completed the program, which will continue in 2025 with a new group of students.

SAFE KIDS STARK COUNTY

SAFE KIDS STARK COUNTY COALITION

In 2024, Safe Kids Stark County received two grants from Safe Kids Worldwide and State Farm.

The first grant, the **Good Neighbor Car Seat Program**, funded three car seat events per month, which included educational tables at community events, car seat checkups, and car seat educational presentations. These activities targeted communities with the highest Social Vulnerability

Index (SVI) scores, as identified on the Ohio Health Improvement Zone map, focusing on Massillon, Alliance, and Canton City. The Coalition hosted 28 car seat checks and presentations, participated in 8 community events, educated over 900 caregivers, distributed 65 car seats, and inspected more than 150 car and booster seats.

The second grant, the **State Farm Bike Helmet Grant**, supported the distribution of 150 bike helmets in collaboration with Stark County schools, the Massillon City Health Department, the Paul & Carol David YMCA in Jackson Township, and the Canton Township Fire Department.

Coalition members also volunteered at Safety City/Safety Village events across six local school districts: Canton Local, Jackson Local, Perry Local, Louisville City, Osnaburg Local, and Plain Local. Nearly 350 children received education on bike helmet safety, pedestrian safety, and playground safety.

In May, Safe Kids Stark County partnered with the Boys & Girls Club of Massillon to host **Safe Kids Day**. With the support of 25 community partners, over 250 children and caregivers participated in educational activities at this event. Safe Kids Day will return to the same location in 2025.

Looking Ahead

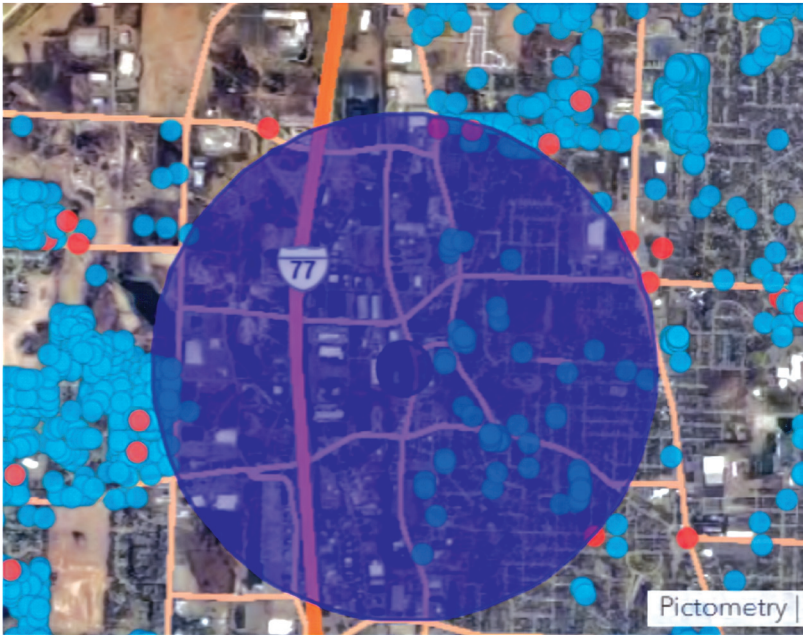
The efforts in 2024 laid a strong foundation for continued injury prevention work in Stark County.

By implementing innovative programs and engaging community partners, these initiatives aim to create safer environments and promote long-lasting positive change. The Injury Prevention Grant and Safe Kids Stark County will continue to build on these successes in 2025, further advancing child safety across the region.

Safe Kids Stark County COALITION

Established in 1992, Safe Kids Stark County is led and coordinated by the Stark County Health Department. The Coalition brings together injury prevention professionals and child safety advocates from various sectors across the county. As a member of Safe Kids Worldwide - a nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing unintentional injuries in children ages 0-14 and promoting equitable, sustainable injury prevention systems - Safe Kids Stark County works to make a difference locally. For more information about our efforts, contact Logan Valentine at valentinel@starkhealth.org.

GIS & WATER WELLS WITHIN STARK COUNTY



The Stark County Health Department has been working with the Stark County Auditor's GIS Department to develop an interactive mapping program depicting private water wells in the county. The project commenced by accumulating a list of properties that have a municipal water connection. These locations were paired with a database of all addresses located within Stark County. Property addresses that did not have an apparent water connection were assumed to have a private water well. This data indicates that there are over 39,500 private wells in Stark County.

Since the Stark County Health Department has authority of private water wells, this data is valuable for numerous applications. In a responsive state,

addresses can be used to determine impact on groundwater. For example, if there is a chemical spill, nearby wells can be identified, and the respective property owner's address can be downloaded within minutes.

The aerial photo above is a screenshot of a fictional scenario showing a made-up spill at the Stark County Health Department. The map depicts the number of water wells within a 1 mile radius. The small light blue or red dots depict a property that has a water well. Red dots are well locations that have been verified, and can be clicked-on to obtain information regarding the well log. Blue dots are locations with a high probability of having a water well. The large blue shaded circle is the 1 mile radius and there are 99 private water wells identified within the radius. These locations are directly linked to the Stark County Auditor's website, so that the owners' information is instantly available.

In a proactive manner, we can identify potential sources of contamination, and educate the property owner on preventing potential impacts to their wells. An example of this may be identifying areas that are prone to flooding, and alerting homeowners of precautions and how they can protect their wells.

In the aerial photo on the right, it shows the properties that have water wells, and are also located within a designated floodplain. Again, the blue and red dots represent properties with a water well. The light blue and orange areas indicate where there is a great chance for flooding.



[illegible]

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Tuscarawas
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