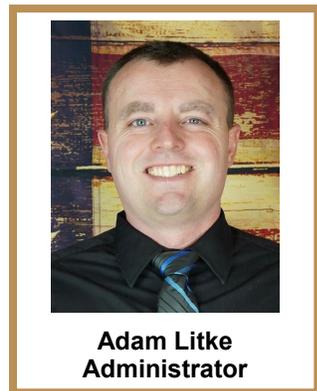


Geauga Public Health 2023 Annual Report

Dear Geauga County Residents,

The annual report is meant to provide you with important updates on Geauga Public Health (GPH) and the ongoing efforts to maintain high-quality services while ensuring responsible use of your tax dollars. A few areas that we would like to highlight are included below.



House Bill 110 Program

During 2023, it was determined by GPH Administrator Adam Litke and GPH Environmental Health Director Daniel Lark that the House Bill 110 (HB110) program was not properly operated in recent years. GPH started an internal review of the HB110 program and, after noting inconsistencies, hired an outside law firm to perform an audit. It was determined that, for approximately 10 years, GPH collected revenue that was associated with the HB110 program but GPH did not provide the services that were paid for.

The GPH Board of Health made the unanimous decision to repay the businesses, with interest, that were affected by the HB110 program. GPH moved the HB110 program into compliance in 2023 and implemented safeguards to prevent this or similar issues from occurring in the future.

Household Sewage Treatment System Operation and Maintenance Program

GPH officially began the process to enroll residents in the State-mandated Household Sewage Treatment System Operation and Maintenance program (“O&M Program”). The Geauga Board of Health was able to implement the O&M Program in a method that meets State requirements while minimizing burdens on Geauga residents. The O&M Program will help ensure that septic systems in Geauga County are maintained properly, extend the useful life of each system, and reduce costs associated with systems that are not properly maintained.

Had GPH not implemented an O&M Program in compliance with State mandates, the Ohio Department of Health would have required that another Health Department take over the entire

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The Geauga Public Health is dedicated to improving public health services by monitoring, educating, and promoting community and environmental health services in Geauga County, Ohio.

Environmental Health program at GPH. Therefore, by implementing the O&M program now, GPH can continue to maintain the local control it remains committed to.

The O&M Program replaces the prior For Sale of Property Program, commonly referred to as FSOP Program, that was ended in July 2022. The FSOP Program was operating in a multi-year backlog and was non-compliant with the State's mandated O&M Program.

Had the Geauga Board of Health not being forward-thinking and instead maintained the FSOP Program, residents would have been subject to required double-testing of their septic systems: both when their home sold and on an on-going basis through the O&M program. The O&M Program provides a more robust system for protecting the environment and drinking water in Geauga County.

Geauga County Financial Assistance Program for Household Sewage Treatment System Repairs and Replacements

The Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio EPA have implemented a financial assistance program for the repair or replacement of failing household sewage treatment systems. The Funds will be distributed by the Ohio EPA through the Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF). GPH has applied for \$150,000 and will solicit potential participants, determine eligibility, and implement this program. The grant will provide 100% of the total system improvement costs for eligible systems where the homeowner is at the federal poverty level. Provides 85% of the cost when the homeowner is at 200% of the poverty level with a 15% homeowner match and 50% of the cost when the homeowner is at 300% of the poverty level with a 50% homeowner match.

It is anticipated that between 10-15 systems can be repaired or replaced depending on the number and cost of each project. WPCLF is an excellent opportunity for eligible homeowners that have been dealing with a failing system and have limited resources to be able to repair or replace their sewage system. Homeowners who believe they meet the income limits and other qualifications are encouraged to contact Chris Loxterman (440-279-1919) to begin the prequalification process.

Cross-Jurisdictional Agreement with Lake County General Health District

In April 2023, the Geauga Board of Health entered into an expanded cross-jurisdictional agreement with the Lake County General Health District (LCGHD). This expanded strategic partnership allows LCGHD to more broadly staff essential health services in Geauga County, leveraging LCGHD's larger workforce and economies of scale. At the same time, the Board of Health was careful to ensure local presence and control was fully maintained.

At the time, this collaboration was projected to save taxpayers \$300,000 to \$600,000 annually while leaving the services Geauga's residents have come to rely on unchanged.

From April 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023, the lowest projected cost of the contract was \$1,028,360. The actual amount billed was \$1,015,326. The actual amount billed includes additional work related

to the HB110 repayment and implementation of the O&M Program but the overall costs were still kept below the lowest expected cost for the contract.

The transition has gone smoothly, and we have enhanced efficiency and continued high-quality service delivery. Public comment at the Board of Health meetings and community feedback since agreement implementation has been the most positive it has been in years.

After the agreement with LCGHD was announced, LCGHD offered all staff members previously employed by GPH a position to continue working out of the GPH office building. All GPH employees who applied for employment with LCGHD were rehired at or above prior rates of pay. Of the 19 employees who were with GPH in March 2023, 10 applied for employment with LCGHD and 10 accepted positions.

From May 2023 through February 12, 2024, the date this document was written, there has been no turnover with the staffing at GPH – a testament to the positive workplace culture GPH has fostered along with the dedicated and capable employees that are serving Geauga County.

Cost Savings and Your Tax Dollars

GPH is committed to being a good fiscal steward of your tax dollars. By implementing innovative partnerships and responsible financial management, we have achieved significant cost savings while preserving Geauga based and controlled public health services. We believe in providing the best possible care while minimizing costs to taxpayers. Over the nine months in 2023 in which the expanded cross-jurisdictional agreement has been in place, GPH is estimated to have saved over \$500,000.

Looking Ahead

As we move forward, we remain focused on your health and well-being. We are committed to:

- Maintaining high-quality services;
- Working with community partners to maximize efficiency and cost-savings;
- Prioritizing preventive care and public health initiatives; and
- Being transparent and accountable to you, our community.

We are confident that these efforts will ensure a healthy and vibrant Geauga County for generations to come. We encourage you to visit our website or contact us directly for more information or to share your thoughts and concerns.

Thank you for your continued support of Geauga Public Health.

Sincerely,

Adam Litke, Administrator

Geauga Public Health

Message from the Health Commissioner

In preparing for the future, public health goals will need to include achieving universal healthcare coverage, reducing health disparities, preventing chronic diseases, promoting mental health and well-being, strengthening pandemic preparedness, addressing environmental health challenges, promoting healthy lifestyles, enhancing primary healthcare systems, improving health literacy, and strengthening public health surveillance and data systems.

These goals aim to ensure access to affordable healthcare, improve health outcomes, prevent diseases, prioritize mental health, prepare for pandemics, address environmental factors, promote healthy behaviors, enhance primary healthcare services, promote health literacy, and improve data collection and analysis for evidence-based decision-making. The following goals will assist with improving the health and well-being of our community.

1. **Achieving universal healthcare coverage:** One of the major public health goals for the future is to ensure that everyone has access to affordable healthcare services. This includes not only medical treatment but also preventive services, mental health care, and health education.
2. **Reducing health disparities:** There is a significant disparity in health outcomes based on factors such as socioeconomic status, race, and geographic location. Future public health goals involve addressing these disparities by improving access to healthcare, implementing targeted interventions, and promoting health equity.
3. **Preventing chronic diseases:** Chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer are leading causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide. Future public health goals include implementing strategies to prevent these diseases through lifestyle modifications, vaccinations, and early screening and detection.
4. **Promoting mental health and well-being:** Mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and substance abuse have a significant impact on individuals and communities. Future public health goals aim to prioritize mental health and well-being by increasing access to mental health services, reducing stigma, and promoting mental health education.



Ron H. Graham, MPH
Health Commissioner

Message from the Health Commissioner

continued

5. **Strengthening pandemic preparedness:** The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for robust pandemic preparedness and response systems. Future public health goals involve strengthening public health infrastructure, enhancing surveillance and early warning systems, and improving global coordination to effectively manage and prevent infectious disease outbreaks.
6. **Addressing environmental health challenges:** Climate change, air pollution, toxic substances, and other environmental factors have significant implications for public health. Future goals involve promoting sustainable practices, reducing exposure to environmental hazards, and developing strategies to mitigate the health impacts of climate change.
7. **Promoting healthy lifestyles:** Unhealthy behaviors such as tobacco use, sedentary lifestyle, and poor nutrition contribute to the burden of preventable diseases. Future public health goals focus on promoting healthy behaviors through community-based interventions, health education campaigns, and policy changes.
8. **Enhancing primary healthcare systems:** Strengthening primary healthcare systems is crucial for achieving better population health outcomes. Future goals involve improving access to primary healthcare services, increasing the number of healthcare providers, and implementing innovative models of care delivery.
9. **Improving health literacy:** Health literacy, or the ability to understand and use health information, is essential for making informed decisions about one's health. Future public health goals include promoting health literacy by providing clear and accessible health information, improving health education in schools, and enhancing communication between healthcare providers and patients.
10. **Strengthening public health surveillance and data systems:** Effective public health surveillance and data collection are essential for monitoring health trends, identifying emerging threats, and guiding public health interventions. Future goals involve investing in robust surveillance systems, interoperable data platforms, and data analytics to inform evidence-based public health decision-making.



Environmental Health

Household Sewage Treatment

In 2023, Geauga Public Health began to implement the unfunded State of Ohio mandated O&M Program. Ohio Administrative Code 3701-29 mandate that all health departments develop and implement an O&M Program to monitor sewage systems for regular maintenance and proper function.

The first phase has begun with sampling of all discharging residential systems who operate under a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. The yearly sampling is a legal requirement and will bring the residents into compliance with the NPDES permit. Besides sampling, verification of maintenance is conducted. Geauga County has over 1800 of this type of system and approximately 75 are added each year.

Lot Evaluations Conducted	246
For Sale of Property Evaluations Performed	48
Sewage Permits Issued	283

Food Safety

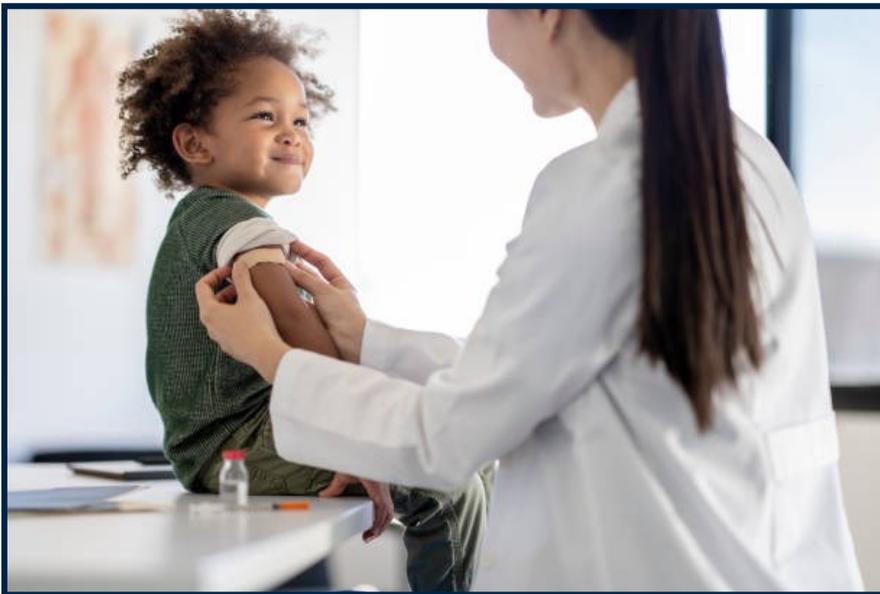
Geauga Public Health Registered Environmental Health Specialist are the first line of defense against foodborne illness by ensuring food vendors are complying with food safety regulations. During inspections, the facility is evaluated for any health code violations. Any facility that sells food to the public is required to be licensed by Geauga Public Health.

Licenses Issued	616
Food Inspections Performed	1,540

Population Health

Community Immunization Services

The goal of public health is to prevent disease and promote health. One way in which the prevention of disease is achieved successfully in Geauga County is through an effective immunization program for both children and adults. The availability of safe and effective vaccines has had a remarkable impact on the health of our residents. Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to protect children and adults against many common infectious diseases. Many people that delayed vaccination during the pandemic are still behind schedule on routine vaccines. However, in 2023, the immunization program nurse administered a total of 696 routine vaccines. There were 649 vaccines administered to children from birth through 18 years of age under the Vaccine for Children Program and 47 immunizations administered to adults under the Vaccines for Adults program. This vaccine protection helps to prevent at least 14 different diseases and decreases the potential for disease outbreaks in our community.



In June of 2023 the immunization program nurse started going to the DDC Clinic Center for Special Needs Children to assist with vaccination clinics. From June through December of 2023 there were 863 vaccines administered to children from birth through 18 years of age.

In 2023, Geauga Public Health recorded a significant uptick in the number of reported communicable diseases compared to the previous year.

Legionnaires Disease

The number of Legionnaires disease cases increased twofold compared to previous year. This illness is serious type of pneumonia caused by a bacteria. People can get sick when they breathe in small droplets of water or accidentally swallow contaminated water into the lungs.

The key to preventing this disease is to reduce the risk of Legionella growth and spread. This can be done by:

- Conducting regular inspection of water distribution system, heating/cooling/ventilation system and cooling towers
- Development and use of water management programs
- Environmental control measures, including monitoring for temperature or chlorine residuals
- Monitoring, development of remediation or treatment plans if Legionella is detected

Pertussis

During the early months of 2023, Geauga County faced an outbreak of pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough. This is a highly contagious disease and spreads easily from person to person through coughing and sneezing. Best way to prevent Pertussis is to get vaccinated. Other measures include:

- Cover your cough or sneeze
- Wash your hands often
- All close contacts should be given post-exposure antimicrobial prophylaxis

Salmonellosis

The incidence of salmonellosis in Geauga County increased to 10 cases in 2023, a notable rise from the 6 cases reported in the preceding year. This is an acute gastrointestinal illness caused by a bacteria that spreads from either ingestion of contaminated food and water or direct person-to-person transmission via fecal-oral route.

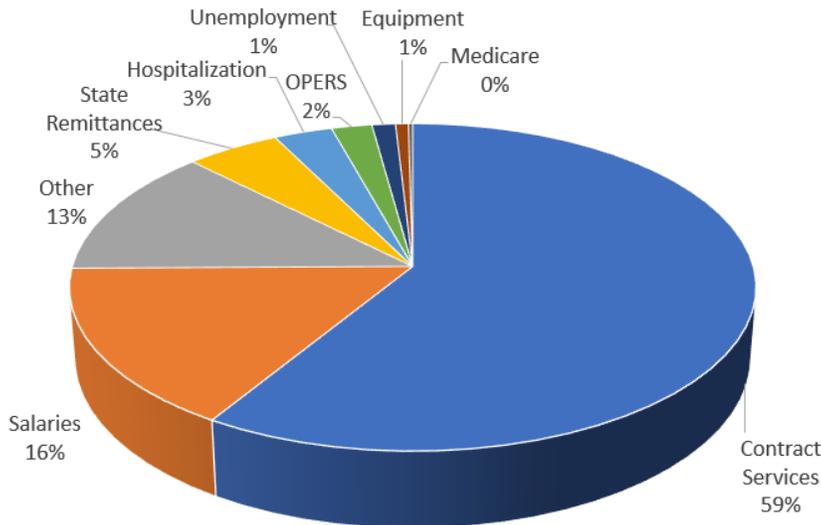
Preventive measures include:

- All meat and egg dishes should be thoroughly cooked
- Avoid cross contamination of food with raw meat juices
- Emphasize good hand hygiene
- Those involved in sensitive occupations or settings should follow recommended isolation measures
- Utilize EPA-labeled products for disinfection of contaminated surface

Reportable Condition	Total 2023	Total 2022
Anaplasmosis-Anaplasma phagocytophilum	1	0
Campylobacteriosis	21	25
Chlamydia infection	83	138
COVID-19	2,068	5,935
CPO	3	8
Cryptosporidiosis	1	3
Giardiasis	3	7
Gonococcal infection	19	25
Haemophilus influenzae (invasive disease)	2	0
Hepatitis B (including delta) - chronic	5	16
Hepatitis C - acute	1	1
Hepatitis C - chronic	18	55
Influenza - ODH Lab Results	14	
Influenza-associated hospitalization	27	34
Legionellosis	4	2
Lyme Disease	9	23
Meningitis - aseptic/viral	2	1
Mumps	1	0
Pertussis	83	3
Salmonellosis	10	6
Shigellosis	2	2
Streptococcal - Group A -invasive	16	11
Streptococcal - Group B - in newborn	1	0
Streptococcus pneumoniae - invasive antibiotic resistance unknown or non-resistant	2	4
Streptococcus pneumoniae - invasive antibiotic resistant/intermediate	1	0
Syphilis - early	2	2
Syphilis - primary	1	2
Syphilis - secondary	1	2
Varicella	1	5
Yersinosis	1	0

Financial Review

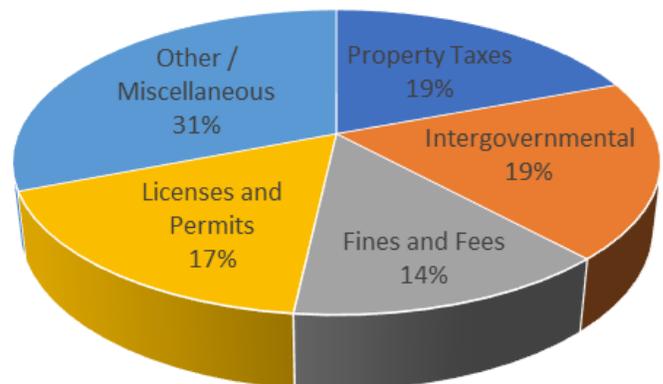
Expenses



Contract Services	\$1,740,106.61
Salaries	\$474,085.43
Other	\$376,339.21
State Remittances	\$148,934.28
Hospitalization	\$92,218.62
OPERS	\$63,837.67
Unemployment	\$36,988.48
Equipment	\$20,182.71
Medicare	\$6,780.80
Total Expenses	\$2,959,473.81

Revenue

Property Taxes	\$579,576.35
Intergovernmental	\$567,470.51
Fines and Fees	\$410,490.17
Licenses and Permits	\$520,624.97
Other / Miscellaneous	\$931,020.83
Total Revenue	\$3,009,182.83



Statistic Snapshot

Animal Exposure Reported



Bites: 77
Non-Bites: 19
Total: 96

Vital Statistics Issued



Birth Cert: 2,490
Death Cert: 4,543

Naloxone Kits Distributed



204

Sewage Permits Issued



283

Vaccines Administered



Routine: 696
DDC: 863
(Jun-Dec)

Food Licenses Issued



616

Services Available at Geauga Public Health

Birth and Death Certificates

Population Health:

- Animal Bite Investigation
- Children with Medical Handicaps Program
- Emergency Preparedness
- Immunizations and Clinics
- Project DAWN (Naloxone)
- Car Seat Program
- Safe Communities

Environmental Health:

- Campground & RV Park Inspections
- Food Safety
- Nuisance Complaints
- Plumbing Permits & Inspections
- Private Water Wells
- Public Swimming Pools & Spa Inspections
- Septic System Inspections
- Tattoo & Body Piercing Inspections

**A heartfelt thanks to our community
for your support!**

From Geauga Public Health



BOARD OF HEALTH

**Carolyn Brakey, Esq; Dr. Mark Rood; Lynn Roman;
Ashley Jones, Pharm D; Dr. Mark Hendrickson**



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Geauga Public Health

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