

Geauga Public Health

2024 Annual Report

Dear Geauga County Residents,

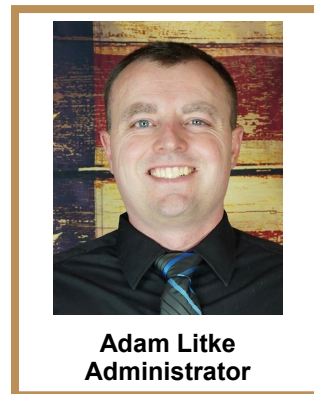
The annual report is meant to provide you with important updates on Geauga Public Health (GPH) and the ongoing efforts to maintain high quality services while ensuring responsible use of your tax dollars. A few areas that we would like to highlight are included below.

House Bill 110 Program

In 2023 it was determined by GPH Administrator Adam Litke and GPH Environmental Health Director Daniel Lark that the House Bill 110 (HB110) program had been improperly operated for approximately 10 years. The GPH Board of Health made the unanimous decision to repay the businesses, with interest, that were negatively affected by the HB110 program. This amounted to nearly \$1 million being returned to taxpayers. The HB110 repayments were completed during 2024 and the HB110 program was brought into compliance in 2023 and remained in compliance throughout 2024.

Change in Board of Health

On December 31, 2024, Board of Health member Carolyn Brakey resigned from the Board of Health to transition to her new position as County Commissioner. Mrs. Brakey was an integral part of the Board of Health and brought common sense to Geauga County during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mrs. Brakey was also a staunch supporter of reduction of fees at GPH and proved invaluable in supporting the dismantling of the For Sale of Property Program, which would have been a duplicative service in Geauga County due to the State-mandated Operation and Maintenance Program (O&M) program.



A Message from the Health Commissioner	3	Population Health	6-9
Environmental Health	4-5	Financial Report	10
		Statistics	11

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.

Geauga Public Health Levy

The residents of Geauga County demonstrated a lot of trust in the GPH Board of Health and GPH team when they voted “yes” on the GPH Levy in November 2023. That confidence and support was and remains appreciated, and has enabled GPH to continue operations at current levels. Further, it drives GPH each day to strive to be a better, more agile, more customer-focused agency in an effort to prove to the residents of Geauga County that their faith was not misplaced.

Cross Jurisdictional Agreement

The Cross Jurisdictional Agreement (CJA) has proven to be not only a cost savings device but also one that ensures accountability, offers new cost-effective ways of running government, and will be a model for other agencies in the future. The ability to share leadership through the CJA has ensured that the majority of resources go to front line staff and that management is there when needed while saving significant dollars for all those involved. The HB110 program mismanagement was identified and rectified through staffing now covered under the CJA. The evaluation and lowering of fees at GPH was also identified and implemented by staffing under the CJA. It is a testament to the success of the CJA that only a single staff member has left employment with GPH since its introduction. The new team at GPH has also been able to repair many relationships within the community that were previously fractured, or thought to have been completely destroyed.

As GPH moves into 2025, I am reminded of a quote that most have heard numerous times, “You, me, nobody is gonna hit as hard as life. But it ain’t about how hard you hit. It’s about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward; how much you can take and keep moving forward. That’s how winning is done!”. I imagine most who read this quote can vividly remember and even replay in their minds the scene in Rocky Balboa. I think one thing we are missing in today’s world is grit. The ability to show up every day, do the mundane and boring tasks each day, pushing through things that might break most people. The ability to be great is often determined by the ability to show up every day and consistently work towards accomplishing a goal. GPH will show up for the residents of Geauga County every day, GPH will be there for the residents of Geauga County every day, and GPH will continue to be an agency of the people and for the people of Geauga County.

Sincerely,



Adam Litke, Administrator

Message from the Health Commissioner

An Opportunity for Public Health

Streamlining federal health organizations, such as the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), can enhance public health outcomes. To achieve this, a cohesive National Health Strategy should be developed, focusing on common goals and minimizing mission overlaps among agencies.



Interagency collaboration can be strengthened through the formation of task forces addressing specific health issues, alongside joint funding initiatives for research and public health projects. Implementing secure, centralized communication platforms and scheduling regular interagency meetings will facilitate timely information sharing and coordinated efforts.

The creation of an integrated health data repository will improve data sharing, research, and resource allocation, supported by standardized metrics and reporting guidelines. A unified public communication strategy will ensure consistent messaging, particularly during health crises, while community involvement programs will help align services with local needs.

Policy harmonization is essential, advocating for joint policy development and streamlined legislative processes that foster collaboration and reduce bureaucratic barriers. Technology can be leveraged through health innovation hubs and expanded telehealth platforms, allowing remote cooperation among agencies.

Workforce development initiatives, including cross-agency training programs and leadership exchanges, will cultivate a cooperative culture. Finally, establishing regular performance reviews and promoting transparency will enhance accountability and facilitate the assessment of collaborative efforts.

By following these recommendations, federal health agencies can improve coordination, streamline operations, and significantly enhance public health outcomes.



Environmental Health

Household Sewage Treatment System Operation and Maintenance Program

GPH officially began the process to bring Geauga County into compliance with the State-mandated Household Sewage Treatment System Operation and Maintenance program (O&M Program) in November 2023 and continued enrolling residents throughout 2024. As the 2024 year ended, the Operation and Maintenance program rounded out its first year with approximately 10% of the County enrolled or in the process of being enrolled in the Program. This program aims to ensure that all owners of residential septic systems maintain their systems to a minimum standard to prevent pollution and protect the public health of our community.

The first phase began with sampling of all discharging residential systems which operate under a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Annual sampling is required by the Ohio EPA to ensure that these systems are sufficiently treating wastewater before it is discharged back into the environment via our community streams, road ditches, and storm sewers. 1,818 systems were sampled in 2024 by Geauga Public Health to evaluate performance against the state standards. In addition to sampling, verification of maintenance is conducted. Geauga County has over 1,800 of this type of system and approximately 75 are added each year.

The GPH team strives to provide the best services possible to the public while balancing overall costs that are incurred by the public. GPH has the lowest O&M Program fees in the State and numerous other counties have reviewed or opted to adopt systems similar to what GPH has implemented in Geauga County.

Lot Evaluations Conducted	215
For Sale of Property Evaluations Performed	13
Sewage Permits Issued	252

Environmental Health

Food Safety

Starting in 2024, Geauga Public Health began to award a Clean Inspection Award to food service operations and retail establishments that exemplify food safety through food safety knowledge and training, a clean inspection history, and operating according to state and local regulations. Recipients of the award received a window cling to let the public know the facility is run in a clean and food-safe manner.



The following facilities were awarded the clean inspection award in 2024:

Dunkin' Donuts	16780 Chillicothe Rd., Chagrin Falls
Domino's Pizza	8486 Mayfield Rd., Chesterland
Congin's Pizza	104 South St., Chardon
St. Anselm School	13013 Chillicothe Rd., Chesterland
Spinners Good Time Diner	602 South St. #13, Chardon
Thistle House	526 Water St., Chardon
Jennings at Notre Dame Village	10950 Pine Grove Tr., Chardon

Food Licenses Issued	607
Food Inspections Performed	1,233

Emergency Preparedness

GPH and Partners Improve Accessibility for Points of Dispensing (PODs)

Geauga Public Health, in partnership with the Community Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing as well as local health departments from Lake, Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Lorain, and Medina counties, produced an educational video to assist residents who are deaf or hard of hearing with navigating points of dispensing (PODs).

PODs are mass clinics, like large flu vaccination clinics, to quickly dispense medications or vaccines or distribute supplies in case of a public health emergency. Public health emergencies that may require PODs include pandemic scenarios, such as 2009 H1N1 Influenza, a bioterrorism event where public health would need to distribute antibiotics or other medications, or even severe weather or other events where power or utility outages may require the distribution of supplies like safe drinking water.

The video includes an interpreter to discuss how PODs operate and what to expect, which may be used in the event a POD would need to be opened, as well as for preparedness exercises, to ensure the POD and its operations are clear and more accessible. Reviews of recent clinics throughout the Northeast Ohio region highlighted the need to improve POD communications and operations to better fit the needs of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing or who use American Sign Language.

Regional partners are planning future collaborations to help ensure we're better serving our whole community.



Population Health

Community Immunization Services

The goal of public health is to prevent disease and promote health. In Geauga County, one of the ways to achieve this goal is through a comprehensive immunization program for both children and adults. The availability of safe and effective vaccines has significantly improved the health and well-being of our community, offering protection against many common infectious diseases. These vaccinations help prevent at least 14 different diseases, reducing the risk of disease outbreaks in our community and contributing to overall public health. Vaccination remains one of the most powerful tools for disease prevention.

In 2024 there were 873 vaccines administered to children from birth through 18 years of age through the Vaccines for Children program and 25 immunizations administered to adults through the Vaccines for Adults program. Geauga Public Health teamed up with University Hospitals every month to hold mobile vaccine clinics for children out in the community. Through these collaborative



efforts, Geauga County continues to prioritize the health of its residents by ensuring access to life saving vaccines and strengthening our community's protection against preventable diseases.



In 2024, Geauga Public Health observed several notable shifts in communicable disease patterns compared to the previous year.

Multidrug-Resistant Organisms (MDROs)

Geauga County experienced a significant increase in multidrug-resistant organism cases in 2024, with 8 cases of Carbapenemase-producing organisms (CPO) compared to 3 cases in 2023, along with the emergence of 2 new cases of *Candida auris*, which has not been detected in previous years. These pathogens are particularly concerning and demand heightened attention due to their resistance to multiple antimicrobial drugs and their potential to cause severe infections and outbreaks, especially in healthcare settings.

Key prevention measures include:

- Implementation of robust infection prevention and control measures in healthcare settings
- Regular screening of high-risk patients
- Proper hand hygiene and use of personal protective equipment
- Environmental cleaning with appropriate disinfectants
- Antibiotic stewardship programs to prevent further resistance

Foodborne Illnesses

In 2024, Geauga County reported a significant rise in foodborne illnesses compared to 2023. Salmonellosis cases doubled, increasing from 10 in 2023 to 20 in 2024. *Campylobacter* cases rose from 21 to 25, while 7 cases of *E. coli* (STEC) were reported after no recorded cases in 2023. Cryptosporidiosis cases saw a sharp increase from 1 in 2023 to 9 in 2024, and Listeriosis emerged with 2 cases after none were reported in the previous year.

These increases emphasize the need for strict food safety measures, including:

- Thorough cooking of food to appropriate temperatures
- Prevention of cross-contamination in kitchen environments
- Proper hand hygiene, especially before food preparation and after handling raw meat
- Sanitization of food preparation surfaces

Pertussis

Following an outbreak in 2023 with 83 reported cases, Geauga County saw a dramatic 95% reduction in pertussis cases, with only 4 cases reported in 2024. Pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious respiratory disease spread through respiratory droplets.

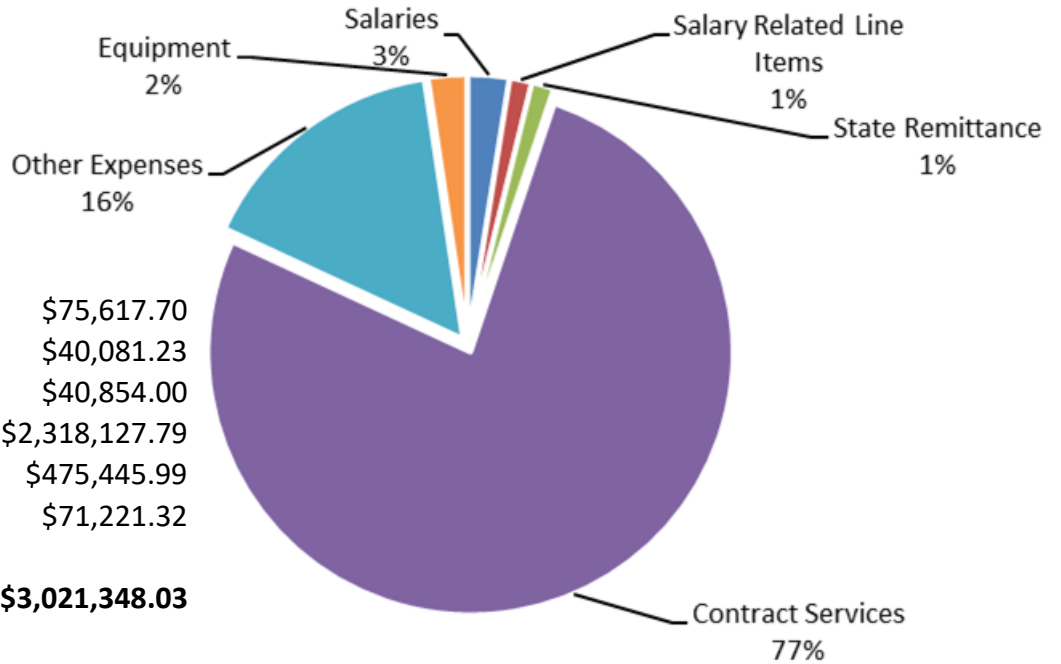
Key prevention strategies include:

- Maintaining up-to-date DTaP/Tdap vaccinations for all age groups
- Practicing proper respiratory hygiene and handwashing
- Ensuring prompt medical evaluation of symptomatic individuals
- Implementing isolation protocols for confirmed cases

Communicable Disease Report	Toal 2024	Total 2023
Anaplasmosis	0	1
Campylobacter	25	21
C. auris	2	0
CPO	8	3
CPO - Colonization Screening	1	0
Chlamydia	91	83
COVID-19	1,445	2,068
Cryptosporidiosis	9	1
Dengue	1	0
E. Coli 0157:H7	7	0
Giardia	5	3
Gonorrhea	26	19
Haemophilus Influenza	2	2
Hepatitis A	1	0
Hepatitis B (chronic)	5	5
Hepatitis C (acute)	0	1
Hepatitis C (chronic)	13	18
Influenza-Hospitalized	62	27
Legionnaires Disease	6	4
Listeriosis	2	0
Lyme Disease	12	9
Meningitis-aseptic/viral	1	2
Mpox	1	0
Mumps	0	1
Pertussis	4	83
Salmonellosis	20	10
Shigellosis	2	2
Streptococcal Group A (GAS)	12	16
Streptococcus Pneumonai(ISP)	8	3
Syphilis	3	5
Tuberculosis	1	0
Varicella	1	1
Vibriosis	1	0
Yersiniosis	1	1
Totals	1,778	2,389

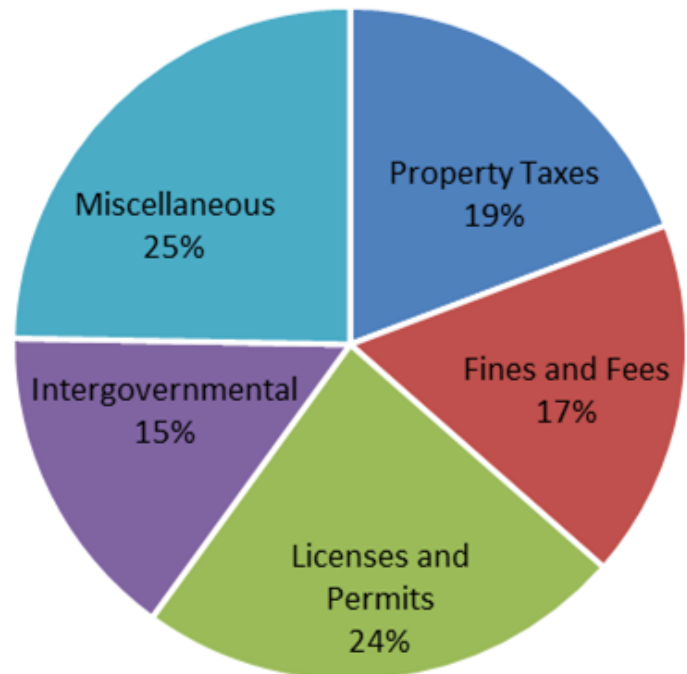
Financial Review

2024 Expenses



Salaries	\$75,617.70
Salary Related Line Items	\$40,081.23
State Remittance	\$40,854.00
Contract Services	\$2,318,127.79
Other Expenses	\$475,445.99
Equipment	\$71,221.32
Total Expenses	\$3,021,348.03

2024 Revenue



Property Taxes	\$584,456.56
Fines and Fees	\$522,271.37
Licenses and Permits	\$713,483.37
Intergovernmental	\$464,215.35
Miscellaneous	\$749,771.18
Total Revenue	\$3,034,197.83

Statistic Snapshot

Animal Exposure Reported



Bites: 96
Non-Bites: 8
Total: 104

Vital Statistics Issued



Birth Cert: 2,283
Death Cert: 4,759

Naloxone Kits Distributed



Community: 272
First Responders: 134

Sewage Permits Issued



254

Vaccines Administered



898

Food Licenses Issued



607

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)
- 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

**Ashley Jones, Pharm D; Dr. Mark Hendrickson; Melissa DeBoth;
Dr. Mark Rood, Carolyn Brakey, Esq (not pictured)**



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Geauga Public Health

Geauga Public Health
12611 Ravenwood Drive, Suite 300
Room A301
Chardon, OH 44024
440-279-1900



Prevent. Promote. Protect.