



2023

Annual Report



STARK  **HEALTH**
COUNTY
DEPARTMENT

*Striving Toward a **Healthier** Community.*

A Message

from
the

HEALTH COMMISSIONER



Kirkland K. Norris, REHS, MPH
Health Commissioner

It is with pleasure and honor that we present the 2023 Annual Report for the Stark County Combined General Health District. The report highlights the work and dedication of the hard-working public health professionals of the Stark County Health Department. It includes activities and accomplishments from the department's three Service Areas: Support and Administration, Nursing, and Environmental Health, which work directly to accomplish our mission of assessing, protecting, promoting, and improving public health within our Stark County community. Additionally, the report focuses on the department's initiative to enhance our community engagement efforts and strengthen public health partnerships.

Below are a few of the Department's high valued projects for 2023.

■ **Stark HealthMobile Unit**

The health department acquired the HealthMobile Unit through partnership with the HEALing Communities Study in late May. The HealthMobile Unit has been vital in providing overdose education, distributing naloxone, and working with partners to link the community to treatment and resources.

■ **Reaccreditation**

The department's Accreditation Team uploaded and submitted reaccreditation documents to PHAB on September 21, 2023. The Public Health Accreditation Board conducted a Site Visit in January of 2024. The department will receive notice of Reaccreditation by the end of March 2024.

■ **Community Health Improvement Plan**

Community partners worked together to focus on a one roadmap approach to address the priority of Mental Health along with Access to Care. Through this approach, a shared vision emerged, "Everyone struggles. No one struggles alone". The 2023-2025 CHIP focuses on strategies that includes community-wide alignment across multiple sectors to promote health equity and wellness in our community.

These high value projects are just a few of the many that the department is responsible for implementing and overseeing within the health jurisdiction.

On behalf of the Board of Health, our staff, Medical Director, and myself, we would like to thank the townships, cities, villages, and Stark County community for your continued support of the health department. The partnerships that have been firmly built over the last decade are of extreme importance in moving the health of our Stark County Community forward. The health of our community is our number one priority. Our dedicated health department team is diligently working to ensure a healthier and safer Stark County.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kirkland K. Norris
Health Commissioner

NEW INITIATIVES FOR THE COMMUNICABLE DISEASE TEAM

One new initiative that the SCHD communicable disease team started in 2023 was the use of geographic information system to map the addresses of Lyme disease cases. This was started due to the increase in Lyme disease cases and the desire to collect ticks for density sampling and pathogen testing. Exposure sites that are public places such as parks are much easier to visualize and correlate between cases, but home addresses cannot be visualized or correlated in the same way. Mapping cases helps to visualize Stark County exposure locations and help direct tick collection efforts. Cases can be added as they are reported, and the companion mobile phone app can be used to mark collection sites in real-time, providing accurate measures of location and area covered during collection.

The communicable disease team spent time familiarizing themselves with both the website mapping along with the mobile phone app and will resume tick collection efforts in Spring 2024 when tick activity restarts in the area.

Second, in 2023, the communicable disease team started doing in-person ICARs (Infection Control Assessment and Response site visits) at long-term care facilities. These ICARs are the natural progression of tele-ICARs (virtual versions of these site visits) that began during the COVID-19 pandemic. These visits are offered to long-term care facilities both in response to a healthcare-acquired infection (HAI) event as well as proactively to prevent HAI cases and outbreaks.

Visits consist of the team going to the facility, meeting with individuals such as Directors of Nursing, Infection Preventionists, and other staff in management to go over infection prevention policies, and touring the

facility to make observations. Observations may include staff hand hygiene compliance, proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE), proper isolation precaution signage, accessibility of hand hygiene supplies, and other relevant infection prevention measures. During the tour, SCHD staff also speak with facility staff to get their perspective on things like training in hand hygiene, PPE, and isolation precautions. Between speaking with management about facility policies, speaking with staff about their perspective, and performing observations, we then provide the facility with things they do well in the realm of infection prevention as well as some opportunities for improvement. After this, we offer to return to the facility to provide education to staff on identified areas for improvement. Often, this education includes hand hygiene and transmission-based precautions along with any topics requested by the facility.

These ICAR visits allow the communicable disease team to build better relationships with our long-term care facilities and facilitates more open communication. In turn, disease reporting occurs more regularly and the SCHD can provide more specialized recommendations to each facility seeking assistance. The communicable disease team will continue to go on these site visits, with some 2024 visits already planned.

Steps for Effective Hand Washing

Wet Hands	Apply Soap Liquid or clean bar soap	Rub vigorously together Pay special attention around nails and between fingers
Rinse Well	Dry with paper towel	Turn off faucet with paper towel

Wash Hands Often

STARK HEALTH
Striving Toward a Healthier Community

www.starkhealth.org

SERVICE DIRECTORS



Kay Conley, MPA, CHES
Administration
& Support Services Director



Paul DePasquale, REHS, MPA
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Services Director



Amanda Uhler, MPH, RN
Nursing Services
Director



Maureen Ahmann, DO
Medical
Director

MISSION: “Our mission is to assess, protect, promote, and improve the health of Stark County through leadership, quality service, and community partnerships.”

VISION STATEMENT: “Striving towards a healthier community with public health excellence.”

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NEWBORN SCREENINGS RESULTS & College Athletes

When babies are born, they are screened for congenital hearing loss, critical congenital heart disease, and blood spot screening for different medical conditions. The Ohio Department of Health's Newborn Screening (NBS) Program identifies newborn babies that could be at risk for certain serious health conditions by just a few drops of blood. Ohio began screening babies for phenylketonuria (PKU) in 1966, and now the NBS program screens for amino acid disorders, fatty acid disorders, organic acid disorders, biotinidase deficiency, congenital adrenal hyperplasia, congenital hypothyroidism, cystic fibrosis, galactosemia, sickle cell disease and other hemoglobinopathies, severe combined immunodeficiency, lysosomal storage disorders, spinal muscular atrophy, X-linked adrenoleukodystrophy, and Krabbe disease.

A majority of the time, after birth and once results have been given after birth, people have little need for further information related to the findings from the newborn screening. But on August 1, 2022, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) changed the requirement and student-athletes are no longer able to sign a waiver declining the confirmation of sickle cell status. Students must now be tested for sickle cell trait or show proof of a prior test. The Ohio NBS results will satisfy the NCAA requirement for documentation of their sickle cell status. Ohio newborn screening tests started including hemoglobinopathy (including for sickle cell) in July 1998.

Each year, more than 500 newborns needing medical care are identified at a newborn screening. All babies should be screened, and Ohio law requires all babies born in the hospital to be screened. If the baby is born outside of the hospital, the screenings can be arranged with their midwife, medical provider, or the local health department. NBS results are sent to the birth hospital and the listed medical provider about a week after birth or the local health department if a provider is not listed. The Ohio Department of Health retains newborn screening results for 21 years, so as long as the parents did not decline the test and the person is under 21 years of age, a result should be available from the Ohio Department of Health.

If you are a college athlete and need a copy of your newborn screening result, a Student-Athlete Authorization to Release Newborn Screening Results form and Frequently Asked Questions can be found at <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/sickle-cell-services/sickle-cell-trait-student-athlete>.



The Stark County Health Department is available to assist with collecting newborn screening samples, provide midwives and medical providers with the screening test kits at no charge, and help connect parents with medical care or resources when needed. Some conditions can be identified at birth, and early treatment can improve outcomes. For more information please call our office or visit <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/Newborn-Screening/welcome>.



odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/Newborn-Screening/welcome



Stark County Health Department Continues to Advance Public Health Practices Through Reaccreditation

The Stark County Health Department worked towards achieving reaccreditation throughout 2023. Reaccreditation ensures that accredited health departments continue to evolve, improve, and advance their public health practice to serve their community.

Between the months of January and June, the health department reviewed and identified documentation highlighting conformity with the Public Health Accreditation Board's (PHAB) standards and measures. The documentation utilized by the health department showcased the initiatives, programs and efforts implemented over the past five years to expand services, enhance community partnerships and improve accountability within the community.

During the second half of 2023, PHAB assigned two site visitors to the health department. The two site visitors, in collaboration with a PHAB Accreditation Specialist, reviewed the submitted documentation for conformity and to ensure all PHAB requirements were met. In December of 2023, PHAB and the Stark County Health Department scheduled the department's reaccreditation site visit which took place in January 2024. More to come.



STARK COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT 2023

ADMIN & SUPPORT AT-A-GLANCE

- **70:** total number of Businesses that received COVID-19 safety items through the CDBG and Enhanced Operations grants
- **\$291,715:** value of COVID-19 safety items provided to local businesses
- **8,938:** total number of death certificates issued
- **3,586:** total number of birth certificates issued

Mental Health:

The Focus of the 2023-2025 Community Health Improvement Plan

The 2023-2025 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) provides the framework used by the Stark County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) Advisory Committee which includes public health, healthcare, and other governmental, education, social, and human service agencies. The goals and strategies identified in the 2023 CHIP aim to improve the health outcomes of Stark County residents with two priorities of mental health and access to care.

During this cycle, the Advisory Committee collaborated with Stark Community Foundation and a consultant to focus on a one roadmap approach for the priority area of mental health. This new approach engaged community stakeholders and community members in discussion around the leading health needs and social conditions impacting our communities. These discussions helped identify the goals and strategies to be addressed within Stark County's 2023-2025 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).

The development of our community roadmap is to achieve positive outcomes towards the mental health of our residents and included a shared vision and core beliefs. The North Star principle "Everyone struggles. No one struggles alone." is the shared vision.

The Core Beliefs are:

- All people can be well and joyful
- Individual and community health are connected
- Everyone should be connected to community and digital infrastructures
- Collaborations are vital to our success
- Mental health care is health care and is more than avoiding crisis

The community roadmap shared vision is "Everyone struggles. No one struggles alone"

Keeping this vision and core beliefs in mind, over 150 community stakeholders and members voted on the top five strategies to be addressed within the 2023-2025 CHIP at the Health Improvement Summit held on June 18, 2023. In the fall of 2023, three CHIP Implementation Workgroups were established to develop action plans with measurable objectives, activities and specific indicators addressing the 2023-2025 CHIP strategies.

They include:

- 1) Utilize a digital technology platform to unify health and human services.
- 2) Increase education on safe electronic device use for parents and youth.
- 3) Increase formalized partnerships between behavioral health providers and medical offices/urgent care centers.
- 4) Reduce non-treatment barriers to improve behavioral health access.
- 5) Expand behavioral health supports for school staff within school districts.

The CHIP Action Plan Workgroups meet regularly to review survey data, discuss community successes and barriers aligning to the CHIP areas, determine the best approach to reduce health inequities, and evaluate CHIP implementation strategies. Over the next two years, these community agencies and community members will work to improve the health of our residents to achieve a healthier Stark County.

Thank you to the following organizations for providing leadership for the 2023-2025 CHIP Action Plan Workgroups:

- Access Health Stark County
- Alliance Family Health Center
- Aultman Health Foundation
- Behavioral Health Collaborative
- Lifecare Family Health and Dental Center
- Stark County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery
- Stark County Health Department
- Stark County Educational Services Center



Stark County Acquires Mobile Unit to Address Drug Overdose Crisis



The Stark County Health Department (SCHD) acquired a new 30-foot mobile unit in 2023 to help address the opioid crisis by providing overdose education, naloxone distribution, and linkages to treatment throughout Stark County. The HEALing Communities Study (HCS) provided the vehicle to the health department, through their funding from the Helping to End Addiction Long-term (HEAL) initiative.

The mobile unit is a resource available to combat overdose deaths in the community. The 2022 Stark County Overdose Fatality Review Report included 159 unintentional drug poisoning deaths (25 were non-Stark residents), which was an increase from the previous year. Of the deaths that occurred in Stark County, the majority continue to be non-Hispanic white males. The age group with the highest rate in previous years has been 25-34. In 2019, this age group shifted to 35-44 and this continued to be the case for 2022. There continues to be an increase in the 55 and over age group when compared to previous years. The highest percentage of deaths fall into the white category (85%). When looking at rate per 100,000 population, the black rates are significantly high (61.8 rate for black compared to 36.38 rate for white).

The mobile unit, now known as the *Stark County HealthMobile*, went into service in May, 2023. SCHD hired two outreach specialists that coordinate the *HealthMobile* – and are responsible for the day to day operations, as well as coordinating services with partners. The team uses a data driven approach to ensure that services are being provided to appropriate communities.

Since May, the *HealthMobile* was on the road over 40 times – at community meetings, pop up Naloxone distribution events, and community outreach events. We also participated in the Pro Football Hall of Fame kickoff parade, and Stark County Overdose Awareness Day events. Over 730 naloxone kits were distributed by SCHD staff. Additional resources were also provided including harm reduction educational resources, Covid test kits, drug deactivation bags, and hygiene kits. Partner agencies also joined with us to provide linkages to treatment and community resources.

Additional funding from HCS was used to create a video highlighting the unit that was recently promoted on YouTube and three local newspaper websites. The *HealthMobile* also has a social media presence via its Facebook page. We appreciate all of our partners for supporting this initiative and providing services with the *HealthMobile*. Information about where the *HealthMobile* will be, and how to request it for your community event can be found on the Save Stark website – at www.starkhealth.org.

NEW STRATEGIC PLAN SETS GOALS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

The Stark County Health Department engaged in strategic planning during 2023. Strategic planning processes all focus on moving an organization from its present state into the future. The best plans are inspired, compelling visions of measurable outcomes that bridge an organization's present with its future. They are actionable rather than merely descriptive, championed by invested Leadership/Board members, and implemented by engaged teams.

Over the course of four months, the SCHD strategic planning team engaged in the inquiry, reflection, discernment, and action planning needed to create a compelling, inspired and measurable pathway to the organization's future. Using Question Thinking techniques in each step, the team built a strategic framework, identified strategic priorities, and articulated measurable action plans.

The team began its work in early September 2023, during an in-service day for all employees and Board members, by facilitating small group discussions of the Predicted vs. Created Future exercise, followed by a Gap Analysis to support the development of the Strategic Frame. Once the Strategic Frame was complete, the team identified and prioritized strategic initiatives.

The top three became the following Strategic Goals:

- I. Intentionally improve public image to build community trust.
- II. Improve workforce retention through employee satisfaction.
- III. Increase and sustain funding and revenue to meet community needs.

The SCHD team will monitor progress on all the activities conducted on each of the three goals during the next five years. The completed 2024-2028 Stark County Health Department Strategic Plan can be found at www.starkhealth.org.

Stark County Health Department Strategic Frame 2024-2028



2023 PROPERTY TRANSFER SUMMARY

A total of 791 property transfer septic system inspections were conducted in 2023, seeing a continued drop from 2022, 2021 and 2020. A more sluggish real estate market has caused a reduction in the number of inspections completed. The 2023 property transfer program statistics are listed to the right sorted by township. Overall, 17% of the systems inspected were considered failing, which is the same as last year. "Failing" means that the system is causing a public health nuisance, which is defined in Ohio Revised Code 3718.011. The statewide failure rate is estimated to be around 30%. An additional 14% of inspections found improperly discharging gray water, slightly up from 13% last year. Each inspection is submitted to the Health Department for review; when the review is completed, additional information and education is provided to the buyer and seller on how to properly maintain the system to maximize its life span. All public health nuisances are required to be corrected whether the system is failing, gray water is being improperly discharged, or both.

2023 PROPERTY TRANSFER INSPECTION BREAKDOWN

Township	Total Inspections	Septic Failure		Gray Water	
BETHLEHEM	19	4	21%	2	11%
CANTON	32	9	28%	4	13%
JACKSON	74	3	4%	5	7%
LAKE	154	15	10%	17	11%
LAWRENCE	49	9	18%	7	14%
LEXINGTON	20	5	25%	4	20%
MARLBORO	35	5	14%	7	20%
NIMISHILLEN	54	12	22%	12	22%
OSNABURG	49	11	22%	3	6%
PARIS	31	8	26%	5	16%
PERRY	31	6	19%	6	19%
PIKE	21	7	33%	3	14%
PLAIN	98	14	14%	11	11%
SANDY	13	5	38%	3	23%
SUGARCREEK	17	3	18%	2	12%
TUSCARAWAS	48	7	15%	6	13%
WASHINGTON	46	8	17%	10	22%
Totals	791	131	17%	107	14%

2013 THROUGH 2023 PROPERTY TRANSFER INSPECTIONS COMPLETED

2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
836	809	857	917	967	945	922	1013	970	842	791

AT-A-GLANCE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

- **8,310:** Total Environmental Health Inspections
- **2,815:** Total Food Inspections
- **33.5:** Average Number of Inspections per Workday

2023 LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH OF RESIDENTS IN THE STARK COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT JURISDICTION

CAUSE	COUNT	CAUSE	COUNT
Heart Disease.....	612	Accidental Drug.....	61
Cancer.....	596	Diseases of the Liver.....	54
Alzheimer's Disease/Dementia.....	197	Parkinson's Disease.....	52
Cerebrovascular Disease.....	156	COVID-19.....	43
Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases.....	136	Sepsis.....	39
Kidney Disease.....	81	Suicide.....	33
Accidental.....	80	Nutritional Deficiencies.....	26
Diabetes Mellitus.....	64	*Other.....	637
Pneumonia/Pneumonitis.....	63	TOTAL.....	2,930

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

Data in this table includes residents of the Stark County Health Department's jurisdiction, regardless of which jurisdiction the death occurred in. The report utilizes the CDC's list of 113 Selected Causes of Death, which is condensed to make a shorter list of common leading causes of death. This list creates cause of death groups numbered 1-53 based on primary cause of death assigned on a death certificate. Stark County Health Department jurisdiction resident deaths are filtered based on these groupings. The data above shows the number of deaths from each cause and demonstrates which causes of death are most common.

2023 COMMUNICABLE DISEASE HIGHLIGHTS

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

This annual summary represents the 2023 communicable disease data required by Ohio law reported to state and local health departments. Only those communicable diseases determined to be of public health importance are reportable, therefore, this summary does not reflect all communicable disease in our community. Additionally, the summary represents only cases of disease for residents of Stark County Health Department jurisdiction, therefore, does not include disease data for the cities of Alliance, Canton, or Massillon.

1) In 2023, SCHD reported and/or investigated several communicable disease outbreaks. Among these were:

- 1 outbreak of Influenza virus (associated with a long-term care facility)
- 1 outbreak of Pertussis (associated with the community)
- 1 outbreak of Lice (associated with a school)
- 2 outbreaks of Strep Throat (associated with schools and childcare facilities)
- 7 outbreaks of Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (associated with schools and childcare facilities)
- 58 outbreaks of COVID-19
 - ✓ 57 outbreaks associated with long-term care facilities
 - ✓ 1 outbreak associated with a daycare

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

2) During 2023, several reportable infectious diseases increased in the number of cases reported in the Stark County jurisdiction compared to that of 2022. These diseases are as follows:

- **Carbapenemase-Producing Organisms (CPO)**
CPO is a group of bacteria that are resistant to carbapenem antibiotics through the production of the enzyme carbapenemase. The name and definition continue to change as this often healthcare-acquired infection evolves and becomes more widespread. In 2023, there were 26 cases compared to 16 cases in 2022. Additionally, 8 individuals were found to be colonized with CPO in 2023. An expansion of the case definition

Reportable Infectious DISEASE SUMMARY

Stark County Health Department Jurisdiction

DISEASE	2023	2022
Amebiasis	0	1
Anaplasmosis	1	1
Babesiosis	0	1
Brucellosis	0	0
Campylobacteriosis	71	50
Chlamydia	559	528
Coccidioidomycosis	0	2
COVID-19	5,920	20,537
CPO	26	16
Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease	2	0
Cryptosporidiosis	12	13
Cyclosporiasis	1	1
E. Coli, Shiga Toxin-producing	17	9
Ehrlichiosis	2	1
Giardiasis	11	9
Gonorrhea	164	162
Haemophilus Influenza	8	7
Hepatitis A	4	3
Hepatitis B – Acute	1	1
Hepatitis B – Chronic	23	25
Hepatitis B – Perinatal infection	1	0
Hepatitis C – Acute	3	2
Hepatitis C – Chronic	49	75
Hepatitis C – Perinatal	1	0
Hepatitis E	1	0
Influenza-associated Hospitalization	105	182
LaCrosse Virus Disease	2	1
Legionellosis	13	20
Listeriosis	1	3
Lyme Disease	186	107
Malaria	0	2
Measles	0	0
Meningitis – Aseptic/Viral	11	7
Meningitis – Bacterial (Not N. Meningitidis)	1	0
Meningococcal Disease-Meningitis	0	1
MIS-C associated with COVID-19	0	2
Mpox	0	5
Mumps	0	0
Mycobacterium other than TB	0	0
Pertussis	13	0
Psittacosis	0	0
Q Fever	0	0
Salmonellosis	33	32
Shigellosis	6	11
Spotted Fever Rickettsiosis (including RMSF)	0	1
Streptococcal – Group A Invasive	30	10
Streptococcal-Group B Newborn	1	0
Streptococcal Toxic Shock Syndrome (STSS)	0	1
Streptococcal-Invasive Pneumoniae	24	19
Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS)	1	0
Tuberculosis	1	1
Typhoid Fever	0	0
Varicella	6	3
Vibriosis	2	1
West Nile Virus	2	0
Yersiniosis	6	3
Zika Virus Disease	0	0
TOTAL	7,332	21,863

*This report includes confirmed, probable, and suspect cases reported 01/01/2022 – 12/31/2023

2023 COMMUNICABLE DISEASE HIGHLIGHTS

occurred in early 2023, allowing organisms outside the Enterobacteriaceae class to be counted as a case of CPO, which may account for some of the increase in cases from 2022 to 2023. These infections can be very difficult to treat and can be spread on the hands of healthcare workers, most often to individuals with vast healthcare exposures such as repeat hospitalizations or residing in a long-term care facility. Additionally, individuals remain colonized after acute infection resolves and at this time there is no evidence for how long this may last, resulting in the current assumption of lifelong colonization.

■ Yersiniosis

Yersiniosis is an infection causing acute gastrointestinal illness with signs and symptoms such as headache, fever, vomiting, and watery diarrhea that begin about 4-7 days after exposure. There are two main bacteria causing Yersiniosis: *Yersinia enterocolitica* and *Yersinia pseudotuberculosis* both of which can be found in various sources including birds, mammals, pigs, puppies and kittens, and food or water. An increase from 3 cases in 2022 to 6 cases in 2023 was noted. These cases result from direct contact (via fecal-oral route) with infected humans or animals or, most commonly, from consuming contaminated food, especially pork. Prevention of yersiniosis includes hand washing before eating or handling food, after animal contact, and after handling raw pork. Additional food safety such as avoiding cross contamination and thoroughly cooking meat applies to yersiniosis as well. Antibiotics are not commonly used to treat yersiniosis, but may be used for more severe infections.

■ Hepatitis E

Hepatitis E is a liver infection caused by the hepatitis E virus (HEV) that is found in the stool and is spread via the fecal-oral route or through eating certain foods. The clinical and epidemiological characteristics of HEV infection can differ depending on which of the 4 identified genotypes of HEV causes the infection, with each one having slightly differing transmission routes, groups at risk, potential for zoonotic transmission, and occurrence of outbreaks. In developing countries, infections usually come from ingesting water contaminated with feces while in developed countries, HEV is contracted from eating raw or undercooked pork, venison, wild boar meat, or shellfish. HEV infection is often asymptomatic for most healthy individuals, but symptoms for those who do become ill can include fever, fatigue, jaundice, loss of appetite, nausea, dark urine, and more. Most people recover completely, but pregnant individuals are at higher risk of more severe disease and mortality as are individuals with chronic liver disease or those who have been recipients of solid organ transplants. There is no approved vaccine in the U.S. and treatment consists only of supportive care such

as fluids and rest. HEV infection can be prevented by not drinking unpurified water and avoiding raw pork and venison.

- 3) Influenza season stretches from October of one year until May of the next. Thus far in the 2023-2024 influenza season there have been 96 cases of hospitalized influenza for Stark County health jurisdiction. At this time in the 2022-2023 season there were 166 cases reported. It should be noted that flu surveillance data may be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and at this time influenza data should be interpreted with caution. The predominant strain for this season is influenza A, which is common as influenza A normally predominates in the beginning half of the season. The influenza vaccine remains the primary and most effective form of protection against the influenza viruses circulating this season. Common symptoms of the flu include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headaches, chills, and fatigue. Complications may include conditions such as bronchitis or pneumonia and may make chronic health problems, such as asthma, worse. Staying home while sick and practicing proper hand hygiene are the best ways to stay healthy this season.

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



WHAT'S A **Public Health Nuisance?**

The Stark County Health Department (SCHD) addresses a wide range of Public Health Nuisances on a daily basis.

THE MAJORITY OF THESE NUISANCES ARE:

- General Public Health Nuisance
- Rabies Prevention and Unvaccinated Pets
- Solid Waste Disposal
- Construction and Demolition Waste Disposal
- Sewage Disposal
- Sanitary Sewer Connection
- Food Service Operations
- Retail Food Establishments

SCHD does not address complaints regarding housing aesthetics, motor vehicles, agricultural pollution or improper pesticide use, non-public health restaurant problems, manufactured home parks regulations, hotels/motels, drainage, or bedbug issues. Each public health nuisance may be addressed a little different dependent on the law/code that directs the program.

The explanation below outlines the Public Health Nuisance process.

To start the Public Health Nuisance process, SCHD needs the location, complaint type, and description of the complaint. Once the department receives the complaint an inspection is conducted by a staff member. If the complaint is justified, the staff member will issue a Specialist Order to the owner to resolve the issue. A time frame of 7 to 30 days will be issued depending on the nuisance type. Once the time frame has passed, a reinspection will be conducted. If the issue has not been addressed, a Public Health Order will be issued by the Health Commissioner with a new appropriate time frame. If there has been no change after the time has passed, the complaint will then be referred to the Stark County Prosecutor's Office for further enforcement. Once the case has been filed, there will be an opportunity for the defendant to respond to the court. If the owner does not respond to the court, the court can then issue a default judgement that allows the local township, village, or city to be named in the "prayer for relief" and they can abate the issues at the property. The goal for the Public Health Nuisance program is for the owner of the property to be held responsible for abating the nuisance, including any financial charges that accompany the abatement process. After SCHD is notified that the issues have been addressed, a staff member will conduct a reinspection to confirm the issues were addressed correctly. Once it has been confirmed that no public health nuisance is present, the owner will receive an abatement letter. At this time, the complaint will be closed.



2023 NURSING AT-A-GLANCE

- Total number of immunizations administered (not COVID): **2697**
- Number of COVID-19 immunizations administered: **236**
- Cribs distributed: **587**
- Nursing services home visits completed (CMH/Public Health Nurse, CHW HV): **837**
- Baby and Me Tobacco-Free sessions: **120**
- Naloxone kits distributed to first responders: **234**
- Overdose reversals reported to SCHD by first responders: **19**
- Project DAWN kits distributed to community members: **860**
- Project DAWN kits placed in Naloxoboxes: **19**
- Number of active WIC clients: **1908 average per month**
- Total number of infectious diseases reported: **7,332**
- Reproductive Health and Wellness visits: **678**

SCHOOL VACCINATION RATES IN STARK COUNTY

Vaccinating the children in our community is an important step in assuring the health and safety of our community. The development of vaccines is still considered to be one of the greatest medical successes of all times. Vaccines can prevent the spread of deadly diseases such as: diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, haemophilus influenzae type b, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, human papillomavirus, influenza, measles, mumps, rubella, meningococcal (meningitis), pneumococcal (pneumonia), polio, rotavirus, respiratory syncytial virus and varicella (chicken pox). It is important to remember that vaccines are not just for babies. Immunizations also benefit teenagers as they grow into adulthood.

Vaccination against the nine diseases underlined above is required for children attending K through 12th grades in public and private schools in the State of Ohio. Although the majority of children attending public and private schools in Stark County are fully vaccinated against these nine diseases, some families sign exemption forms for medical, religious, or philosophical reasons. According to the most recent data received from the Ohio Department of Health vaccine survey for the 2022/2023 school year, of the schools that reported:

- Eighty-nine percent of children had received all vaccines required for entry into kindergarten
- Eighty-one percent of 7th grade students were up to date
- Eighty-five percent of 12th grade students were up to date on school-required vaccines
- 0.13% of Stark County students had medical contraindications to one or more vaccines
- 4.27% of parents signed a philosophical or religious exemption
- 10.7% of the families had not complied with the required vaccinations or signed exemption by the reporting deadline of October 15, 2022

While the recommended routine vaccination schedule of children includes vaccination against 17 vaccine-preventable diseases starting immediately after birth, only those vaccines listed in the boxes below are required for school entry in Ohio. Each year the Ohio Department of Health updates the school-required guidance. No new vaccines have been added to the required list since 2016 when the meningococcal vaccine was added. If you

have questions regarding your child's immunization status, please reach out to your school nurse, your child's healthcare provider or the Stark County Health Department. The guidance for the 2024/2025 school year can be found below or use your phone's camera to scan this QR code or visit <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/immunization/media/immunization-summary-school>



Each year the Stark County Health Department evaluates immunization disparities within the county. We have found that central and southern Stark County have the highest rates of immunization disparities. Attributions to these disparities include few or no Vaccine for Children (VFC) providers, higher rates of poverty, higher rates of those without health insurance, higher rates of free and reduced lunch participants through school, high rates of immunization exemptions as reported by schools, high rates of students not up to date by the immunization reporting deadline and the percentage of children who are not up to date on vaccination as entered in Ohio's immunization database. After this evaluation, a report is submitted to the Ohio Department of Health and a plan is made to decrease disparities within Stark County. Currently, we have increased our vaccination appointment availability. We are also providing quality improvement assessments at pediatrician offices and are providing continuing education to offices that provide vaccines to children.

The Stark County Health Department holds vaccination clinics in North Canton each week. Attributions to these disparities include few or no Vaccine for Children (VFC) providers, higher rates of poverty, higher rates of those without health insurance, higher rates of free and reduced lunch participants through school, high rates of immunization exemptions as reported by school, percentage of children who are not up to date on vaccination as entered in Ohio's immunization database, and high rates of students not up to date by the immunization reporting deadline. We accept most major insurances and participate in the VFC program to assist those who may not otherwise be vaccinated due to their inability to pay. Children qualify for the VFC program if they are 18 year of age or younger and they qualify for Medicaid, don't have insurance or are an American Indian or Alaska Native. Due to the complexity of insurance coverages, clinics are by appointment only and families can call 330-493-9914 to schedule an appointment.

Appointments are offered at the Stark County Health Department on the following days:

1st and 4th Monday of the month	12:00pm-7:00pm	Birth-18 years of age
Tuesdays	12:00pm-4:00pm	Birth-18 years of age
3rd Friday of the month	9:00am-12:30pm	Infants
3rd Friday of the month	1:30pm-4:00pm	Teenagers



For additional information regarding childhood vaccines please log onto the Parent Immunization page of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/index.html> or use your phone's camera to scan this QR code.

Ohio Immunization Summary for School Attendance, 2024-2025													
Vaccine/Grade	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
DTaP Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis	4 or more doses												
Hep B Hepatitis B	3 or more doses												
MMR Measles, Mumps, Rubella	2 doses												
Polio	3 or more doses												
Varicella (Chickenpox)	2 doses												
Tdap Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis									1 dose				
MCV4 Meningococcal ACWY									1st dose				2nd dose

Stark County Health Department Began Septic OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE ENFORCEMENT IN 2023

As part of our Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Program, all septic systems with aeration pre-treatment components are required to be under a service contract to ensure routine system maintenance is completed twice a year. Within our health district there are approximately 6,000 aeration systems. Of those, 2,000 are discharging aeration units that hold a National Pollution Discharge Elimination Systems (NPDES) permit from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and nearly 4,000 do not hold a permit (Non-NPDES), all of which discharge treated wastewater into the county's surface water. As of 2022, the overall compliance for service contracts on these units fell from 75% to 60%. In other words, nearly 2,000 systems were not properly serviced and were possibly discharging poorly treated wastewater.

Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 3709.091 grants a general health district the ability to place a tax lien on the real property of an owner for the fee and accrued late penalties of an Operation Permit or inspection of a household sewage treatment system. This is a standard enforcement protocol used successfully by many other health departments across the state.

In 2022, the Board of Health revised the O&M regulations and enforcement protocol to increase compliance. In 2023, the focus of enforcement was on the NPDES systems without a service contract. Property owners were mailed a postcard, and 2 letters (one with delivery confirmation) requiring a service contract with a Registered Service Provider. This correspondence took six months, allowing for ample time to comply. The information sent to the property owners detailed that those who do not obtain a service contract by the end of September would be issued a Type 2 Operation permit at \$200, with a 25% late fee (if applicable). For those who did not obtain a service contract or pay for the Type 2 Operation Permit the cost of the Type 2 permit plus 25% late fee would be placed as a tax lien against the property.

LEGAL NOTICE



The Stark County Health Department, in accordance with the Ohio Department of Health, requires all homeowners with an aerobic sewage treatment unit to have a current service contract and maintain a contract for the life of the system. Our records indicate your home has an aerobic treatment unit and you do not have a current contract.

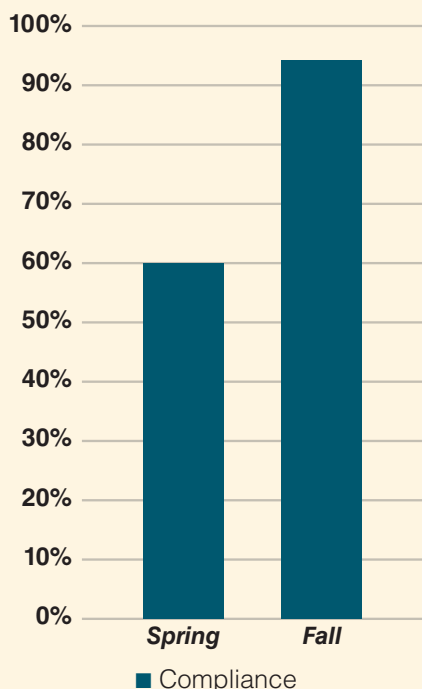
FAILURE TO MAINTAIN A CONTRACT MAY LEAD TO PENALTIES ASSESSED AGAINST YOU.

Contact a Registered Service Provider to obtain a service contract.

For a list of Registered Service Providers or more information about your system, use your phone's camera to scan this QR code or visit StarkHealth.org.



2023 Compliance



As a result of the new program, the compliance rate of NPDES systems under a service contract increased from 60% to 94%. In other words, this 34% increase represents 245 million gallons of treated wastewater from systems now being maintained by a service provider. The policy revisions improved compliance and ensured a cleaner environment.

The remaining 6% comprises those issued a Type 2 Operation Permit. Thirteen property owners chose to pay for the Type 2 Permit instead of obtaining a service contract. As a result of inaction, tax liens of \$250 were placed on 113 properties. Our staff will inspect properties with a Type 2 Operation Permit to ensure the systems are properly operating.

Adding the enforcement piece to the O&M code is not intended to penalize property owners, but to nudge them in the direction of compliance. This enforcement program also positively impacted the Non-NPDES systems. The compliance rate for these systems currently hovers around 70%. With the success of the new enforcement procedure, the SCHD is set to expand the program to include all aeration septic systems in 2024. The success of the O&M Program will be based on routine maintenance, and service contracts because proper septic system operation is the end goal.



COVID-19

Coronavirus

Recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Even though the COVID-19 public health emergency is declared over and universal contact tracing and quarantine are no longer needed for the general public, COVID-19 persists as a public health threat. Isolating when you have COVID-19 and monitoring for symptoms when you have been exposed to COVID-19, along with vaccination, remains part of our best defense. Recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are as follows:

Isolate When You Are Ill

If you are sick with COVID-19, or suspect that you have COVID-19, you should stay home and stay away from others for the first 5 days. This is when you are most infectious. Days 6-10, continue to wear a mask when you are around others.

- Wear a high-quality, well-fitting mask if you must be around others
- Stay home and away from others as much as possible
- Do not go places where you are unable to wear a mask
- Avoid travel
- Don't share personal or household items like cups, towels, and utensils
- Use a separate bathroom if possible
- Increase home ventilation if possible
- Monitor your symptoms, if you have emergency warning signs, like shortness of breath, seek emergency medical care

When to End Isolation

Determining when to end your isolation is based on how serious your symptoms are.

If you had **NO** symptoms:

- You can end isolation after day 5 but continue to wear a high-quality, well-fitting mask around others days 6-10

If your symptoms **are improving**, including being fever-free for 24 hours without the use of medication:

- You can end isolation after day 5 but continue to wear a high-quality, well-fitting mask around others days 6-10

If your symptoms **are NOT improving**:

- Continue to isolate until you are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of medication and your symptoms are improving

If you have moderate to severe illness, isolation through day 10 is recommended.

Symptoms of moderate to severe illness include:

- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Were hospitalized
- Have a weakened immune system

When to Remove Your Mask

- Continue to wear a mask around others through day 10 - **or**
- With 2 sequential negative antigen tests 48 hours apart, you can consider removing your mask earlier than day 10 (If your antigen test results are positive, you may still be infectious, wait 48 hours before taking another test. Continue taking antigen tests at least 48 hours apart until you have 2 negative results. This may mean you need to continue wearing a mask and testing beyond day 10.)

continued on page 14

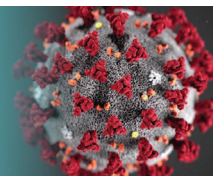
Staying up-to-date on your Covid-19 VACCINATION

Staying up-to-date on your COVID-19 vaccination is recommended as a primary measure that is safe and effective to reduce your risk of developing severe illness related to COVID-19. Vaccine recommendations are based on age, time since last dose, immune system status, and type of vaccines received. Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is available by appointment only at the Stark County Health Department. Other vaccine providers can be located by visiting <https://www.vaccines.gov/>.



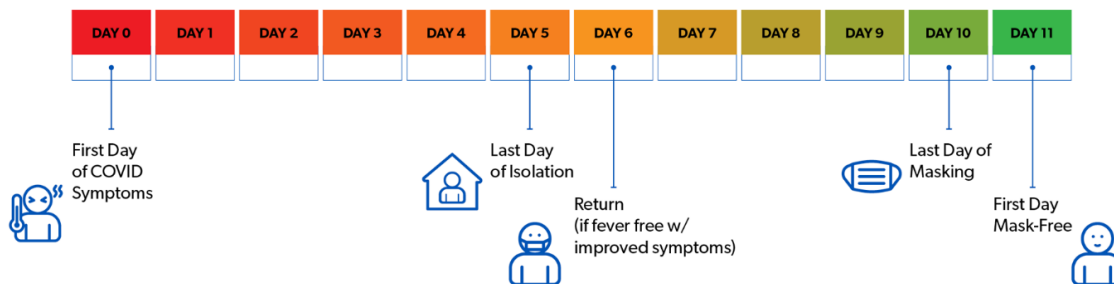
COVID-19

Recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention



After you have ended isolation, and symptoms return or worsen, restart your isolation at day 0.

How to calculate isolation and masking:



- Day 0 of isolation is the day of symptom onset or positive test
- Day 1 is the first full day after symptoms started, or following testing
- Count 5 days- this is your isolation period:
 - ✓ Example: Symptoms develop 01/20/2024, isolate through the end of the day 01/25/2024.
- Days 6-10- this is your masking period
 - ✓ Example: Mask 01/26/2024 through the end of the day 01/30/2024.

An Isolation and Exposure Calculator tool, along with more information related to COVID-19 isolation and precautions can be found here <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/isolation.html>

If you were exposed to someone with COVID-19, it is important to take precautions.

- Take precautions for 10 full days after the last exposure
- Wear a high-quality well-fitting mask around others
- Monitor for symptoms (Symptoms may change with new COVID-19 variants or be different from person to person)
 - ✓ Fever (100.4°F or greater), chills
 - ✓ Cough
 - ✓ Shortness of breath
 - ✓ Body aches
 - ✓ Fatigue
 - ✓ Headache
 - ✓ New loss of taste or smell
 - ✓ Congestion or runny nose
 - ✓ Nausea, Vomiting, Diarrhea
- Avoid going to places where you are not able to wear a mask
- Avoid going around others that are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19
- Test on day 6 after your last exposure even if symptoms don't develop. If positive, isolate immediately. You can still develop COVID-19 up to 10 days after your last exposure, despite a negative test on day 6.

SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19



Testing Resources

While supplies last, free at-home COVID-19 antigen tests are available at the Stark County Health Department and can be ordered for free from the United States government at <https://www.covid.gov/tools-and-resources/resources/tests>.

Regarding COVID-19 at-home tests, some expiration dates have been extended. A list of extended expiration dates can be found here <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-covid-19-and-medical-devices/home-otc-covid-19-diagnostic-tests#list>. Additional information like who can use these tests and other details about the test can also be found there.



PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests remain the “gold standard” COVID-19 test. They are available from healthcare providers and will be sent to a laboratory for testing. This could take multiple days to receive results. If you are waiting for results, you should begin isolating away from others.

More Information

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides more in-depth, detailed information regarding COVID-19 symptoms, testing, treatments and medication, and prevention. These resources can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

Current and historical county-level COVID-19 data can be found by visiting the Respiratory Dashboard at <https://www.cantonhealth.org/?613>

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