

2023 Annual Report
Putnam County
Department of Health



Putnam County Department of Health
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I. Description of Department

The Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH) is divided into five divisions: Early Intervention; Fiscal and Administration; Health Education (includes Epidemiology and Public Health Emergency Preparedness); Nursing and Clinical Services; and Environmental Health Services. While each area operates with distinct staff members, they collaborate to provide Putnam County residents with the highest quality programs and services.

The Board of Health serves the PCDOH by advising on public health policy. Division managers provide regular reports to the Board and attend meetings at the request of the health commissioner to present and discuss relevant health issues.

II. Services Provided (Divisions and Programs)

Early Intervention and Preschool Programs

The Early Intervention (EI) program evaluates infants and toddlers from birth through two years of age for developmental delays (physical, cognitive, communication, social-emotional, and adaptive). If eligible for services, the EI program provides special instruction, speech, occupational, and physical therapy, and other services as appropriate. The Preschool Special Education program provides similar services for eligible children three to five years of age diagnosed with a disability that affects their ability to learn.

Environmental Health Services

The Division of Environmental Health Services (EHS) implements specific strategies and ensures environmental quality in Putnam County. Enforcement of the New York State and Putnam County Sanitary Code and applicable laws, administrative rules, and regulations guides all programmatic activities. Public Health 12 Protection (PHP) strategies include monitoring and regulating service establishments and other public facilities. Regulations are also enforced to ensure rabies control, lead poisoning prevention, and clean indoor air. In addition, environmental quality is ensured by monitoring water quality and regulating public water systems, treatment plants, sewage disposal systems, and solid waste facilities; approving realty subdivision plans and construction; providing environmental risk assessment; and responding to environmental emergencies.

Fiscal/Administrative

The Fiscal/Administrative Division is responsible for the financial oversight at the PCDOH. Preparation of all financial reports, including State Aid reimbursement, grant and fiscal monitoring, purchase orders, and accounts receivable, are performed by

fiscal office staff. Department-wide policies and procedures dealing with time accruals, call-in, travel requests, and reimbursement are also handled by this division as well as all personnel related needs.

Health Education

The core functions of the Health Education Division include: assessing and monitoring population health; communicating effectively on health, health factors, and health improvement; and strengthening, supporting and mobilizing communities and partnerships. The Health Education division coordinates and promotes countless disease-specific prevention campaigns and programs throughout the year to the residents of Putnam County. Public information is made available in English and Spanish through social media, media releases, alerts and advisories. Education and health promotion for residents is also achieved through engagement and outreach activities, cross-sector coalitions, and community presentations. Epidemiologic support is provided within the department and with partner agencies through ongoing surveillance, data analysis, assessment, and evaluation activities and surveys. The division is primarily responsible for producing the Putnam County Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHA/CHIP), both required by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH). Together, these efforts support departmental and countywide initiatives and planning. Additionally, Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) staff work within the health education division and oversee the planning, implementation, and evaluation of PHEP, Cities Readiness Initiatives (CRI), Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) and related activities. Health Education is also responsible for the management of the Putnam County Employee Wellness program, supporting health improvement for all county employees.

Nursing and Clinical Services

The Nursing Division utilizes a variety of strategies to improve and monitor the health status of Putnam County residents. These include outreach to populations at risk for specific health problems; increasing access to services, either by direct provision of care or by partnering; maternal child health (MCH) consults; screening and surveillance for the early detection of disease; health education and promotion activities to improve prevention; and coalition development within the community to address service gaps. Nursing case management is provided through the lead poisoning prevention, tuberculosis control, and rabies prevention and control programs. Clinical services are provided in the areas of immunization, HIV and hepatitis C testing and counseling, and tuberculosis testing, diagnosis, and treatment. The PCDOH maintains a license for a Licensed Home Care Services Agency (LHCSA) which ensures the ability of the department to continue conducting home visits for the mandated public health programs such as MCH, lead poisoning prevention, communicable disease, and immunization. Approval for this program was obtained through the NYSDOH, which also conducts periodic surveys to assess for regulatory compliance. The PCDOH LHCSA is not a full-service agency as personal care and home health services are not provided.

Divisions and Programs

Environmental Health

- Enforcement of Regulations
- Complaint/ Request for Service Program
- Putnam County Sanitary Code

Facility Inspections

- Children's Camps
- Food Service Establishments
- Mobile Home Parks
- Migrant Farmworker Housing Program
- Tanning Facilities
- Temporary Residences & Campgrounds
- Tobacco Control Program
- Public Swimming Pools
- Public Bathing Beaches
- Daycare Centers
- Public Water Supply Sanitary Surveys

Food Safety

- Food-Borne Illness & Complaint Investigation
- Permanent and Temporary Food Service

Injury Prevention

- Lead Poisoning Prevention*

Other Environmental Health Programs

- FOIL requests
- Food Operators Seminars
- Camp Operators Seminars
- Feral Cat Program
- Rabies*
- Mosquito & Stagnant Water Complaints
- Tick Identification
- Tobacco Control (ATUPA)
- Indoor Air Quality (CIAA)

Land Development

- Commercial Development (New Construction)
- Major Projects
- Home Additions
- Realty Subdivision
- PFAS Removal
- Septic Repair Program
- Septic System Replacement Program for Lake Oscawana, Palmer Lake, and the East Branch Croton Middle Tributaries
- New York City Watershed Rules and Regulations
- Septic System Contractor Licensing Program

Solid Waste and Recycling

- Solid Waste Management Planning
- Household Hazardous Waste Events
- Waste Hauler Permitting
- Pharmaceutical Disposal (Medication Take Back)
- Compost Bins
- Recycling Promotion

Public Water Supply and Services

- Water Quality Improvement Initiative
- Drinking Water Enhancement Grant
- Emerging Contaminants
- Water Operator Certifications

Individual Water Supply and Services

- Well Permit Program

Fiscal/Administration

- Budget
- Grant Management
- State Aid
- Time Bank/Overtime/Temp payroll
- Personnel Management

*Cross-divisional program



Putnam County Department of Health

A PHAB-ACCREDITED HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Divisions and Programs

Early Intervention and Preschool Programs

- Early Intervention Program
- Preschool Special Education Program
- Child Find Program*

Health Education

Community Health Education

- Educational presentations, workshops, tabling
- Health Promotion, Community Outreach, and Engagement
- Training Coordination
- Employee Wellness
- Undergraduate and Graduate School Experiences

Epidemiology

- Community Health Assessment
- Community Health Improvement Planning and Implementation
- Program Evaluation
- Disease Surveillance*
- Community Surveys

Media and Community Relations

- Public Information Communications
- Social Media Engagement
- Health Promotion and Education Campaigns
- Coalition and Task Force representation, and Community Partner Support

Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP)

- Cities Readiness Initiative
- Plan and Program Development
- Workshops, Tabletops, Functional and Full-scale exercises
- Medical Reserve Corps

Nursing and Clinical Programs

Communicable Disease Control and Surveillance

- 80 reportable communicable diseases, 34 “red phone” 24-hour response diseases
- Arthropod
- Hepatitis A, B, C
- Perinatal Hepatitis B + C
- HIV/AIDS
- HIV/Hepatitis C Clinics
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases
- Tuberculosis Control
- Rabies*
- Enteric Disease Investigation
- COVID-19

Immunizations

- Child and Adult Vaccine Clinics
- Travel Vaccine Clinics
- Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker Program
- School-Based Flu Clinics
- Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Clinics
- Influenza Mapping
- Overnight Camp Infirmary Inspections

Licensed Home Care Services Agency (LHCSA)

- Maternal and Child Health Program
- Newborn Screening Program
- Prenatal/Postpartum Newborn Visiting Program
- Parent Support Groups
- Child Find Program*

Other

- Educational presentations and outreach*
- Opioid Overdose Prevention Program*
- Death Certificate Review
- Chronic Disease Prevention

*Cross-divisional program



Putnam County Department of Health

A PHAB-ACCREDITED HEALTH DEPARTMENT

III. Mission Statement

The mission of the Putnam County Department of Health is to improve and protect the health of our community.

IV. Population Served

Putnam County Department of Health services are made available to all residents. Early Intervention, Preschool, and Child Find serve children birth to five years of age, and their families.

V. Significant Events and Accomplishments in 2023 (by division and committee)

Early Intervention and Preschool Programs

- While the number of children that qualified for Early Intervention Program in 2023 has remained consistent compared to 2022, this year, there is a higher prevalence of children with more significant delays and greater challenges compared to recent years.
- There is a significant increase in children qualifying for the Preschool Program. Putnam County school districts are reporting an increase with some districts showing a 20-25% rise in the number of referrals as well as the number of individuals qualifying for the program.

Environmental Health Services

Adolescent Tobacco Use Prevention Act (ATUPA):

- Recent changes in law have made it illegal to sell flavored vape products in New York State. Compliance inspections are performed annually and in 2023, there was a significant number of enforcement actions associated with tobacco and flavored vape sales in this program. Fifteen (15) cases were concluded in 2023, and \$33,775 was collected in civil penalties for tobacco and vape enforcement.

Rabies:

- 334 potential rabies exposures investigated, 25 treatments for potential rabies exposure, 72 samples tested for rabies, and one positive rabies result (woodchuck).
- Three rabies clinics were held: March, July, and November. A total of 325 animals were vaccinated for rabies (219 dogs, 103 cats and 12 ferrets).
- The Feral Cat Task Force, a partner program with Putnam AdvoCats, processed 170 cats, 57 of those were fostered/adopted. All cats over four months old receive rabies vaccinations before they are released or adopted. The Towns of Patterson and Putnam Valley and the Putnam Humane Society provided additional funding to support the initiative.

Childrens Camps:

- 21 permits were issued, 17 injuries investigated, 15 illnesses investigated, 2 abuse allegations investigated, and 1 treatment for a potential rabies exposure.

Complaints/Requests for Services: (as of 12/28/2023): Complaints may include septic system failures, lake and stream pollution, private and public water supplies, indoor air, hazardous waste investigations, and more.

- 165 complaints/requests for services were investigated.

Food Operators Seminar:

- On Monday, October 30, more than 120 attendees, representing more than 80 different food industry-related organizations, attended the Putnam County Department of Health Food Operators Seminar. The event, held at the Putnam County Golf Course in Mahopac, was offered by the Putnam County Department of Health to any food operator in the county and provided them with educational and networking opportunities.

Communicable Disease:

- In April 2023, the Putnam County Department of Health investigated an illness outbreak at an assisted living facility where residents and staff suffered from diarrhea and/or vomiting. Laboratory testing supported the suspicion that norovirus was the agent responsible for the outbreak.

Lead Poisoning Prevention Program:

- There were 15 new cases of children with elevated blood lead levels, which was an increase from the 9 cases investigated in 2022. Some families reported children consumed certain cinnamon apple fruit pouches that were associated with an FDA advisory related to elevated lead levels.
- Two staff members that work in the Lead Poisoning Prevention Program attended a weeklong training which will allow them to complete the final steps of obtaining their EPA Risk Assessor Certifications. This training and certification provide a framework for investigating lead cases and identifying the lead hazards that may contribute to elevated blood lead levels.

Beaches:

- During the summer of 2023, many public bathing beaches were severely impacted by environmental conditions that caused closures. Closures were due to the presence of bacteria, blue-green algae blooms, and severe weather events like the major storm in early July.

Solid Waste Management:

- Two Household Hazardous Waste Day events were held at Fahnestock State Park's Canopus Beach Parking Lot in Kent. A total of 666 residents attended and safely disposed of their household chemicals.

Litter:

The NYSARC Litter Patrol Program continues to thrive and grow. This year an additional component of the program was added. Now there is a Roadside Litter Patrol Crew and a Rail Trail Litter Patrol Crew.

- The Litter Patrol Hotline was launched in 2023 which provides a more efficient way for residents to report litter concerns. Roadside and rail trail litter is now able to be reported by our residents by using a simple QR code and answering a few quick questions. This information is automatically sent to the department via email and a work order can be forwarded to the Litter Patrol Supervisor at NYSARC. Workorders are then created, and crews are dispatched in a timely manner.

Engineering & Water:

Lead Service Line Inventory

- Our department continues to provide guidance to water system operators as they work to complete a materials inventory of all water service lines on Community and Non-Transient Non-Community Water Supply as required nationwide by the USEPA Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR). This inventory is to be submitted to the PCDOH by October 16, 2024. PCDOH issued a press release regarding the LCRR inventory that provided information to the public regarding this requirement and urged them to cooperate if contacted by their water operator, to assist with the inventory.

Garrison Landing Public Water System: Existing community water system by the Metro North Train Station.

- Existing leaking watermain was replaced with a new watermain that passes through the Metro North pedestrian tunnel.
- Additional water supply was sought due to low yielding wells.
- After drilling and testing multiple new wells, well #8, approved on 9/27/22 provided the best test results.
- An application for the implementation of well #8 was received on October 4th and approved on December 13th.

Commercial Campus at Fields Corners (T)SE: The project consists of two large warehouse buildings that will be broken up into several different tenant spaces.

- The total square footage of both warehouses is 933,100 sq. ft.
- Proposed Building A employees: 375
- Proposed Building B employees: 665
- Building A Design Flow: 4500 gallons per day
- Building B Design Flow: 7980 gallons per day
- Each building has its own septic system and 100% expansion area.
- Non-Transient, Non-Community Public Water Supply System.
- Water System approved by NYSDOH on February 23,2022.
- Septic System approved on April 13th, 2022.
- Construction commenced in Summer of 2022 and has continued throughout 2023.
- The septic system for building A has been constructed and inspected by PCDOH.
- Buildings are still under construction.

Brewster Yards: Located at Fields Corners Lane & Pugsley Rd (across the street from the Commercial Campus Project).

- Proposed commercial septic system and public water supply.
- Project consists of the following:
 - 4 Baseball Fields
 - 1 Showcase Field
 - 4 Little League Fields
 - 1 Multi-Sport Field
 - 3 Batting Cage Facilities
 - 3 Concession/Restroom Facilities

- 2 Concession Facilities
- 35,000 sq. ft. Indoor Facility
- Parking Areas (449 Parking Spaces, 8 Bus Parking Spaces)
- 1 Playground
- Application was received on January 3, 2023, and has been under review throughout the year.
- Since the project is commercial and is within the NYCDEP watershed, the septic application has been under joint review with the NYCDEP engineering division.
- Non-Transient, Non-Community Public Water Supply System (PWS)
- PWS has been under review with the PCDOH.
- Anticipated approval is January 2024.

EE Brewster: Located on Route 22 across from the Lakeview shopping center (formerly the Golf Dome)

- Application for two new wells.
- Proposed community public water supply and commercial septic system.
- Wells were approved for drilling and testing. Full application received March 10, 2023.
- Project consists of two 50-unit senior housing complexes and two large storage buildings (32,400 sq. ft.).
- Located at 1534 Route 22 (across the street from the Lakeview Shopping Center).
- Application is currently under review (SSTS – PCDH, Community Water – NYSDOH).

PFAS (Perfluoroalkyl AND Polyfluoroalkyl Substances):

- NYSDOH lowered the Maximum Contaminant Level from the EPA guideline of 70 ppt (parts per trillion) to 10 ppt effective August 26, 2020.
- Since that time, we have been receiving numerous applications for community and non-community, non-transient water systems to treat PFAS with Granular Activated Carbon (GAC) Filtering Units.
- In 2023, we approved 16 PFAS treatment applications and we currently have 5 outstanding applications still under review.

Fiscal/Administration

- Fiscal staff implemented engaging trainings, called “Fiscal Fairs” for employees on all fiscal-related procedures. Topics were determined based on staff input and were designed to enhance compliance and efficiency.

Health Education

Health Education Programming, Media, and Community Relations:

- Website improvements included a streamlined news and events section for ease of access for residents.
- Established monthly employee spotlights, highlighting their work serving county residents.
- Over 1 million social media post impressions were made across three platforms, a 43% increase from 2022.
- Collaborated with the Department of Social Services, Mental Health, and the Youth Bureau to conduct three Youth Mental Health First Aid trainings for school districts throughout Putnam County.
- Co-facilitated a breakout session on Opioid Overdose Prevention at the Statewide Harm Reduction Symposium.
- Established a cross-sector, multi-agency coalition addressing fatal and non-fatal overdoses in Putnam County (BR;DGE Alliance).
- Revised Adolescent Tobacco Use Prevention Programming to meet the growing burden of tobacco and vape use countywide.
- Established partnership with Prevention Council of Putnam to expand capacity to deliver evidence-based vaping education sessions to Putnam County school districts.
- Identified, wrote, and published 52 news items on the PCDOH website under “News & Events,” including 16 media releases and alerts disseminated directly to the media, five of which were done in collaboration with the County Executive’s Office. These efforts produced 35,829 hits on the website.
- Important educational campaigns and related media are translated into Spanish as well to address issues related to equity and inclusion.
- Front-page news coverage included stories on blue-green algae, heart month, tickborne disease, childhood vaccination rate drop, COVID spike, and well water testing. Narrative and thematic photo-compatible stories were published on the Food Operators Seminar, blue-green algae and the Medical Reserve Corps Conference, along with countless other print stories.
- Four select television placements were achieved through health department relationship building with media contacts. News12 Westchester interviewed PCDOH Environmental Health director on at least two occasions including local air quality issues during the Canadian wildfires in June (<https://hudsonvalley.news12.com/interview-putnam-county-environmental-health-services-director-addresses-air-quality-issues>) and again the following month after heavy rains produced an abundance of mosquitoes (<https://hudsonvalley.news12.com/tips-to-prevent-mosquito-bites-and-getting-sick-from-viruses>). Again that month, News12 ran a 30-second spot on the increase in anaplasmosis in the county from a website news brief (<https://hudsonvalley.news12.com/putnam-county-reports-higher-than-average-cases-of-tick-borne-disease>) and in December, they again relied on health department content running a news story on holiday candle safety--utilizing a full-screen image of a social media graphic from the PCDOH social media platforms.

[https://hudsonvalley.news12.com/putnam-health-department-shares-candle-safety-tips-to-prevent-fires.](https://hudsonvalley.news12.com/putnam-health-department-shares-candle-safety-tips-to-prevent-fires)

- Hundreds of print and digital placements including published calendar event listings, posters and flyers sent to dozens of outlets on all health department and health department-supported community events PCDOH events.
- The FDA Advisory related to cinnamon apple fruit pouches linked to elevated lead levels was amplified through social media, community partner email distribution list, media alert, and grassroots community outreach.
- In total, comprehensive program and service promotion contributed to successful outcomes—ranging from reaching new audiences to accessing new resources and building partnerships.
- The Live Healthy Putnam coalition, a community-based organization facilitated by the health department, formalized the group's efforts to address Putnam's most pressing social determinant of health—transportation—by establishing a sub-committee working group in collaboration with Putnam County Transportation.
- The Public Health Infrastructure grant contract was executed, which includes two new full-time positions to enhance public health workforce capabilities.
- The [Walking for Wellness Program](#), a 4-week challenge to increase exercise and improve physical fitness and stamina resulting in a combined step count of 4,452,955 steps from 30 county employees, with the greatest submissions from Putnam County Law Enforcement and Corrections officers.
- Putnam Hospital Center/Nuvance upgraded the Community Education display in memory of Hal Farquhar, M.D. The wellness program continues to provide information on topics such as heart health, emergency preparedness, tick/rabies prevention, immunization information (Flu, COVID, and RSV), and lung cancer awareness.
- Wellness emails continue to be sent to all county employees and volunteers to reinforce the importance of self-care tips through office stretches, meditation practices, healthy food choices, and other healthy habits to incorporate in the workday. The promotion of physical and mental wellness improves the lives and health of employees, supporting their well-being, lessening workplace stress, and increasing productivity.
- PCDOH, together with the Prevention Council of Putnam, participated at the National Night Out in the Village of Brewster.
- During participation at the Office for Senior Resources (OSR) annual Falls Prevention Month events at the four Senior Centers in Putnam, PCDOH Fellows and staff created an interactive Emergency Preparedness and Falls Prevention Jeopardy game to educate and engage the seniors. Topics included how to better prepare for emergencies and avoid unnecessary falls in their homes. Take-home information and starter bags for their personal preparedness kits were also provided.
- As a follow-up to the Falls Prevention Month activities, PCDOH staff attended the Senior Health Fair to provide information on upcoming health department events, immunization information and clinic schedules, sexual health information and

contraceptives, and reinforced emergency preparedness by distributing the File of Life and other public health factsheets.

- A Graduate Fellow presented virtually to Brewster Central School District parents in Spanish on the topic of Mental Health and Wellbeing (Salud Mental y Bienestar).
- Collaborated with the Sheriff's Office, Prevention Council of Putnam, and Putnam Hospital at two Medication Take Back events to collect 387 pounds of old or expired medication and 375 pounds of used sharps.
- 11 students were hosted department-wide, including PILOT and other student interns, and volunteers.
- PCDOH maintains participation on numerous county-wide task forces and coalitions: Community Resource Group, Communities That Care Coalitions, Health Emergency Preparedness Coalition, Fall Prevention Task Force, Live Healthy Putnam, Mental Health Provider Group, Suicide Prevention Task Force, Reproductive Health Coalition, Disaster Preparedness Community Resilience Task Force, School Wellness Committees, Putnam Hospital Community Health Needs Committee, Putnam County Food Systems Coalition, and Putnam County BR;DGE Alliance.
- The New York State Public Health Corps Fellows and Graduate Fellows supported cross-sectoral partnerships with county agencies and community-based organizations to promote health equity and address the 10 Main Health Challenges identified through the Community Health Assessment. From access to transportation to harm-reduction strategies they continue to support the department's efforts to improve and protect the health of the community.
- With a grant-funded award, Family Support Kits were created to enhance the County's capacity to recover from a critical event in which residents may be displaced. This award was also used to purchase technology to support the Bureau of Emergency Services Alternate Emergency Operations Center (AltEOC) plan.

Epidemiology:

- The [weekly COVID surveillance report](#) was streamlined to be in alignment with [the weekly flu surveillance report](#). COVID reports were published on the health department website throughout 2023, and flu reports were published during the flu season (October-May). Individual case investigations are not done for high volume respiratory diseases like flu and COVID, but surveillance is conducted to monitor trends, and detect outbreaks so that control measures can be initiated. Published reports provide information to healthcare professionals to inform clinical decision making, and the public for personal risk assessment.
- Revisions were made to the school-based disease surveillance process and materials to standardize the data collected, and clarify objective to detect and monitor patterns of respiratory and gastrointestinal illness in the schools.
- A protocol was developed, and daily monitoring of the New York State Electronic Syndromic Surveillance System (ESSS) was initiated in the Nursing Division. ESSS monitoring provides a means for early identification of unusual disease occurrences in the Putnam Hospital Center Emergency Department.

- Online systems for tracking illness complaints and disease reports were developed and initiated to facilitate communication between the Nursing and Environmental Health Services Divisions and ensure detection of patterns indicative of outbreaks.
- The Outbreak Team, which includes the Epidemiologist and members of Nursing and EHS, participated in investigative and disease control activities related to a large norovirus outbreak in an assisted living facility. Final reports were submitted to CDC through NYSDOH, with findings including a total of 33 probable and confirmed cases spread over a 38-day period.
- An evidence-based intervention to increase early childhood vaccination rates through improving data quality and utilizing the reminder/recall functionality in the New York State Immunization Information System (NYSIIS) was developed and launched in the Spring of 2023 as part of the [Community Health Improvement Plan \(CHIP\)](#). Three pediatric healthcare practices, and PCDOH, were recruited to participate in the intervention. To date, 72% of vaccine reminder/recall notifications sent as a part of the intervention have resulted in the scheduling of vaccination appointments.
- Two surveys, one of pediatric vaccination providers and one of parents of young children, were conducted to inform the work of the ongoing intervention through better understanding of factors influencing early childhood vaccinations in Putnam County. Reports detailing the findings of these surveys can be found at: <https://www.putnamcountyny.com/health/community-health#Assessments>
- An [Executive Summary](#) of Putnam County data in the 2023 [County Health Roadmaps and Rankings](#) was submitted to PCDOH leadership and the leadership of other county agencies and community partner organizations. While Putnam was ranked the number one healthiest of New York's 62 counties for the second year in a row, identification of areas in need of improvement, such as rates of binge drinking and access to grocery stores, are useful to inform prioritization of community resources.
- In response to findings in the [2022-2024 Community Health Assessment \(CHA\)](#), a suite of tickborne disease prevention activities were initiated including distribution of diagnostic resources to healthcare providers, educational presentations and outreach, and posting of tick warning signs. More details can be found in [Addendum 2](#) to the 2022-2024 Putnam County CHA/CHIP.
- The epidemiologist provided charts and interpretation of data related to physician antimicrobial prescribing in support of the Nursing Division initiative to combat antimicrobial resistance. Resources to decrease unnecessary prescribing were distributed to 11 healthcare practices as a part of this initiative.
- Physician advisories were sent to County healthcare providers via the Integrated Health Alerting Network System (IHANS) regarding high rates of anaplasmosis in July and lead contamination in Cinnamon Apple Fruit Pouches in November.

Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP), Cities Readiness Initiative (CRI),
Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)

- Organized and chaired quarterly meetings of the county-wide Disaster Preparedness/Community Resilience Task Force.
- Participated in NYSDOH CRI quarterly meetings and Technical Assistance Action Plan (TAAP) webinars to assure program requirements were on track.
- Wrote the Mass Fatality Tabletop Exercise After Action Report (AAR) and submitted the document to the NYSDOH and shared outcomes with Preparedness partners.
- Developed, wrote, and submitted the departmental Pandemic Influenza Plan to the NYSDOH.
- Revised/updated the departmental Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and Public Health Asset Distribution (PHAD) Plan and submitted the plans to the NYSDOH.
- The PHEP Coordinator participated in the virtual 2023 National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO) Annual Preparedness Summit.
- Assured coordination of emergency preparedness educational activities with Fellows and other Health Education staff.
- During this past year, medical and non-medical MRC volunteers donated approximately 116 hours in flu clinics and educational events, including informational and interactive programs at the PC Senior Centers and Food Operators Seminar.
- Assured two National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO) MRC grants requirements were met and submitted.
- Created an MRC Handbook. The purpose of the handbook is to provide an overview of the Putnam County Medical Reserve Corps including volunteer rules and responsibilities, training and deployment information.
- The PHEP/MRC Coordinator represented the PCDOH at the annual, national MRC Conference in Richmond, VA.
- Participated in the annual Technical Assistance program review with Health and Human Services (HHS) Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) staff to discuss program goals.
- Produced and disseminated a bi-monthly newsletter listing training courses, highlighting county MRC volunteers, spotlighting related conferences and including newsworthy topics on local, regional or national MRC issues.
- Hosted the Annual Medical Reserve Corps Conference where subject matter experts presented information on civilian readiness, protective actions and reunification and recovery (physical and mental) efforts after critical incidents.

Nursing and Clinical Services

- 2023 saw the highest number of tuberculosis (TB) cases in recent history (6 active cases).
- Cases of elevated blood lead levels are at the highest number in the last five years.
- 2023 was the highest year on record for babesiosis and anaplasmosis/ehrlichiosis cases in Putnam County.
- Provided 1,998 flu immunizations.
- 316 visits were made by MCH nurses to assist new moms.
- HIV counseling, testing, and referrals were maintained with twice weekly clinics.
- Two 8-week programs of Freedom from Smoking, an evidence-based smoking cessation program developed by the American Lung Association, were successfully facilitated by Nursing and Health Education staff. These programs were provided free of cost for anyone who works or lives in Putnam County.
- Provided 6 Mount Saint Mary BSN students with public health clinical experience.
- Attended the Mahopac Middle School Health Fair where education was provided on HPV, flu and vaping.
- Participated in the Mahopac Middle School Career Fair where students inquired about careers in public health.
- STI Awareness month was commemorated in partnership with the ALLY Care Center at Westchester Medical Center. Over 30 residents were educated regarding STIs and free HIV testing services were offered at two different locations in Putnam County.
- Attended Putnam County Country Fest along with health education staff and provided education and literature on HIV/STI, Lyme disease, immunizations, emergency preparedness, MRC, upcoming PCDOH events as well as information from many of the health department services.
- Nursing and Health Education staff represented PCDOH at Putnam Hospital Kids Day and provided education and information on Lyme, Emergency preparedness, HIV, STIs, lead, and immunizations.
- Nursing's health educator and a public health fellow supported the Mahopac ENL health fair at Mahopac High School through the culturally and linguistically appropriate provision of information on HIV, STIs, immunizations including HPV, Emergency Preparedness, healthy relationships, lead poisoning prevention and upcoming PCDOH events including public flu clinics.
- Commemorated World AIDS Day and National HIV testing day with free HIV Testing all day. The department provided education, literature, and condoms.
- Implemented Patagonia Health, an Electronic Medical Record software to modernize the health data of PCDOH clients.
- Re-established antibiotic resistance outreach to Putnam County providers to improve the incidence of unnecessary antibiotic prescribing.

Communicable Disease Prevention and Control:

In the first 11 months of 2023, the communicable disease division:

- Received and reviewed 2,427 lab reports of reportable communicable diseases.
- Based on assessment of these lab reports, staff conducted 1,286 unique investigations of suspected cases of reportable communicable diseases.
- Based on the findings of investigations, staff created 593 confirmed or probable cases of reportable communicable disease and initiated disease control measures as appropriate to the nature of the disease.
- Excluding COVID-19, influenza, and Lyme disease which are not investigated on an individual case basis, the most frequently reported communicable diseases included:
 - Hepatitis, with a combined total of 672 lab reports received and 34 cases created for hepatitis A (1 case), B (11 cases), and C (22 cases).
 - Sexually transmitted infections, with a combined total of 667 lab reports received and 413 cases created for chlamydia (178 cases), gonorrhea (32 cases), and syphilis (25 cases).
 - Tickborne diseases, with a combined total of 661 lab reports received and 153 cases created for babesiosis (56 cases) and anaplasmosis/ehrlichiosis (97 cases). 2023 was the highest year on record for cases of babesiosis and anaplasmosis/ehrlichiosis in Putnam County.
(Please note that Lyme disease is the most common tickborne disease in Putnam County, but the volume is such that reports are no longer investigated individually in New York State. Case counts for Lyme disease for 2023 based on lab reports received are determined by the state and are not yet available.)
 - Enteric diseases, with a combined total of 209 lab reports received, and 99 cases created for 11 different diseases.

2023 Outbreaks and Notable Investigations:

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an **outbreak** is the occurrence of more cases of a disease than would normally be expected in a specific place or group of people over a given period of time (<https://cdc.gov>, Jun 5, 2017).

- **GI illness:**

An Adult Care Facility in Putnam County experienced a GI outbreak during April and May 2023. The outbreak consisted of a total of 32 probable and one confirmed case of Norovirus. Ten cases were in staff and 23 were in residents. The clinical picture was compatible with the suspected norovirus pathogen. PCDOH assisted the facility with specimen submission to Wadsworth, and infection control guidance.

- **Avian Flu:**

USDA confirmed a highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in a commercial flock in the United States on February 8, 2022. USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service worked to identify and respond to detections of disease and to mitigate the virus' impact on U.S. poultry production and trade. In April 2023, 2 flocks of chickens in Putnam County were identified as being infected with the Avian Flu. Both flocks were culled, and 3 identified human contacts were monitored for Avian Flu signs and symptoms.

- Hepatitis A:

A single case of Hepatitis A led to the identification of three household contacts at risk for disease after exposure to the index case. Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) was provided to three unvaccinated household contacts. Work contacts were determined to be outside of the PEP window however, education was provided with a recommendation for the Hepatitis A vaccine for future protection.

- Neisseria Meningitis:

A single case of Neisseria Meningitides led to the identification of 9 contacts exposed to and therefore at risk for disease. PEP was provided for all 9 contacts within the prophylaxis window.

- Dengue:

2023 saw an increase in the number of Dengue cases worldwide. In the United States, local spread of dengue has been reported in Florida, Hawaii, Texas, and Arizona. Putnam investigated three travel-related cases.

Immunization Program:

- In collaboration with the Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, new parents receive three postcards from PCDOH Immunization and Lead Poisoning Prevention Programs:
 - All Putnam County parents of newborns receive a postcard with PCDOH information directing to “Parents of Newborn” informational [webpage](#).
 - Birthday postcards are also sent to remind parents to have children tested for lead at ages 1 & 2, and to be up to date on immunizations.
 - 2,285 postcards were mailed out in 2023.
- Demand for travel vaccinations has increased. PCDOH will begin to offer two travel clinics per month in 2024 to support safe international travel for residents.
 - 73 people received a total of 144 travel vaccines.
- Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers/ Vaccine for Adults Program (MSFW/VFA) is held monthly, except for August and November.
 - 87 people received 156 vaccines.
- Two VFA flu clinics are held annually in October and November.
 - 99 flu vaccines were administered.
- School Based Flu Clinics have been a disease prevention staple in Putnam County for 14 years. Clinics are held in all six school districts.
 - 1367 flu vaccines were administered in 2023.
- Seasonal Flu Clinics:
 - 2 in Brewster at PCDOH as drive-thru clinics.
 - 160 vaccines administered.
 - 1 at the Garrison Fire Department.
 - 72 vaccines administered.
- 1 employees-only drive-thru clinic at PCDOH.
 - 170 vaccines administered.
- 4 Office of Senior Resources (OSR) senior center clinics.
 - 130 vaccines administered.

Other Disease Control Services:

Tuberculosis:

The TB program's goal is the elimination of tuberculosis. The TB program contracts with the Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) to provide free services for Putnam County residents with TB disease and TB infection including testing, evaluation, and treatment. TB data is gathered and submitted to the NYS DOH.

- 6 tuberculosis disease (active TB) cases required the following:
 - Coordination with NYSDOH TB control and Wadsworth laboratory for TB specimens and case management.
 - Coordination with local hospitals (Putnam Hospital, Danbury Hospital, and Westchester Medical Center) for safe discharge planning.
 - Directly observed therapy (DOT) of 165 in-person home visits and 300 video calls were completed.
- 12 tuberculosis infection (latent TB infection) cases initiated voluntary prophylactic treatment.
 - 10 patients completed treatment.
 - 18 office visits and 6 in-person home visits were completed.
- 46 PPDs (TB skin screening tests) were completed for employees and residents.
- Continued to work with the Federally Qualified Health Center, Open Door Brewster, to improve the process for referrals and coordinate care for all TB patients per contract with clinic.
 - 38 total referrals received from or made to Open Door Brewster in 2023.

HIV/AIDS:

Free HIV counseling and testing clinics are offered on an appointment and/or walk in basis. Putnam County DOH provides HIV testing and linkage to treatment. An added focus at PCDOH is to amplify the NYSDOH AIDS Institute's mission to educate those we test and the community regarding pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and U=U (undetectable equals untransmittable).

- 10 HIV screenings were completed at PCDOH.
- 252 HIV screening tests were completed at Brewster Open Door January through October 2023.

Rabies:

Rabies treatment was recommended for 25 potential cases.

- 24 completed treatment, with one lost to follow-up.
- Pre-exposure vaccine was provided for 9 people for prevention prior to either travel or working with animals/wildlife.

Lead Prevention Program:

- 2,009 children were tested for lead in 2023.
- 20 children with an elevated blood level of greater than 5 µg/dL are in Nursing case management as of December 2023.
- All children in case management are retested per the Lead Prevention protocol as outlined in letters to parents and pediatricians.

- 5 children with elevated lead levels in Putnam County have been identified as being associated with the FDA Advisory related to lead contamination in certain Cinnamon Apple Fruit Pouches. PCDOH continues to investigate the possibility of other potential cases (siblings).

Maternal and Child Health:

- The Maternal Child Health Program (MCH) continued to provide training and educational services to new parents through a holistic approach by offering support groups, classes, telephone consults, and home visits. Educational topics include general parenting, breastfeeding, diet, immunizations, disease control, lead poisoning prevention, sleep safety, postpartum depression, and child growth and development.
- Renewed programming post pandemic with long-tenured employee with specialized credentials as an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) and a more recent hire—a Spanish speaking Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC).
- The MCH program continued to conduct the Child Find Program in partnership with Early Intervention monitors child development in at-risk children.
- The Nursing Division maintained English and Spanish speaking nurses to meet the needs of our residents.
- Lactation services and breastfeeding support received 126 referrals with 316 home visits conducted.
- Child Find Program has 19 active cases, with 38 home visits conducted.
- New Moms groups resumed in two locations: the Mahopac Library and the Philipstown Friendship Center. Groups provide peer support from other moms as well as breastfeeding support, parenting education, and educational presentations on a variety of topics by subject matter experts.
- Partnering with NYP Hudson Valley Hospital Center, PCDOH hosted a Global Big Latch-On in April to show community support for breastfeeding. This is a global initiative supporting the importance of breastfeeding for the health of the child and the role of breastfeeding in the prevention of chronic disease.

Newborn Screening Program:

All newborns in New York State are screened before being discharged from the hospital for a variety of rare but serious disorders. All abnormalities that are found during these screenings are then reported to the NYSDOH. A Public Health Nurse in the PCDOH is notified and assists medical providers and families to ensure the findings are followed-up per NYS guidance.

- 9 cases referred for assistance.
 - 9 cases retested by private practitioners.
 - 7 cases within normal limits.
 - 2 cases with abnormal (positive) results.

Perinatal Hepatitis B Program:

- One new case of perinatal hepatitis B being followed.
- Two cases were completed and closed.
- Two unknown status laboratory reports were investigated and determined to be negative.

Department-wide Committees

Accreditation

- Completed and submitted the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) reaccreditation application to maintain nationally accredited status.

Communications

- Rolled out new branding visuals on health department materials at start of year with the new logo for Putnam County (incorporating “New York” text and refreshing typeface with a serif style). Began discussions about a branding “refresh” (new color palette, type, etc. i.e. BSG elements) and updating Communications Plan.
- Improved accessibility in communications through research and implementation of ADA-compliant equity tools, such as “alt text” and more descriptive captions.
- Enhanced health department staff knowledge and understanding with the ten essential Public Health services and the Putnam County ten main health challenges through creation of an innovative, three-dimensional tree designed, constructed, and displayed in large conference room.
- Formalized media plan for health department and shared with committee for input.

Personnel

- Established new hire focus groups to assist with the review and updates to the Employee Orientation Manual.

QIPM

- Received approval to hire a QIPM Coordinator.
- Reinstated Administrative and Programmatic Dashboards.
- A few department sections had positive changes in program procedures as a result of QI projects.
- Revision and simplification of QIPM Plan to improve staff understanding of concepts, such as PDSA forms simplified and shortened.

Strategic Plan

- The Strategic Plan Committee facilitated “coffee talk” groups to collect feedback from employees on health department strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). The qualitative data was reviewed by the committee and after collective analysis, revised departmental values were defined as were four new departmental strategic priorities.

Workforce Development

- The Workforce Development Committee conducted a Training Needs Assessment (TNA) in 2023. The Region 2 Public Health Training Center at Columbia University assisted in the implementation and analysis of the training needs of the department. The Workforce Development Plan will be updated to reflect the training needs identified through the TNA. In addition, two Public Health Works! Honor Roll nominees were submitted to the NYSDOH to recognize employees who consistently go above and beyond to serve the residents of Putnam County.

VI. Staffing changes in 2023

- Created two new positions through the Public Health Infrastructure Grant: A Quality Improvement Program Management Coordinator and a Data and Informatics Specialist. The Data and Informatics Specialist was hired and has begun to work closely with the epidemiologist on departmental data modernization efforts.
- Expanded NYS Public Health Corps fellowship opportunities through hiring one additional part-time graduate fellow and one additional full-time fellow.
- Public Health Program Assistant Trainee was hired in Health Education.
- Filled vacancy with a new hire for Receptionist in Fall 2023.
- Filled vacancies through hiring two Service Coordinators in Summer 2023.
- Part-time Senior Account Clerk (Preschool Billing) resigned June 2023. Interviews pending.

VII. Sources of Revenue

- Significant increase in fines collected from ATUPA enforcement activities totaling \$30,925 through December 2023. \$9,362 has already been allocated, and an additional \$3,250 will be allocated to Health Education for expanded tobacco and vaping prevention and education programming.

Notable Savings Realized:

- In collaboration with the Putnam County Clerk's office, EHS streamlined FOIL (Freedom of Information Law) requests by introducing a front facing portal. This allows the public to access our well and septic system database for record searches without having to submit a FOIL request. This has saved both administrative support and engineering staff a great amount of time and has allowed us to focus on our primary responsibilities. It also provides a more timely service to our community.
- In 2023 the State reimbursed Putnam County Health Department an additional \$500,000 due to changes that were enacted in 2022, which added fringe benefits to the allowable expenses for reimbursement from the State at 36%. These additional revenues will continue year after year.

VIII. Goals for 2024

Early Intervention and Preschool Programs:

- Increase the number of groups and/or group sessions offered to children in the programs to help meet capacity.
- Monitor the number of cases and evaluate the need for another Service Coordinator.
- Increase the support staff to assist coordinators with projects and improve efficiency and service delivery.

- Expand contracts with school districts to provide related services while also decreasing costs. Assess potential to reduce transportation costs through regional provision of therapeutic classes and/or Universal Pre-K (UPK) programs.
- Improve outreach and understanding of the Early Intervention, Preschool, and Child Find programs by establishing ongoing meetings and in-services with community stakeholders and developing an informational pamphlet for distribution.

Environmental Health Services

- Staff development continues to be a top priority for both succession and continuity of operations planning. In the first week of 2024, we will see the retirement of a staff member with 38 years of experience. We also have two senior staff members with over 70 years combined public health program experience that are eligible to retire. Priority will be placed on staff training for program needs as well as analysis of staffing for new and emerging challenges. Specifically, we will be evaluating the need for an additional engineer and sanitarian positions as well as the future composition and staffing of the Solid Waste Management Program.
- Reduce the design flow to NYSDOH state standard of 119 gallons per day per bedroom.
- Implement Phase 4 of the NYSDEC/EFC Septic Replacement Program.

Fiscal/Administration

- Support succession planning with hiring a new full-time entry level position that was approved for 2024.
- Streamline the Time and Activity reporting which is the basis of reporting reimbursement to the State.
- Continue “Fiscal Fair” offerings for the Health Department staff.

Health Education

- Enhance adolescent tobacco prevention and education programs through ATUPA program and community partnerships.
- PCDOH will host the 2024 Public Health Summit with a theme of “Making Connections” to harness the power of partnerships in community health improvement.
- Finalize Communicable Disease Surveillance & Outbreak Policy and Procedure documents.
- Develop departmental informatics capabilities to design and implement databases with online user interfaces to meet information gathering needs for emergent public health issues as they arise (e.g.: to be able to quickly standup a cloud-based questionnaire for investigation of a food-borne disease outbreak).
- Initiate systematic department-wide tracking of population health initiatives and evaluation metrics.
- Initiate systematic monitoring of community health indicators in years where a full-scale Community Health Assessment is not completed.
- Launch a dedicated webpage for tickborne disease prevention resources to include a recording of Tickborne Disease Prevention in Putnam County presentation.
- Hire and orient a part-time MRC Assistant.

- Increase MRC recruitment.
- Expand MRC trainings and volunteer opportunities.
- Organize and attend the local annual MRC conference.
- Write a volunteer management plan.
- Assure completion of the NYSDOH MRC State, Territory and Tribal Nations Representative Organizations for Next Generation (STTRONG) grant deliverables and requirements.
- Participate in the annual, national MRC Conference.
- Maintain and enhance communication with preparedness partners through the Disaster Preparedness/Community Resilience Task Force meetings and distribution list.
- Improve PCDOH emergency preparedness trailer and shed equipment inventories.
- Continue to conduct communications drills to maintain proficiency and assure enhanced capabilities.
- Participate in the annual Preparedness Summit.
- Formalize photo shoots to enhance communications.
- Build a database of gray sky media templates.
- Improve and maintain lobby and waiting area educational information.
- Establish an Employee Wellness Sharepoint with access to recipes, office stretches, and more.

Nursing and Clinical Services

- Research and implement a public health education series for the community.
- Increase the number of HIV screening tests for existing patients.
- Distribute 5,000 condoms to community partners.
- Increase community TB screening tests by 20%.
- Streamline the TB referral process to the Federally Qualified Health Center.
- Increase the number of MCH referrals received from hospitals by 25%.
- Expand the MCH New Mothers Support Group to Brewster Library.
- Increase efficiency by transitioning all nursing programs to the Patagonia electronic medical record (EMR).
- Enhance staffing to provide optimal services in the areas of health promotion and prevention.
- Strengthen services to support new mothers at risk for post-partum depression and psychosis.