

ANNUAL REPORT



2025



Striving Toward a **Healthier** Community.

MESSAGE

from the **HEALTH
COMMISSIONER**



Kirkland K. Norris,
REHS, MPH
Health Commissioner

It is with great pride and honor that we present the 2025 Annual Report for the Stark County Combined General Health District. This report showcases the exceptional work and steadfast dedication of the professionals within the Stark County Health Department. Each member of our team plays a vital role in advancing our mission to promote and protect the health and well-being of all Stark County residents. Through their commitment, expertise, and collaboration, we continue to make meaningful progress toward building a healthier and stronger community.

In 2025, Stark County leadership convened at the Health Summit to evaluate community public health needs, assess available resources, and strengthen cross-sector partnerships. Guided by data-driven discussions and collaborative planning, participants identified shared priorities and explored strategies to improve access to care, promote equity, and support positive long-term health outcomes for residents throughout the county.

The Stark County Health Department also partnered with WHBC during Health Week to highlight key public health programs and raise awareness of the essential services that protect and improve community health. Throughout the week, this partnership provided opportunities to educate residents on disease prevention, health promotion, and emergency preparedness, while spotlighting services such as immunizations, health screenings, environmental health, and wellness initiatives. By collaborating with WHBC, the department reached a broad audience, reinforced the importance of public health efforts, and encouraged residents to take proactive steps to protect their health and the well-being of those around them.

The past mosquito season presented notable challenges, with routine surveillance revealing elevated levels of West Nile Virus within local mosquito populations. Increased viral activity was detected across multiple monitoring sites, indicating widespread circulation of the virus. These findings underscored the heightened risk of transmission to humans and animals and reinforced the critical importance of mosquito control efforts, public education, and ongoing surveillance to reduce potential health impacts.

On behalf of the Board of Health, our Medical Director, our dedicated staff, and myself, I extend our sincere gratitude to the townships, cities, villages, and the entire Stark County community for your continued support. Strong partnerships are essential to advancing public health, and together we are making meaningful and lasting progress. We are proud to work alongside such an engaged and committed community and remain steadfast in our mission to ensure a healthier, safer Stark County for all.

Respectfully submitted,

Kirkland K. Norris
Health Commissioner



WE ARE YOUR HEALTH DEPARTMENT!

What do seventeen townships, twelve villages, and three cities in Stark County have in common? They are all proudly served by the Stark County Health Department.
We are your health department!

While many residents and officials are familiar with our core environmental services—inspecting food operations, permitting and inspecting sewage systems and private water wells, and ensuring safe public swimming pools—our commitment extends far deeper into your communities.

You may not realize that we also:

- Conduct health and safety inspections at your temporary events, such as festivals with food vendors and camping areas
- Perform two annual inspections at your public and private schools
- Oversee commercial and residential plumbing installations within your jurisdictions and assist the City of Alliance, City of North Canton, and Carroll County through Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- Inspect and sample local bathing beaches during the summer
- Provide ongoing support for sewage treatment and private water system programs throughout the whole county via established MOUs with the Cities of Canton, Massillon, and Alliance

Every day, Board of Health staff collaborate closely with township trustees and zoning officials to identify and abate public health nuisances. We actively advocate for the extension of sanitary sewer service into areas burdened by failing septic systems and serve on numerous county committees to promote seamless collaboration across jurisdictions.

When it comes to emergency preparedness, we stand ready. We work hand-in-hand with local, county, and state partners to ensure Stark County is fully equipped to respond to any public health emergency.

You see us at your regular meetings because your input matters to us. We value the open dialogue and welcome your ideas on how we can better serve you. Most importantly, we value our relationship.

We are driven by our commitment to building strong community relationships, enabling us to more effectively protect and improve the health of every resident, business, and visitor in Stark County. The Stark County Health Department is working diligently throughout the community every day, protecting public health, safety, and quality of life. Even when our efforts are not visible, our services positively impact our shared community.

We are your health department!

SERVICE AREA DIRECTORS



Kay Conley, MPA, CHES
Administration
& Support Services Director



Paul DePasquale, REHS, MPA
Environmental Health
Services Director



Amanda Uhler, MPH, RN
Nursing Services
Director



Maureen Ahmann, DO
Medical
Director

MISSION: “To promote and improve the health of all Stark County residents.”
VISION STATEMENT: “Striving toward a healthier community with public health excellence.”

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COMMUNITY FEEDBACK FROM CANAL FULTON SENIOR CENTER Town Hall

The Stark County Health Department (SCHD) recently held an engaging town hall at the Northwest Senior Center, in Canal Fulton, to learn how we can better serve this population. This ongoing initiative focuses on one of the department's key strategic goals for 2024-2028, intentionally improve public image by building community trust. During this event we were able to provide Stark County Senior residents with information about their health department and ask focused questions about where they have needs. Several staff attended the event to provide service area specific information. Walter Dorescheck and Tasha Catron spoke about the Administration and Support service area, Paige Seech discussed the Environmental Health Service area and Amanda Uhler spoke about Nursing Services. Health Commissioner Norris attended as well.

Attendees participated in an interactive discussion about public health and SCHD's role in the community. Seniors were asked thought-provoking questions, including:

- *How have you utilized SCHD services or information?*
- *How would you like to find out more?*
- *What creates challenges to accessing services?*
- *Where can SCHD fill a gap for you?*

Key Feedback from Seniors:

- In some neighborhoods the lighting is poor and creates unsafe environments.
- They enjoy reading information in community newsletters in paper form.
- They would be interested in a text/email service to learn of news/updates locally.
- They appreciate it when organizations engage directly, like at the senior center.
- They would like additional presentations/information on topics such as infection prevention, falls prevention, and digital safety including scams.

The town hall underscored the importance of collaboration between public health agencies and residents. SCHD remains committed to addressing barriers, enhancing communication, and creating safer, healthier environments for all Stark County residents. By listening to residents' experiences and preferences, SCHD aims to strengthen its connection with the community and ensure services meet local needs. A survey will be created and distributed to other senior groups in the community to continue gathering information on where we can fill a need.



Sickle Cell Screening for the College Athlete



Do you know someone that will be going to play collegiate sports? In 2022, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) updated the requirements that all student athletes must be tested for sickle cell trait or show proof of a prior test. Ohio Newborn Screens will satisfy the NCAA requirement.

Sickle cell disease is a disorder of red blood cells. Healthy red blood cells are round and easily move through blood vessels. Sickle cells are hard and sticky and look like a C shaped cell. They can get stuck in the blood vessels and clog blood flow. Sickle cell trait is when you have one gene for sickle hemoglobin. Having the sickle cell trait is not a reason for an athlete to be removed from competition, but being aware of the trait allows for proper precautions. Athletes with this trait should build up intensity slowly while training, rest and recover between repetitions, stay hydrated, and notify your trainer or coach if you experience muscle pain, abnormal weakness or undue fatigue or breathlessness.

The Ohio Department of Health Newborn Screen tests for several congenital conditions. All babies born since 1966 in Ohio are recommended to receive this testing. Screening can be declined for religious objection. All records are maintained for 21 years at the Ohio Department of Health. Screenings occur for amino acid, endocrine, fatty acid and organic acid disorders, lysosomal storage diseases and other disorders including sickle cell disease. People who are 18 years of age or older may request their own newborn screening results. To request results from the Ohio Department of Health, complete the form using the QR code.



Once the form is complete, attach the required documents and submit them by fax, email or mail.

Fax: 614-644-4648 ■ **Email:** ODHLabs@odh.ohio.org

Mail to: Ohio Newborn Screening Program
Public Health Laboratory
8995 E. Main St., Bldg. 22
Reynoldsburg, OH 43068

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE 2025 COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT

The 2025 Stark County Community Health Assessment (CHA) provides a comprehensive look at the health status, needs, and challenges facing residents across Stark County. Guided by the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) 2.0 framework and supported by a broad coalition of hospitals, health departments, and community organizations, the CHA relies on extensive quantitative and qualitative data—community surveys, social barrier surveys, partner input, focus groups, and secondary datasets—to identify the county's most pressing health issues.

KEY PRIORITY HEALTH NEEDS

Analysis of data consistently pointed to **five overarching priority health needs**:

Mental Health

Mental health concerns remain widespread.

- 86% of residents rated mental health as a serious issue.
- 1 in 3 adults reported prolonged sadness or hopelessness, and 11% have seriously considered suicide.
- Depression and anxiety diagnoses affect about 40% of households.



Substance Use Disorder

Substance use—particularly opioids—continues to strain communities.

- Heroin and illegal drug use was the top concern (87%).
- Overdose deaths have risen by more than 50% since 2019.
- Nearly 17% of residents reported someone in their household needing drug or alcohol treatment in the past year.

Chronic Disease

Chronic conditions remain common and are influenced by lifestyle, environment, and social determinants.

- High rates of hypertension (44%), cholesterol (34%), arthritis (31%), and diabetes (23%) were reported in households.
- More than 59% of adults classify themselves as overweight, and 27% reported no exercise in the past month.

Community Conditions

Residents described several community-level barriers to health, including:

- Food insecurity (66%)
- Transportation challenges (52%)
- Affordable housing shortages (82%)

These barriers disproportionately affect lower-income households, Black residents, renters, and individuals living in Canton and Alliance.

Access to Health Care

Although most residents have insurance, access gaps persist.

- 17% could not obtain needed services in the past two years.
- Dental care, mental health services, and specialty care were cited as particularly difficult to access.
- Provider shortages remain a challenge in rural areas and among Medicaid-accepting practices.

Social and Economic Factors Shaping Health

Stark County's diverse mix of urban, suburban, and rural communities creates varying health challenges:

- Poverty affects 12.7% of the county but rises to 28% in Canton and 24% in Alliance.
- ALICE households (working families who struggle to afford essentials) make up 27% of the county.

- Residents report significant obstacles in transportation, childcare, utility costs, and navigating health and social service systems.
- Housing instability remains a concern, with 13% worried about losing housing and 6% lacking permanent housing.

Strengths and Community Assets

Despite these challenges, Stark County benefits from a strong network of community resources:

- Four hospitals, multiple federally qualified health centers, and numerous behavioral health providers.
- A wide array of food assistance, transportation services, housing programs, and social service organizations.
- Collaborative partners that include health systems, nonprofits, educational institutions, and local governments working toward improved community health outcomes.

The 2025 CHA was funded by the four health departments in Stark County—Alliance City Health Department, Canton City Public Health, Massillon City Health Department and the Stark County Health Department. This report provides specific information pertaining to each health jurisdiction, highlighting the needs, barriers and opportunities within each area. The 2025 CHA can be found at www.starkhealth.org.

As the county works to update its Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), these insights will guide local agencies and leaders in developing targeted interventions that support healthier, more stable, and more equitable communities.

Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

During the 2023–2025 CHIP cycle, Stark County partners advanced five core strategies to improve mental health outcomes and reduce disparities driven by social determinants of health. These strategies strengthened coordination among health and human service organizations, expanded support in schools and primary care, and addressed barriers that prevent residents from accessing behavioral health services.

As the county prepares for the 2026–2028 CHIP cycle, all five strategies remain important; however, two initiatives—**development of a unified digital platform and digital wellness and safety for families**—will continue as priority areas due to their countywide impact and ongoing implementation needs.



After several years of planning, research and analysis, funds were secured to launch the **ConnectWell CIE of East Central Ohio** in Fall 2025. ConnectWell partners with local agencies, providers, and community members to link individuals with housing, food, transportation, healthcare, legal aid, and other essential resources through a digital platform. The initiative focuses on whole-person care — removing barriers, fostering collaboration, and creating a healthier, more connected community for everyone. Visit <https://www.goodwillgoodskills.org/connectwell/> to learn more or to join the network.

Digital Wellness Stark County began as a strategy to support no cell phones in schools and grew into a committee focused on improving family education and promoting healthier digital habits. To receive regular updates on this topic, email digitalwellness@starkhealth.org or visit our webpage at <https://www.starkhelpcentral.com/digital-wellness-resources>



Stark County Health Department 2024-2028 Strategic Plan Annual Update

Vision Statement

Striving toward a healthier community with public health excellence.

Mission Statement

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



Increased Funding

- Refined process for implementing annual cost benefit
- Implemented changes to Kronos for improved tracking for grants and programs
- Awarded new supplemental funding in OPRC Grant
- Completed the 2023 cost benefit process
- Worked with Plain Township for Harm Reduction+ events in the community
- Adjusted to reductions in grant funding

Employee Satisfaction

- Formed subcommittee to develop management job aids
- Finalized internal process for routine Lunch and Learns
- Implemented a focus group for new hires
- Assessed mentorship program for improvements
- Integrated department projects into management meetings to improve communication
- Received nominations for all Employee Recognition award categories

Public Image

- Hosted Town Hall meeting with Northwest Senior Center
- Began staff training on 10 Essential Public Health Services
- Implemented Ethics Committee tabletop exercise at staff meeting
- Added QR code to business cards linking to customer satisfaction survey
- Provided education to all staff on CHA/CHIP
- Hosted 3 community conversations for CHA/CHIP

Next Steps

Continue to meet quarterly as a large group, and monthly as Priority Teams
Complete 2024 & 2025 cost benefit analysis (Increased Funding)
Continue to equip staff on job specific training manuals and lunch and learns (Employee Satisfaction)
Continue to build on community conversations and relationships with jurisdictional partners (Public Image)

Annual Report 2025

STARK COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT 2025 ADMIN & SUPPORT AT-A-GLANCE

- **1,631:** Total Project Dawn Kits (Naloxone) distributed
- **185:** Bike helmets distributed during 7 safety cities in the community.
- **21:** Number of car seat check-up events held
- **138:** Total number of car seats checked

- **58:** Total number of seats distributed to community members in need
- **9,405:** Total number of death certificates issued
- **5,016:** Total number of birth certificates issued

2025 PROPERTY TRANSFER AND O&M REPORT

2025 PROPERTY TRANSFER INSPECTION BREAKDOWN

Township	Total Inspections	Septic Failures		Gray Water	
BETHLEHEM	24	5	21%	1	4%
CANTON	57	14	25%	10	18%
JACKSON	79	10	13%	5	6%
LAKE	154	11	7%	16	11%
LAWRENCE	65	7	11%	2	3%
LEXINGTON	29	7	24%	6	21%
MARLBORO	33	1	3%	4	13%
NIMISHILLEN	47	10	22%	3	6%
OSNABURG	34	5	15%	5	15%
PARIS	27	7	26%	6	23%
PERRY	31	7	23%	6	20%
PIKE	24	5	21%	6	25%
PLAIN	88	10	12%	13	15%
SANDY	11	1	9%	2	18%
SUGARCREEK	21	3	15%	2	10%
TUSCARAWAS	45	9	20%	8	18%
WASHINGTON	54	11	20%	8	15%
Totals	823	123	15%	103	12%

2014 THROUGH 2025 PROPERTY TRANSFER INSPECTIONS COMPLETED

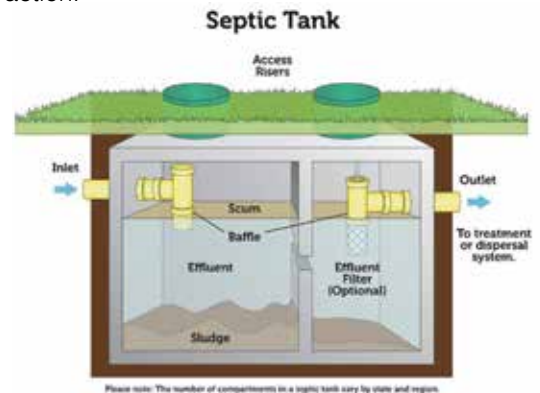
2014 809	2015 857	2016 917	2017 967	2018 945	2019 922
2020 1013	2021 970	2022 842	2023 791	2024 801	2025 823

HERE ARE SOME BROADER O&M PROGRAM STATISTICS FOR 2025:

- Septic tank pumping reminder mailers sent: **6,683**
- Residential pumping reports received and entered (for 2024, due to contractor submission deadlines): **5,004**
- Total gallons of septage pumped (for 2024): **6,561,909**
- Service contract reminder mailers sent: **1,214**
- Type 2 Permits issued (for failure to obtain required service contract): **158**
- Overall O&M Program compliance rate: **97%**
- Inspections performed for home additions: **229**

Every interaction with property owners — whether through inspections, consultations, mailed reminders, or notices — includes practical education on proper septic system care. This ongoing guidance helps extend system life, prevent costly repairs, and protect surface water quality.

The Property Transfer Inspection Program is a key element of the Health Department's Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Program for onsite sewage treatment systems (STS). In 2025, our team reviewed 823 property transfer STS inspections. These inspections help verify system functionality during real estate transactions and play a vital role in protecting public health and the environment. The 2025 property transfer program statistics are listed below, sorted by township. 15% of inspected systems were classified as failing — a rate that has remained consistent within a few percentage points annually. "Failing" means that the system is causing a public health nuisance, such as sewage surfacing, or backing up, which is defined in Ohio Revised Code 3718.011. For comparison, Ohio's statewide estimated septic system failure rate is approximately 30%, meaning our local results reflect effective program oversight. Additionally, 12% of inspections identified improper gray water discharge, another important area addressed through education and corrective action.

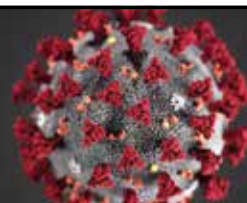


2025 EH AT-A-GLANCE

- **2509:** Total number of food inspections conducted
- **527:** Number of animal bite/exposure investigations conducted
- **\$2 million:** in grant funds distributed to low and moderate - income households for septic system repair/replacement or connection to sanitary sewer since 2017.
- **4:** State program surveys passed, maintaining approval to administer: Solid Waste Program, Swimming Pool & Spa Program, Home Sewage Treatment System Program, Campground Program
- **552:** total miles sprayed for mosquito control
- **15,584:** mosquitoes collected and tested for the West Nile Virus
- **246:** Total number of public pool and spa inspections conducted
- **313:** Total number of water well permits issued
- **800:** Total number of plumbing permits issued

REPORTABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASE SUMMARY

Stark County Health Department Jurisdiction



DISEASE	2025	2024	DISEASE	2025	2024
Amebiasis	1	0	Influenza-associated Hospitalization	310	163
Anaplasmosis	3	2	La Crosse Virus Disease	1	0
Babesiosis	0	2	Legionellosis	29	26
C. auris	5	0	Leptospirosis	1	0
C. auris Colonization	3	2	Listeriosis	1	2
Campylobacteriosis	95	78	Lyme Disease	237	161
Chikungunya virus	1	0	Measles	0	0
Chlamydia	476	522	Meningitis – Aseptic/Viral	13	10
Coccidioidomycosis	1	2	Meningitis – Bacterial (Not N. Meningitidis)	5	0
COVID-19	1,448	3,443	Meningococcal Disease – Meningitidis	1	0
COVID-19 Associated Hospitalization	33	N/A	Mpox	0	1
CPO	27	26	Mumps	0	1
CPO Colonization	3	7	Pertussis	25	18
Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease	0	1	RSV-Associated Hospitalization	6	N/A
Cryptosporidiosis	12	13	Salmonella Typhi	1	0
Cyclosporiasis	4	2	Salmonellosis	33	53
E. Coli, Shiga Toxin-producing	11	17	Shigellosis	7	5
Ehrlichiosis	0	2	Spotted Fever Rickettsiosis (including RMSF)	1	0
Giardiasis	14	21	Streptococcal – Group A Invasive	33	19
Gonorrhea	131	150	Streptococcal-Group B Newborn	1	1
Haemophilus Influenzae	10	7	Streptococcus Pneumoniae – Invasive	20	31
Hepatitis A	6	3	Tuberculosis	1	1
Hepatitis B – Acute	2	0	Typhoid Fever	0	0
Hepatitis B – Chronic	14	25	Varicella	15	8
Hepatitis B – Perinatal infection	3	3	Vibriosis	4	0
Hepatitis C – Acute	0	4	West Nile Virus	2	1
Hepatitis C – Chronic	41	39	Yersiniosis	10	12
Hepatitis C – Perinatal infection	0	1	TOTAL	3,101	4,885

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2025 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 2025 communicable disease data required by Ohio law reported to state and local health departments. Only those communicable diseases determined to be of public health importance are reportable, therefore, this summary does not reflect all communicable diseases in our community. Additionally, the summary represents only cases of disease for residents of Stark County Health Department jurisdiction, therefore, does not include disease data for the cities of Alliance, Canton, or Massillon.

1) In 2025, SCHD reported and/or investigated several communicable disease outbreaks. Among these were:

- 1 outbreak of *Acinetobacter baumannii* (associated with a long-term care facility)
- 1 outbreak of Varicella-Zoster virus (associated with a household)
- 4 outbreaks of Hand, foot, mouth disease (2 associated with Daycare center and 2 associated with school)
- 2 outbreaks of *Streptococcus* (associated with long-term care facilities)
- 1 unknown outbreak (associated with restaurant/community)
- 5 outbreaks of Influenza (associated with long-term care facilities)
- 1 outbreak of Fifth Disease/Parvovirus B19 (associated with a school)
- 1 outbreak of Norovirus (associated with a long-term care facility)
- 18 outbreaks of COVID-19
 - ✓ All outbreaks associated with Long-Term Care Facilities (LTCF)

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

2) The number of cases reported for some reportable diseases increased in 2025 compared to 2024 in the Stark County jurisdiction. A few of these diseases are as follows:

■ **Candida auris**

Candida auris- *C. auris* is a type of yeast that can cause infections at various sites such as skin or blood, and most often affects patients in healthcare facilities. While there were no cases in 2024, there were 5 cases in 2025 along with 3 additional cases of *C. auris* colonization. This is partially due to a change in case counting that occurred in 2025, where cases were originally assigned to the jurisdiction of the healthcare facility which tested cases, and now cases are assigned to the jurisdiction of the case's home address. *C. auris* can cause active infection throughout the body but can also live on or in the body without causing symptoms, which we refer to as colonization. Individuals colonized with *C. auris* can develop active infection from their own colonization and can spread the yeast to surfaces and other people. The best way to prevent the spread of *C. auris* is by adhering to good infection control practices including using personal protective equipment, proper cleaning and disinfection protocols, hand hygiene, and more. Those affected by *C. auris* commonly reside in long-term care facilities and/or have numerous hospitalizations.

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2025 COMMUNICABLE DISEASE

highlights *continued*

■ **Campylobacteriosis**

Campylobacteriosis-Campylobacteriosis (or Campy, for short) is the name for the infection caused by *Campylobacter* bacteria, which is most commonly a gastrointestinal illness. There were 95 cases of Campy in 2025, a relatively large increase from the 78 cases reported in 2024. Campy can spread in a number of ways including through eating raw or undercooked poultry (and some other foods), cross-contamination of raw or uncooked foods with raw meat or utensils used on raw meat, direct contact with living animals, and also through drinking untreated water. Frequently, cases may handle raw meat at home or have pets, especially livestock like chicks or adult chickens. Oftentimes we cannot definitively identify the source of exposure, but cases are always advised to handle raw meat with care to avoid cross contamination, to clean their hands and their environment well after handling raw meat, and to practice good hand hygiene habits when around livestock.

■ **Pertussis-Bordetella**

Pertussis-Bordetella Pertussis is the bacteria that causes pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough. In 2025, there were 25 cases of pertussis, up from 18 cases in 2024. Pertussis can be prevented by receiving different pertussis-containing vaccines at various times throughout life. Those with pertussis are most contagious in the first stage of illness marked by runny nose, low-grade fever, and mild cough. Symptoms continue to progress, with coughing fits usually lasting 2-6 weeks, but sometimes up to 10 weeks. Antibiotics can affect the course of illness if given early enough, though most times this does not happen and antibiotics are instead given to stop the infectiousness of the individual. Strategies to prevent pertussis include vaccination, respiratory hygiene, hand hygiene, and post-exposure treatment of contacts with antibiotics.

3) **Influenza season stretches from October of one year until May of the next.**

Thus far in the 2025-2026 influenza season there have been 106 cases of hospitalized influenza for Stark County health jurisdiction. At this time in the 2024-2025 season there were 77 cases reported. The predominant strain for this season is influenza A, which is common as influenza A normally predominates in the beginning half of the season. The influenza vaccine remains the primary and most effective form of protection against the influenza viruses circulating this season. Common symptoms of the flu include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headaches, chills, and fatigue. Complications may include conditions such as bronchitis or pneumonia and may make chronic health problems, such as asthma, worse. Staying home while sick and practicing proper hand hygiene are the best ways to stay healthy this season.

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

What's New in Communicable Disease?

Each year, the Communicable Disease (CD) team works on a variety of projects, attends training, and undergoes changes related to communicable disease reporting. Below are a few highlights of some of the work the CD team has done in 2025.

- Continuing previous work, the CD team utilized funding from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) to work with area long-term care facilities (LTCF) on training and education related to infection prevention and control (IPC). The project included adapting materials from CDC's Project Firstline initiative, which were then made into "education stations" that facility staff would rotate through, receiving a stamp on their IPC "passport" at each station. Topics included PPE selection and usage, hand hygiene, reading disinfectant labels, cleaning and disinfection of medical devices, and more. Each station took about 5 minutes and were hands-on to better engage with adult learners. Education was conducted at 7 LTCFs and received great feedback from each participating facility. The CD team will continue this learning opportunity.
- Alongside the education stations, the CD team also developed a quarterly LTCF infection prevention newsletter. This newsletter replaces a virtual meeting that had also been scheduled quarterly and covered the same topics. These topics include general communicable disease updates in SCHD jurisdiction, links to trainings and webinars, important IPC updates for facilities to know, IPC tools to build or maintain facility IPC programs, and more.
- Two members of the CD team attended a project-end meeting in Washington D.C. to both present the education stations initiative, as well as to learn how other grant recipients adapted Project Firstline materials.
- Other trainings attended by the CD team include the Ohio Department of Health's world Tuberculosis Day, the annual Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) conference, ODH's Rabies Roadshow, a Criminal-Epidemiology training, the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) annual conference, and an APIC in-person Epi Intensive course.
- In 2025, the Ohio Department of Health implemented rule changes to Ohio Administrative Codes regarding communicable disease reporting. The following list is not fully inclusive of all changes but includes the most notable changes:
 - ✓ Removal of COVID-19, aseptic/viral meningitis, and amebiasis as individually reportable diseases.
 - ✓ Addition of COVID-19-associated hospitalizations and RSV-associated hospitalizations as reportable conditions.
 - ✓ Latent tuberculosis infection in children 2 years of age or younger has been added as a reportable disease.
 - ✓ Cholera has been moved from a Class A (report immediately by phone) to a Class B (report by the end of the next business day) reportable disease.

Stark County Health District

Licensing Council



The Health District Licensing Council (DLC) was established pursuant to Ohio Revised Code 3709.41(A). The Council is composed of one representative from each business activity for which the Board of Health operates a licensing program. These

programs include Retail Food Establishments, Food Service Operations, Solid Waste Landfills, Construction and Demolition Debris (C&DD) Landfills, Swimming Pools and Spas, and Recreational Parks and Campgrounds, all of which fall under the Environmental Health Services area.

The purpose of the Licensing Council is to initiate, build, and maintain a strong working relationship between the regulated community and the Board of Health. Members of the DLC are appointed by the Stark County District Advisory Council to serve in this advisory capacity. The DLC represents the interests of the regulated community during Board of Health deliberations, including recommending a representative to serve on the Board of Health.

In addition, the DLC reviews and provides input on issues affecting licensed entities at both the state and local levels, improves communication and collaboration between the public and private sectors, and identifies potential needs for changes in legislation, policies, and practices.

Health District Licensing Councils are advisory bodies only and do not possess regulatory, enforcement, or decision-making authority. Members serve without compensation unless otherwise provided by local policy. The Board of Health retains full authority over licensing fees, enforcement actions, and rule adoption. The DLC often serves as an early warning system by identifying potential unintended consequences of proposed policy or program changes prior to their adoption.

Licensing Councils typically meet four times per year, with meetings often aligned with:

- License fee reviews
- Legislative or regulatory changes
- Major program updates
- Program cost methodology
- Programmatic changes affecting inspections or compliance
- New or amended state or local regulations
- Program performance metrics

Below is a list of the current Stark County Health Licensing Council members and the license/industry they represent:

MEMBER	REPRESENTING	TERM EXPIRES
Jennifer Adams (Alternative Board of Health Member)	Retail Food	2027
VACANT	Pools/Spas	
Stephanie Axtell	Campgrounds	2029
Bruce Sullivan	C&DD Landfills	2027
VACANT	Food Service	
Mohammed Ali (Chair/Board of Health Member)	Landfills	2027



CANCER Profile 2025

The Ohio Department of Health released the Stark County Cancer Profile 2025. This report summarizes cancer incidence (new cases) and mortality (deaths) for residents from 2018–2022. During this period, an average of 2,351 new cancer cases were diagnosed annually. Lung and bronchus cancer was the most diagnosed cancer. Other commonly diagnosed cancers were breast cancer (female), prostate, colorectal cancers, and melanoma. Overall, males had more diagnoses than females.

Cancer caused an average of 885 deaths per year between 2018–2022, making it the second leading cause of death for Stark County residents after heart disease. Lung and bronchus cancer accounted for 24.7% of deaths, with pancreatic, colorectal, and breast (female) cancers also significant contributors. Overall cancer cases and deaths declined slightly from 2013–2022.

Early detection through screenings can reduce deaths from cancer. Recommended screenings include:

Breast cancer: Mammography for women ages 40–74.

Cervical cancer: Pap smears every 3–5 years.

Colorectal cancer: Screenings for ages 45–75.

Lung cancer: Low-dose CT scans for heavy smokers ages 50–80.

Qualified individuals may access free breast and cervical screenings through Ohio's Breast and Cervical Cancer Project (**call 1-800-929-6626**).

For lung and colorectal screenings, consult your doctor.

Vaccination also plays a key role. The HPV vaccine, recommended for ages 9 - 45, prevents over 90% of cancers caused by the virus, including cervical, anal, and throat cancers.

To schedule, call 330-493-9928.



2025 NURSING AT-A-GLANCE

- **2,122:** Total Number of Immunizations Administered
- **516:** Cribs Distributed
- **1,069:** Nursing Services Home Visits Completed (CMH/Public Health Nurse, CHW)
- **1,974:** Average Number of Active WIC Clients Each Month
- **3,149:** Total Number of Infectious Diseases Reported
- **1,041:** Reproductive Health and Wellness Visits
- **8,881:** Number of Clients/Families Who Visited Nursing Services
- **18:** Number of High Lead Level Cases Followed
- **114:** Direct Observation Therapy Visits (TB Control)
- **196:** Number of TB Tests Completed

TITLE X REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CLINIC | ***WILL CLOSE***

After careful consideration regarding our public health mission, fiscal realities, community needs and uncertainties of future Title X funding, the Stark County Health Department has decided that we will no longer be offering Title X reproductive health services effective April 1, 2026. This decision was not made lightly, and we remain committed to supporting the reproductive and sexual health needs of our community in every way we can. The health and well-being of our patients remain a top priority, and we will ensure a smooth transition of care. Patients are being notified of this transition, given our contact information to have medical records transferred and encouraged to use the **“Dear Stark Women”** website (*QR code provided*) to locate other reproductive healthcare providers in the county. Our staff can also assist those seeking connections to services as they need.



SCHD will continue to offer sexually transmitted infection screenings

SCHD will continue to offer sexually transmitted infection (STI) screenings for gonorrhea, chlamydia, trichomoniasis, HIV, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and Syphilis. SCHD will also continue to provide STI treatment on site, through a local pharmacy, or referrals out as necessary. We welcome individuals to SCHD for these screenings and care either by appointment or as a walk-in service during business hours to promote and improve sexual health.

2025 LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH OF STARK COUNTY RESIDENTS

CAUSE	COUNT	CAUSE	COUNT
Heart Disease.....	917	Pneumonia/Pneumonitis.....	104
Cancer.....	825	Diabetes Mellitus.....	92
Cerebrovascular Disease.....	269	Accidental Drug.....	80
Alzheimer's Disease/Dementia.....	249	Sepsis.....	72
Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases.....	244	Suicide.....	65
Accidental.....	159	*Other.....	1,047
Kidney Disease.....	151	TOTAL.....	4,274

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

Data in this table is preliminary and may be subject to change after the time data was accessed and published. The data includes residents of Stark County, regardless of which jurisdiction the person lived in or where death occurred. Data from 2025 should not be compared to years prior to 2024 due to a change in the data collection methodology. Beginning in 2024, data includes all Stark County residents, encompassing the jurisdictions of Alliance, Canton and Massillon Cities as well as the Stark County jurisdiction. In contrast, data from prior years only represented residents of the Stark County Health Department jurisdiction. As a result of the change, the overall count of deaths beginning with 2024 is higher and comparisons to previous years may lead to misinterpretations of the data. Data for the report was accessed 1/16/2026 through the Ohio Department of Health's Mortality Protected Dataset Reports** on the DataOhio Portal. The report utilizes the CDC's list of 113 Selected Causes of Death to create counts based on the underlying cause of death assigned on a death certificate. Selected report output categories and their respective counts are combined to create the generalized cause list above. The data above is intended to demonstrate which causes of death are the most common among Stark County residents.

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

Academic Health Department Partnership Strengthens Public Health Workforce

The Stark County Health Department (SCHD) and Kent State University College of Public Health continue to grow a strong Academic Health Department (AHD) partnership designed to prepare the next generation of public health professionals. This collaboration blends academic learning with hands-on experience, giving students a look into the daily work of public health. The SCHD entered into a formal agreement with Kent State University in 2024.

As an AHD, SCHD serves as a real-world training site where students apply classroom knowledge to real community challenges. Students gain exposure across the department's three service areas:

- Administration & Support Services
- Environmental Health Services
- Nursing Services

Through internships, practicums, and observational experiences, students work alongside public health professionals and gain insight into the programs, services, and responsibilities that shape community health. In 2025, the SCHD hosted 6 students from KSU College of Public Health for their Applied Practicum Experience (APE) or internships.

SCHD also offers interactive academic sessions multiple times each semester. These 3 1/2 hour sessions introduce students to:

- Public Health 101
- Department structure
- Service area presentations
- Activities and applied learning exercises

These sessions are open to college, university, and high school students exploring careers in public health. New employees are also invited to attend these learning sessions to improve their understanding of public health as they begin their careers. A total of 167 college students and six new employees participated in the academic sessions in 2025.

The collaboration between SCHD and Kent State University strengthens the public health workforce by:

- Increasing awareness of public health careers
- Enhancing student knowledge of local programs and services
- Supporting professional development for future practitioners
- Building strong academic community relationships

By aligning academic training with real-world practice, this partnership ensures students are well-prepared to meet the evolving needs of the public health field.

2025 PHAB ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY

In 2025, the Stark County Health Department submitted its first annual report of the current reaccreditation cycle to the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). Annual reporting is a key requirement between accreditation cycles, ensuring continued conformity with PHAB standards and demonstrating ongoing progress in three core areas:



1. Health Department Updates
2. Specific Measure Reporting
3. Reflection and Learning

Health Department Updates

The Stark County Health Department reported several organizational advancements and addressed emerging public health issues. In 2025, the department continued strengthening its performance management system, improving data sharing with employees, the Board of Health, and community partners.

The department also responded to the issue of drug overdoses by expanding community access to lifesaving resources.

Key efforts included:

- Distribution of Project DAWN (naloxone) kits
- Educational outreach through the mobile health unit, known locally as the HealthMobile
- Installation of NaloxBoxes across the community to increase access to overdose reversal medication

Specific Measure Reporting

PHAB requires health departments to demonstrate ongoing progress in selected measures each year. In 2025, the Stark County Health Department focused on strengthening its processes for identifying and resolving ethical issues related to programs, policies, and interventions.

Major accomplishments included:

- Convening an Ethics Council
- Developing a comprehensive ethics policy
- Identifying and implementing ethics training for all staff

These steps reinforce the department's commitment to ethical practice and transparent decisionmaking.

Reflection and Learning

For the annual reflection component, the department selected Domain 8: Workforce Development, highlighting its efforts to build and sustain a competent public health workforce.

Initiatives emphasized in the 2025 reflection included:

- Enhancing employee satisfaction
- Supporting professional development opportunities
- Improving staff retention
- Engaging community partners
- Promoting public health careers
- Using data to guide workforce planning and decisionmaking

Although the focus areas of PHAB's annual report remain consistent each year, the Stark County Health Department will continue to highlight new programs, innovations, and improvements that demonstrate ongoing advancement and alignment with PHAB standards.

Striving Toward a Healthier Community.

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Contract Fees	439,489.28
Fees for Services	538,876.76
C & D User Fees	758,167.64
Inspection Fees	413,016.60
Vital Statistics	358,824.68
Permits	1,690,954.55
Fines / Late Charges	27,173.93
State Subsidy	139,427.88
Local Tax Subdivisions	1,619,378.00
Moms Quilt for Two Grant	24,525.00
Public Health Infrastructure Grant	234,333.00
Breast & Cervical Cancer Grant	23,333.35
Mobile Unit Grant	62,682.06
Prescription Drug Overdose Grant	118,394.66
NACCHO Grant	198,979.00
Joint Solid Waste District Grant	127,500.00
Adolescence Resiliency Grant	153,800.00
Get Vaccinated Grant	65,033.00
WIC Grant	464,726.52
Public Health Workforce Grant	283,110.20
THRIVE Medicaid Support for CHW	198,212.50
Reproductive Health Grant	198,891.34
Injury Prevention Grant	331,175.00
Occupant Protection Coordinator Grant	90,235.94
Cribs for Kids Grant	96,600.00
Preconception Health & Wellness Grant	24,887.50
COVID-19 Grant Funding	55,199.23
COVID-19 Business Safety Funds	11,689.33
Water Pollution Control Grant	48,668.57
Homeowner Contributions - HSTS	10,141.75
Mosquito Grant	30,000.00
Private Grants	88,697.00
Other Receipts	73,402.74
Reimbursements	102,075.24
Carryover From 2024	3,144,419.00
TOTAL SOURCES OF REVENUE	12,246,021.25

EXPENDITURES

Salaries	4,447,282.28
Insurance	1,113,396.41
Medicare	66,380.66
PERS	748,729.23
Worker's Compensation	22,373.78
Unemployment	0.00
Supplies	329,115.98
Utilities	42,469.65
Contracts & Purchased Services	1,059,110.28
Phones & Communications	66,507.79
Equipment / Vehicle Rental	52,616.43
Rent	377,383.69
Equipment	55,571.42
Other Expenses	1,997.50
State Remittances	944,403.10
Travel	99,901.38
Refunds	7,046.78
Payouts for Vacation & Sick Leave	180,836.37
Encumbrances Carried Over to 2026	338,025.09
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	9,953,147.82

STARK COUNTY COMBINED GENERAL HEALTH DISTRICT

Serving the cities, villages, and townships of Stark County since 1920:

TOWNSHIPS

Bethlehem
Canton
Jackson
Lake
Lawrence
Lexington
Marlboro
Nimishillen
Osnaburg
Paris
Perry
Pike
Plain
Sandy
Sugarcreek
Tuscarawas
Washington

VILLAGES

Beach City
Brewster
East Canton
East Sparta
Hartville
Hills & Dales
Magnolia
Meyers Lake
Minerva
Navarre
Waynesburg
Wilmot

CITIES

Canal Fulton
Louisville
North Canton



Striving Toward a **Healthier** Community.

Environmental Health Services, Vital Statistics, and Administration & Support Services

7235 Whipple Avenue NW, Suite B
North Canton, OH 44720
Phone: 330-493-9904 | Fax: 330-493-9920

Nursing Services

7235 Whipple Avenue NW, Suite C
North Canton, OH 44720
Phone: 330-493-9928 | Fax: 330-493-9932

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