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## DIRECTOR OF HEALTH REPORT

Jessica Kristy, MPH

SUMMER 2023

JUNE | JULY | AUGUST

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Welcome back, Board of Directors! I hope you have all enjoyed a wonderful summer. As we wrapped up one fiscal year and entered a new, our public health professionals have remained busy providing our environmental health services, providing chronic disease prevention and other evidence-based programs, conducting opioid and infectious disease surveillance, continuing our response to COVID-19, continuing the implementation of our community health improvement plan, building internal capacities, and more! I would like to acknowledge that the Environmental Health Division staff, under Melanie's leadership, have remained on top of all responsibilities during this continued period of the division being understaffed while simultaneously experiencing an overwhelming workload. This report will highlight work accomplished by the district during the months of June, July, and August 2023.

Welcome new Board member, Marietta Sabetta, of Seymour! Marietta was appointed to our Board in August.

### Miscellaneous

The CT Association of Directors of Health continues to meet virtually on the first Wednesday of the month. The CADH Annual Meeting was held on June 28<sup>th</sup> at Powder Ridge Mountain. I was elected to serve on the CADH Board of Directors. I was also appointed as the CADH Emergency Preparedness Committee Chair by the CADH President, Charles Brown (Central CT Health Direct). The CADH Board of Directors meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month.

On June 22<sup>nd</sup>, Commissioner Juthani and CT DPH staff held the Commissioner's Semiannual Directors of Health Meeting in Wallingford. Agenda topics included Climate and Health in CT: BRACE Grant; Local Health Department Experiences Utilizing Per Capita Grant in Aid Funding; Lead Statute Changes and Lead ARPA Funding Updates; Local Health Experiences Utilizing the PHHS Block Grant; Workforce Development & Grant Update; Local Workforce Development Projects: Sanitarian Trainee Program; and other discussion.

CT DPH and CADH continue to hold alternating meetings for statewide local health departments/districts hosted by on Wednesdays. I also attended the DPH monthly Infection Preventionist/ Infectious Disease meeting held by CT DPH.

I was selected to [the de Beaumont Foundation's 40 under 40 in Public Health](#) Class of 2023. The de Beaumont Foundation publicly announced all honorees on Thursday, September 7. The de Beaumont Foundation's 40 Under 40 in Public Health recognizes rising leaders who are working to improve the health of communities across the nation. Hundreds of professionals working to benefit state or local public health across the United States were evaluated by a distinguished panel of public health leaders on their leadership and contributions to their community's health. This opportunity also admits me in a two-year professional development program that will feature an array of learning and training experiences, as well as valuable opportunities for networking and thought leadership.

I was also invited to join the Hartford Chapter of the Womens Leaders Association. The Women Leaders Association is the world's largest women executive association with over 30,000 women in executive and leadership positions who are committed to the development and advancement of women in the private and public corporate arena. The WLA empowers and equips high-achieving women to thrive in the modern workforce by giving them the tools, strategies, and network needed to master their work.

I am grateful for both opportunities, and I look forward to applying what I learn so that I can become a more effective leader to our staff and for the district.

### Public Health Accreditation

We submitted our annual report in June. We received really positive feedback in our PHAB Committee review summary including a highlight that "impressive work has been completed for supporting a diverse and skilled workforce at NVHD."





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### Workforce Development

Joan continues to participate in the CT Public Health Association (CPHA) Mentoring Committee, which is planning a fall (virtual) event for mentors and students. Lisa T. continues to chair the NVHD Workforce Development Committee. She put together a list of courses available to fulfill the individual staff training requirements for the fiscal year. The expectation is to complete two courses per quarter and submit them via the electronic tool she created.

At our monthly staff meeting in July, we had a fire safety training and a controlled fire extinguisher demonstration presented by Seymour Fire Marshal Timm Willis and Deputy Fire Marshal Robert Rockwell.



Pictured are the Seymour Fire Marshal and Deputy Fire Marshal providing classroom training to NVHD staff.



Pictured is John Mucha, extinguishing a controlled fire outside NVHD with Seymour Fire Marshal and Deputy Fire Marshal looking on.

Lisa T. and Joan are members of the CT Partnership for Workforce Development, which met on Tuesday, June 6<sup>th</sup>. Here are some highlights of the discussion:

- Reviewed the results of a survey the committee was asked to complete in advance of the meeting, regarding needs in the public health workforce and how to better attract people into public health roles. They then broke up into smaller groups to discuss where the following issues were raised:
  - Retention of specialized staff: sanitarians and nurses.
  - Training deficits in areas like leadership and financial management.
  - Salaries for public health employees.
- The fellowship program was discussed, with an overview of currently placed fellows (ours included) and the continued availability of interns was reinforced.
- Tom St. Louis (CT DPH) talked about some initiatives with CT universities and community colleges, including the introduction of an associates in public health. He is also working with school districts to create opportunities to introduce high school students to the public health discipline.
- The Public Health Training Academy of CT was discussed. The intent is to make courses available on the CT Train website that align with the October 2021 core competencies and can be easily accessed by the public health workforce.





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### **Quality Improvement**

Joan reports that the quarterly QI Committee meeting was held on July 14<sup>th</sup>.

- Reviewed status of recommendations from 2022 Organizational Culture of Quality Self-Assessment. Critical action to be completed is the incorporation of participation in NVHD QI activity into the performance review of each staff member (both in the employee’s self-review and the supervisor’s review). The review templates have been updated; annual reviews need to be completed.
- Recommendations for new QI projects were discussed, to be taken to the NVHD Steering Committee.
- Next quarterly meeting scheduled for Sept 12, which will be transition from Joan Lane to Paulina Cherkasov serving as QI Committee chair.

Joan conducted a QI training activity at August staff meeting (“Think Inside the Box”).

We continue to write up *Quick QIs* (small, everyday improvements to processes and programs). We continue to work on our current “administrative projects” and will be starting our next “program project” early this summer.

1. Admin QI Project: “Increase NVHD’s Visibility.” This project has concluded, and Joan has completed writing the project summary report.
2. Quick QI Project: “Sage.” The Sage accounting software has proven to be not as flexible with the needs of our staff as we had anticipated. We tried work arounds, but ultimately due to the software limitations, we will be pivoting from Sage all together. Jess, Lisa M., and Carissa met with George Sinnamon, CPA to discuss an alternative software, QuickBooks Enterprise. George S. is in support of NVHD utilizing this software and George Z. (IT consultant) is also on board due to his experiences with Sage’s limitations; we will be moving forward with QuickBooks. The two Georges are meeting in September to plan the integration of QuickBooks and will be providing technical assistance during the transition.

### **Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Anti-Racism (IDEA) Committee**

The Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Anti-Racism (IDEA) Committee, chaired by Paulina and consisting of representatives from each division includes Jess, Carissa, Joan, Lisa M., Nancy, and Nicolette. The following update is provided by Paulina:

The committee met mid-June to participate in a live training as a group and continue outlining committee objectives; the group viewed half of NACCHO’s “Health Equity and Social Justice 101 Training,” with plans to finish it—along with NACCHO’s Health Equity training on intersectionality—in time for the next meeting. The committee’s goal for next month is to begin work on NVHD’s IDEA Glossary of Terms.

The committee met once in July and twice in August. After completing multiple trainings on topics such as intersectionality and health equity, the group has begun compiling NVHD’s version of an IDEA Glossary, pulling terms from similar documents from the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) and American Medical Association (AMA). The committee hopes to have a ready-to-use glossary by the fall.





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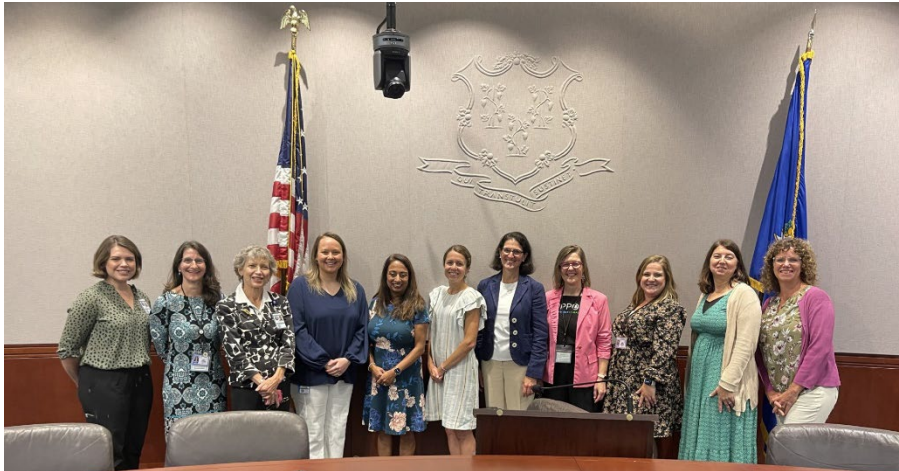
## Maternal & Infant Health

### Maternal & Infant Health Coalition

Savannah Prince joined us this summer as our third Public Health Fellow/Intern! Savannah is a senior at Southern CT State University and has been working with Joan and the Valley MIH Coalition to continue rolling out the Valley Breast/chest-feeding Friendly Worksite (BFW) initiative. Savannah created social media posts for World Breast Feeding Week (8/1-8/7) and National Breastfeeding Month (August). She has also been supporting various programs of the Community Health staff over the summer.

BFW initiative updates:

- Facilitated successful application of BFW recognition for the Valley Community Foundation.
- Connected several local day care programs to the CT chapter of NAPSACC, a national evidence-based program on infant and toddler nutrition (including breastfeeding)
- Joan, Kristie, and Jess were pleased to attend the Capitol News Briefing on August 16<sup>th</sup> at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford with Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz, CT DPH Commissioner Juthani and Deputy Commissioner Terranova, members of the CT Breastfeeding Coalition, CT WIC leadership, legislatures, Stratford Health Department, and others (pictured below) to highlight National Breastfeeding Month. It can be watched on CT-N by clicking this link: <https://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=22037>.



Group picture at the Capitol News Briefing on August 16<sup>th</sup> at the Legislative Office Building

## WIC

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, otherwise known as “WIC” continued to be provided for Valley residents in partnership with the Waterbury Health Department out of our Community Health Annex (100 Bank St) on “WIC Wednesdays” from 9am-4:30pm. Waterbury will be turning over their WIC Program to Optimus Healthcare starting October 1<sup>st</sup>. Carissa and I hosted Lauren Keenan, Manager of WIC Nutrition Services with Optimus on August 23<sup>rd</sup> and oriented her to our Annex and reviewed our historical relationship with WIC. We are grateful for the work Waterbury Health Department has done for our clients while managing the program for our jurisdiction, but we are happy to begin fostering this new partnership and anticipate improved service delivery in the months to come.







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### **Naugatuck Valley Overdose Prevention & Education (NOPE) Program**

#### Valley Opioids Task Force

The Task Force is now inclusive of the Opioids Workgroup members from our Community Health Improvement Plan Committee on Substance Use. The Valley Opioids Task Force meeting was held at the Echo Hose Training Facility on August 10<sup>th</sup>. Our colleagues Bobby and Anna from the CT High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) DEA Program gave a presentation then I provided a data update.

Lisa T. had a health education table set up at the Fighting Against Drugs Everywhere (F.A.D.E.) candle lighting ceremony for International Overdose Awareness at the Shelton Riverwalk Pavilion.

#### Academic Detailing on Opioids Safety (ADOPS)

*Status: Contract Executed with CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)*

Carissa, Lisa T., Lorrie (APW), and I continue to train and prepare for upcoming Academic Detailing sessions.

#### Implementing Overdose Prevention Strategies at the Local Level (IOPSLL)

*Status: In-Kind Partner Participation*

I continue to participate in the IOPSLL regional project led by the New Haven Health Department. We are currently evaluating our data collection and sharing mechanisms and researching opportunities for improvements and standardization. I was one of seven Directors of Health collaborating on this initiative that co-signed letters directed to the CT DPH Deputy Commissioner (DC) Dr. Jody Terranova and the CT Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) Director, Dr. Rodrick Marriott. The letters advocated for improved data accessibility, sharing, and accuracy as well as identifying the need for technical assistance and streamlined guidance related to certain aspects of overdose prevention and responses to spikes. CT DPH Deputy Commissioner Dr. Terranova was very receptive to our letter, and we met with her on August 17<sup>th</sup> to address our requests. Since then, we have seen communication and training being offered as a result, which is a great step forward.

#### Overdose Data to Action: Limiting Overdose through Collaborative Actions in Localities (OD2A)

*Status: Application Approved! Awaiting subcontract from New Haven Health Department.*

The New Haven Health Department, Waterbury Health Department, and health districts/departments across New Haven County, including NVHD, jointly applied (New Haven will be the fiduciary) for federal funding up to \$10.4 million over five years to reduce health inequities and fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses by launching a New Haven county-wide campaign to reduce accidental overdoses and close gaps in access to care. The purpose of the initiative is to implement strategies that will decrease fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses, decrease illicit opioid and stimulate use, improve health equity, increase adoption of harm and stigma reduction strategies, and improve care by tracking data on connections to and retention in care. NVHD along with 5 other local health departments/districts will be hiring a total of 9 full-time Navigators (1 will be hired by NVHD for our jurisdiction) to link people who use drugs to care and support their retention if care in the Valley. We will have more information once we receive our subcontract from New Haven.

### **Air Quality and Climate Change**

#### EPA Air Quality Monitoring Grant

*Status: Application Approved; Awaiting Sub-Contract from CT DPH; Phase: Training and Planning Meetings*

We are still awaiting our sub-contract from the CT DPH Office of Climate and Public Health for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant, but we continued working with the grant partners (DPH, DEEP, UCONN, and Yale) over the summer to develop our Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) that needs to be submitted to the EPA. The major





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components of the QAPP are overviews of project management and tasks, data generation and acquisition, assessment and oversight, and data validation and usability.

### **Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP)**

I attended the Region 5 PHEP workgroup meeting for health directors and program staff hosted by the Region 5 CRI Lead, Torrington Area Health District, on June 13<sup>th</sup> and August 15<sup>th</sup>. Carissa attended as my proxy on July 18<sup>th</sup>.

The Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator grant funded position is posted. I hope to conduct interviews and have someone hired in September.

### **ESF 8: Public Health & Medical Services, Chair**

I facilitated the Region 5 ESF 8 meetings on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, July 14<sup>th</sup>, and August 4<sup>th</sup>. I attended and provided the ESF 8 update at the Region 5 REPT Steering Committee meeting on July 10<sup>th</sup> as well as the full REPT meeting on August 21<sup>st</sup>. I attended the Region 2 ESF 8 meeting on June 21<sup>st</sup> and attended the Region 2 REPT meeting on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. I attended the CT Healthcare Coalition meetings.

WebEOC and the Region 5 DEMHS Teams room were activated on Sunday, July 16<sup>th</sup> due to the significant rain event. I had to log in to WebEOC and monitored the ESF 8 radio.

### **Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)**

I continued to meet with the other 4 Regional Leads and our State MRC Coordinator to review/revise the Statewide MRC Strategic Plan goals and objectives.

In the absence of NVHD funding for preparedness and volunteer management activities, and no direct MRC funding in the State of Connecticut, our units heavily rely on National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) MRC funding opportunities to develop our capacities and readiness for response activities and missions. As the Region 5 lead, I coordinated with the units in the Region, prepared, and submitted an advocacy letter in support of the NACCHO application for the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR) funding opportunity *Medical Reserve Corps Small Grant Program*. The Region 5 units include: Danbury MRC (unit #2693), Housatonic Valley MRC (unit #2182), Naugatuck Valley MRC (unit #2489), and the Torrington Area MRC (unit #1327).

On August 10<sup>th</sup>, I attended Lisa T.'s evening QPR Suicide Prevention Training and conducted a Loyalty Oath for 3 MRC Volunteers at the end of the training. Under State statute, MRC Volunteers are required to participated in a loyalty oath that can only be legally administered by a Director of Health, Emergency Management Director, or Town Clerk, every two years to be eligible for CT Title 28 liability coverage while activated to perform volunteer duties.

CT DPH is now requiring all MRC volunteers to also have a background check completed in the CTResponds! online volunteer management system. I have been attending meetings and training regarding this function in the system. To clarify, while MRC and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers both fall under the CT Citizen Corps umbrella, only MRC volunteers have this new requirement. The State of CT has paid for the background checks so there is no cost to the local units at this point.

### **ELC Grant: Surveillance & Outbreak Response Team (SORT)**

- COVID-19 – Status: Endemic Response
  - *An endemic means a disease is spreading in a community at normal or expected levels*





The following update is provided by SORT Coordinator, Paulina:

June was SORT Program Assistant, Barbara’s last month working with NVHD, as her contract came to conclusion; however, her contribution to the case surveillance effort has been significant.

Heading into the summer, reported cases of COVID-19 in the Valley have continued to decrease, but we have seen an uptick towards the end of July and August, as demonstrated in the charts below. While not as significant as previous waves, it has nevertheless prompted members of the public and community partners to reach out for guidance and resources, such as COVID-19 test kits, from the SORT team.

In June, The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which is under the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, released an advisory regarding Long COVID titled, “Identification and Management of Mental Health Symptoms and Conditions Associated with Long COVID”. The SORT team began working on an educational campaign regarding Long COVID for Valley residents, which will include general information about the condition, recommended treatment options, and existing community resources. Bea and Barbara also lent their support to the CHIP, verifying and building on existing databases of mental health resources compiled by the SORT team. Bea completed Mental Health First Aid facilitator training in June, and along with Lisa T., continues her Circle of Security program work.

At the end of June, NVHD received a shipment of 240 COVID-19 self-test kits from Inteliswab, replenishing the health district’s supply after successfully distributing the last shipment to the community and local partners. At the end of August, we received a shipment of 720 COVID-19 test-kits. NVHD was identified as one of two Regional Distribution Sites (RDS) for local health departments/districts in CT Region 5. CT DPH delivered pallets of test-kits to NVHD and then Me, Nancy, Vanessa and Jess unpacked the pallets and sorted the shipment based off the requests submitted by NVHD, Danbury, Bethel, Newtown, Ridgefield, New Fairfield/Sherman and Brookfield. A notification went out to their health directors & designated staff and then the test-kits were picked up within 24 hours. Home test-kits are available for pick up or delivery; please contact Paulina at (203) 881-3255, ext. 118 or email [pcherkasov@nvhd.org](mailto:pcherkasov@nvhd.org) to reserve your order.

As the landscape of COVID-19 case surveillance continues to change, we have adjusted our approach; the priority is no longer making contact with every case, but attempting to reach those who could potentially be vulnerable. The metrics below reflect this change, as there is less contact with positive residents overall.

Table 1. Adult Case Statistics (18+)

	May	June	July	August
Total Cases & Contacts Managed	91	65	93	147
Successful Phone Contact	64	39	7	24
Attempted Contact-Letters Mailed			14	14
Attempted Phone Calls for Abbreviated Interviews	6	10		
Not Attempted due to Delayed Report	21			
No contact or attempt		16		

Table 2. Youth and Teen Case Statistics (0-17)

	May	June	July	August
Total Cases & Contacts Managed	6	3	3	6
Successful Phone Contact	6	2		1
No contact or attempt		1		





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### **NVHD Gives Back Program**

Amanda continues to coordinate our “NVHD Gives Back” program where throughout the year, we will designate a “charity or non-profit of the month” and all donations collected will be donated to that organization. During the months of July and August, we collected hygiene products for Traveler on a Mission (Ansonia). Their organization’s mission is to provide essential hygiene products to support and improve the health and self-esteem of adults and children in need. Our next collection will be supporting TEAM, Inc.’s holiday toy drive.

### **Fish Consumption Advisory**

In June, CT Department of Public Health in coordination with Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) issued new or updated consumption advisories for certain fish species in 11 waterbodies in Connecticut. New advisories were issued for the Housatonic River (near O'Sullivan's Island in Derby) and the Naugatuck River. Previously, neither fishing areas had specific consumption recommendations. The new recommendation is to limit consumption of fish from these two areas to one meal per month due to elevated levels of PFOS. “These consumption advisories are necessary to protect public health while allowing for community members to benefit from the nutritional benefits of eating fish,” said DPH Commissioner Manisha Juthani, MD. “PFOS is one of a group of related chemicals known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). This group of chemicals is commonly used in a wide range of industrial processes and is found in many consumer products. Long-term exposure to PFAS may be associated with increased levels of cholesterol and liver enzymes, a change in immune response, developmental effects, increased chance of high blood pressure and/or increased chance of pre-eclampsia during pregnancy, and an increased chance of thyroid disease.” There are other rivers and areas with new or updated advisories. Read the full DPH press release here: <https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Press-Room/Press-Releases---2023/fish-advisory?fbclid=IwAR2yFc18zC33i6WksI9fsV0UGq91xaJxjOfSpCmxaikrT5HaHYBHKb9OqOY>. I put out messaging on our website and social media pages and we will be providing Derby officials weather proof posters to post in the Greenway and at the new fishing pier once we receive them from DPH.

### **Save the Date!**

To enhance the relationship between the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) and municipal and district departments of health, the DPH commissioners request the opportunity to visit each of Connecticut’s 61 local health departments in 2023. Through these visits, they expect to gain an even better understanding of the valuable services we provide and hope our meeting leads to collaborative opportunities to further enhance those services. Staff, Board of Directors, and Chief Elected Officials are encouraged to attend.

Tentative: Commissioner Juthani and Deputy Commissioner Morrissey will be visiting NVHD on Tuesday, November 7<sup>th</sup> from 9am-11am.

Once I receive final confirmation from the Commissioner’s staff, I will send out a more formal invitation and reminder.





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### **Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)**

Jess, Joan, Lisa T., and I continue to serve on the CHIP Steering Committee. Additional staff including myself, Jess, Joan, Lisa T., Kristie, and Bea have been participating in the new CHIP for 2022-2024 workgroups, which include equitable access to health services, mental health, and substance use. Thank you to our Board member Barbara L. (Shelton) for joining the equitable access workgroup!

As part of the Oral Health subgroup of the equitable access workgroup, Joan engaged with COHI (CT Oral Health Initiative, a research and advocacy agency) and CFDO (the CT Foundation for Dental Outreach, which sponsors the annual CT Mission of Mercy free dental clinic). They will become active partners in our ongoing efforts to address access to services.

On August 28<sup>th</sup>, Carissa and Jess attended a roundtable discussion and presentation of our community health assessment and CHIP work with Jameson Foulke, Senator Murphy's Outreach Assistant & Special Assistant. The meeting included Griffin Outreach Workers, NVHD, and TEAM, Inc. We look forward to continuing meeting with Jameson to raise awareness of health issues and improve resources here in the Valley.

### **Community Health Programs**

Kristie and I "graduated" from a LiveWell program leader training on June 8<sup>th</sup>. This will allow us to offer more programs and have backup trainers when needed.

NVHD was awarded the Preventive Health Services Grant! This grant will fund all our community health programs and offset some of the health educator's salary. This is a five-year grant (2/1/23-9/30/28).

### **A Matter of Balance**

A Matter of Balance program in Shelton ended on June 30<sup>th</sup> with 13 participants and there once again is a growing wait list as the Matter of Balance program continues to grow in the Valley! There are two full programs happening now at Shelton and Ansonia senior centers. A new class will be starting in September at the Naugatuck senior center.

### **Diabetes Self-Management Program (DSMP)**

Kristie and Lisa T. co-facilitated a DSMP class at the Naugatuck Senior Center that ended on July 20<sup>th</sup> with 9 completers. We plan to host another series of these programs at the Shelton and Ansonia Senior Centers.

### **Chronic Pain Self-Management (CPSM)**

Lisa T. started a new Chronic Pain class on June 21<sup>st</sup> virtually that ended on July 26<sup>th</sup> with 5 completers.

### **Question, Persuade, & Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention Training**

Lisa T. conducted several QPR programs virtually for the community and local organizations to staff. On 8/10, she held a virtual program for the community which had 12 participants, and on 8/24 she held a virtual program for South Central Agency on Aging employees which had 12 attendees. She also was invited to host a QPR session at Yale University for incoming MPH students which was in person and had 13 attendees.

Lisa T. was also asked to teach QPR for all teachers in Ansonia during professional development days, which have all been scheduled in September and October.



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### Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)

Lisa T. completed Mental Health First Aid certification training this month and is now certified! Congrats Lisa! Her certification cost (\$2,200) was covered by the NACCHO MRC Operational Readiness Award grant. We will be offering these programs soon.

### Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

Lead case management is ongoing. Melanie and Lisa T. have worked together on 2 properties where children reside that have elevated blood lead levels.

On August 9<sup>th</sup>, Melanie, Jess, Lisa T., and I had a site visit audit from Brianna at the CT DPH to review new lead regulations and important updates to the lead program. Brianna also reviewed our files and case management processes, which went very well, and congratulated Lisa T. for her great job and great organization of cases.

DPH has received American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocated through CT Public Act 22-49 to support the States response to lead poisoning of children. DPH will be processing requests for reimbursement from local health departments (LHDs) for expenses incurred related to epidemiological investigations performed for children with blood lead levels equal to or greater than 5 micrograms per deciliter. This means that NVHD will be able to bill the state DPH for any lead visits that include environmental inspections, which will help further our education efforts around lead awareness.

- Each LHD received an amount that's been allocated for the entire reimbursement period of July 1, 2023 to December 31, 2026. This allocation is based on the 2020 surveillance data for levels of venous blood lead levels 5 and higher. NVHD's total allocation is not to exceed \$274,560. *If a LHD has an increase in cases, they can discuss this with DPH. If additional funding is available, due to it not being spent elsewhere, DPH will consider reallocating that funding as requested.*
- Effective July 1, 2023, billing will be done quarterly and will be reimbursed in the amount of \$4,160 per case. To bill, we must have all child and environmental data entered and up to date in the Lead Surveillance System (MAVEN), which we already do, and submit the non-PO voucher provided to us.
- We are grateful the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) approved this because as we complete cases and receive reimbursement, we will be able to reinvest these funds into lead poisoning prevention programming and resources for our clients and cover any external costs associated with the investigations, which we currently do not have core funding or other grants to do so.
- CT DPH has also allocated some ARPA funds for lead remediation for these properties. More information to come after they put out the RFP and the contractor is identified.
- CT DPH utilized ARPA funding to purchase new X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) spectrometers and two years of resourcing for the machines. NVHD was identified as one of ten regional host sites beginning this Fall for the XRFs. Our coverage area will include NVHD, Bethel, Brookfield, Monroe, and Trumbull and will be a backup in case Danbury or Bridgeport need an additional machine.

### Immunization Grants & Clinical Services

#### Immunization and Vaccines for Children COVID-19 Supplemental Funding

NVHD has been awarded \$409,222 that will be used for the contract period of September 1, 2023\* to June 30, 2026. We submitted our work plan but are still waiting to be assigned a representative from the CT DPH Contracts and Grants Management Section (CGMS). Once we are assigned, we will be able to submit our budget and move forward with the contracting process. We cannot retro-charge any expenses to DPH-issued contracts so we are waiting to see what the new contract period will be. The original contract was supposed to expire in June 2025, but a no cost extension was approved so we are under the assumption that this may be contributing to our delay.





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Immunization Action Plan (IAP) and COVID-19 Immunization Action Plan (CAP) Grant Programs

IAP: In June, Elizabeth completed 1 site visit at Griffin Hospital and one at West Rock Pediatrics. She completed 4 virtual IQIPs for her grant program for various pediatric offices. In July and August, she completed 7 IQIP visits with pediatric offices in her surrounding area which includes the Valley towns, Trumbull, Monroe, and Stratford. Elizabeth, Carissa, and Jess attended the virtual quarterly IAP meeting on June 8<sup>th</sup>.

**CAP:**

NVHD was approached by CT DPH to be the third pilot site in the State to conduct a Rapid Community Assessment (RCA) focused on barriers to childhood immunizations at no cost, with support from CT DPH and Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center (PRC) staff. We agreed and identified Naugatuck as our target jurisdiction and parents of children in grades K-5 as our target population for our 3-week RCA. In July 2023, NVHD successfully conducted the RCA in the Borough of Naugatuck to identify key barriers affecting routine childhood vaccine confidence and uptake in the community. With the assistance of CT DPH, the PRC, and Key stakeholders in Naugatuck, NVHD was able to gain valuable insights from the community by conducting parent interviews, an online parent survey, and listening sessions. Nancy and Vanessa visited several organizations and schools in Naugatuck to collect this information. Please see the attached report.



Pictured are Nancy & Vanessa with our partners from CT DPH and the Yale-Griffin PRC during community canvassing for the RCA.



Pictured left to right is NVHD employees Nancy, Vanessa, Bea and intern/fellow, Savannah, during community canvassing for the RCA.

Nancy and Vanessa have also attended a meet and greet at Whittemore Library in Naugatuck and participated in the CT Foodshare mobile food pantries in Ansonia. They were able to meet with over 100 families and provide them with a bag on educational materials. Photos below!

CAP Team provided libraries in the valley with flyers and materials highlighting National Immunization Awareness (NIAM) month. Many libraries displayed our NIAM materials alongside books and activities that highlight health, vaccines, and doctor's visits. Some libraries, like Plumb Memorial Library in Shelton, displayed our flyer on their front tables, while others, like the Howard Whittemore Memorial Library in Naugatuck, created a wall display.



Pictured is Vanessa at the St. Mary's Church (Ansonia) Mobile Food Pantry on 6/20/2023.







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Pictured is a screen shot of Miss Maura's Programs Facebook post highlighting the education table and NIAM at Plumb Memorial Library (Shelton)



Pictured is the bookshelf display of children's immunization and healthcare books for NIAM at Howard Whittemore Memorial Library (Naugatuck)

### Clinical Services

Kristie has provided 15 vaccines for children and 2 for adults throughout June. Kristie held a Tdap vaccine clinic at AIEP which is the international student exchange program. The students from China needed Tdap boosters to be compliant with school vaccine requirements for CT. She will be going back there twice in July to vaccinate students again. COVID booster clinics were also offered every week in June.

Kristie has provided 162 vaccines to children throughout the months of July and August. The summer months are always busy with children needing vaccines to go back to school. We also held additional clinics at NVHD and at the APEX International Students (formally AIEP) offices in Derby to help vaccinate students from China who were entering CT schools for the year.

For the first time this year, we held two clinics for parents at Naugatuck High School to make sure kids were vaccinated before school started. Kristie had planned this based on our rapid community assessment parent responses we received, and assuring we were easily accessible for parents.





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Flu clinics have been scheduled and the public flu clinics have been posted below. We have 22 clinics scheduled throughout the Valley at senior centers, board of education employees, preschools, and a few small businesses. Appointments are also available by calling Nurse Kristie at 203-881-3255 x 107.

Offsite public flu clinics this fall:

Monday	10/2	10am-12pm	Beacon Falls Senior Center
Thursday	10/12	10am-1pm	Seymour Community Center
Friday	10/13	9-11am	Naugatuck Senior Center
Tuesday	10/17	11am-1pm	Derby Senior Center
Thursday	10/19	10am-12pm	Ansonia Senior Center

Healthcare-Associated Infections & Antimicrobial Resistance & Infection Prevention & Control

DPH continues to host a monthly meeting with the CT DPH HAI-AR staff and local health departments/districts building capacity in Infection Prevention & Control (IPC). Jess attended virtual meetings held on June 20<sup>th</sup> and August 2<sup>nd</sup>. The quarterly HAI-AR meeting on was held August 2<sup>nd</sup>. Jess also attended the quarterly CT Coalition Against HAIs (CCAH) meeting on June 6<sup>th</sup>, and the monthly Infection Control Nurses of CT on June 28<sup>th</sup> and July 26<sup>th</sup>.

The National Association for County & City Health Officials (NACCHO), in partnership with CDC, offered a scholarship opportunity for local health department staff to obtain entry-level certification in infection control (CIC) or IPC. Kristie was awarded the scholarship and has been training and studying for the exam which will be in September.

**Miscellaneous**

Connecticut Public Health Association Health Education Committee

The work of this committee is to provide additional health education to public health educators, using bi-monthly webinars on predetermined topics. In early June, Lisa T. was recruited to join the committee by Jamie Luckhardt, Committee Co-Chair and former Health Educator for NVHD.

The first meeting was held on July 12<sup>th</sup>.

- The committee members were introduced and roles outlines. Lisa’s main function will be to provide data for topics and create/institute evaluations for CPHA Health Education programs.
- A meeting/webinar schedule was decided upon; will meet and present a webinar or in person topic every other month, with a break in the summer.
- The first meeting/webinar will be presented in conjunction with the Copper Beach Institute and will be focused on mental health and wellness for the school year (date TBD).
- August meeting ended up being cancelled by the co-chairs. Next meeting is on September 20<sup>th</sup>.







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### Events Recap

Lisa T. and I attended the Ansonia Senior Center grand opening which was a great event to broadcast our services and programs. This was a large ribbon cutting event with many community members and organizations!



Pictured left to right: Carissa Caserta, MPH, Assistant Director, and Lisa Trupp, CCHW, Health Educator

Lisa T. was invited to attend Yale University's MPH student orientation to be part of a panel of speakers. She provided an overview of public health and what we do at NVHD (along with teaching a QPR session as previously mentioned). She was a part of a public health panel to discuss her role in public health and educate students about varying public health roles. A great experience! This article highlights the orientation: <https://ysph.yale.edu/news-article/orientation-session-introduces-ysph-students-to-diverse-community-public-health-initiatives/>.



Pictured are a panel of public health professionals speaking at the Yale MPH student orientation. Lisa Trupp, CCHW, is pictured third from the right.

Lisa T., Nancy and Vanessa went to the Naugatuck Police Department National Night Out event at Linden Park which is hosted by the police to raise awareness about police and neighborhood camaraderie. While this is year marked the 40<sup>th</sup> National event, this is the 3<sup>rd</sup> time Naugatuck has hosted their own (and our 3<sup>rd</sup> time participating). NVHD hosted a table there with giveaways and information about our services and programs.



Three pictures side by side including two showing Lisa T. and Vanessa with child and adult visitors at their education table. The event flyer is in between the two event photos.



# Rapid Community Assessment

*Understanding barriers affecting routine childhood vaccine confidence and uptake*



## Introduction

Naugatuck Valley Health District, in collaboration with the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CTDPH) and Yale-Griffin Prevention and Research Center (PRC), set out to identify key barriers affecting routine childhood vaccine confidence in the town of Naugatuck. Naugatuck was selected for this project because it is home to a significant population of children, making it crucial to ensure high vaccination rates to protect public health. However, recent data indicated a decline in routine childhood vaccine uptake, signaling the need for a comprehensive assessment to understand the underlying barriers.

## Our strategy

With the help of the community, NVHD gathered information through community interviews, an online parent survey, and listening sessions. By leveraging in-person engagement and online accessibility, we obtained valuable insights from a diverse range of parents.





# What we learned

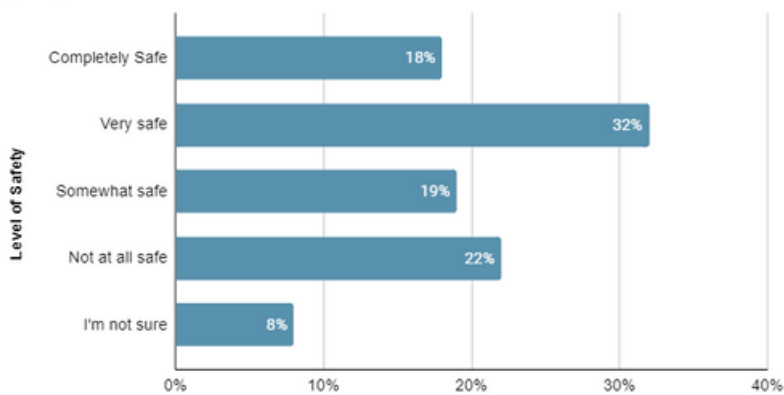
## Childhood Vaccination Status:

**21% of respondents indicated that their children did not receive all their childhood vaccines.**

**Most Black/African American respondents (67%) reported that their children had not received all childhood vaccinations, compared to 19% of White and 5% of Hispanic/Latinx respondents.**



Total Sample: How safe do you think childhood vaccines are?  
[n=72]



## Vaccine safety:

**50% of the participants perceived vaccines as safe, while 22% considered them not at all safe.**

## Barriers affecting vaccine confidence and uptake:

**I think vaccines should be given during school hours**

-Naugatuck Parent

Accessibility and Convenience

Vaccine Hesitancy

Language Barriers

Socioeconomic Factors



**I think there should be more information provided in Spanish at schools, libraries, bus stations and bus stops so that I can understand better**

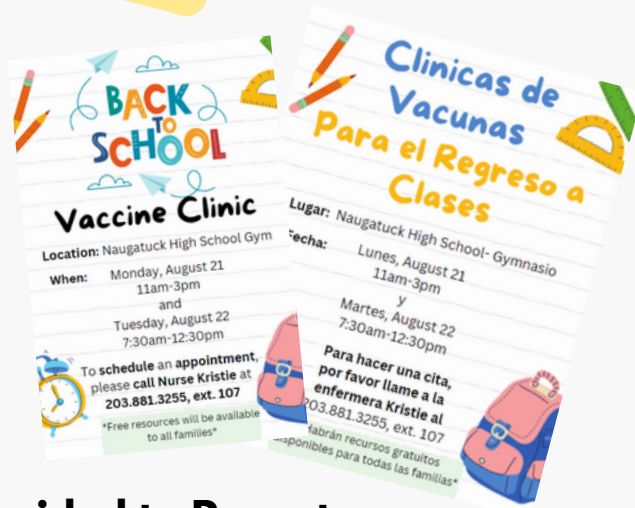
-Naugatuck Parent



# What we are doing

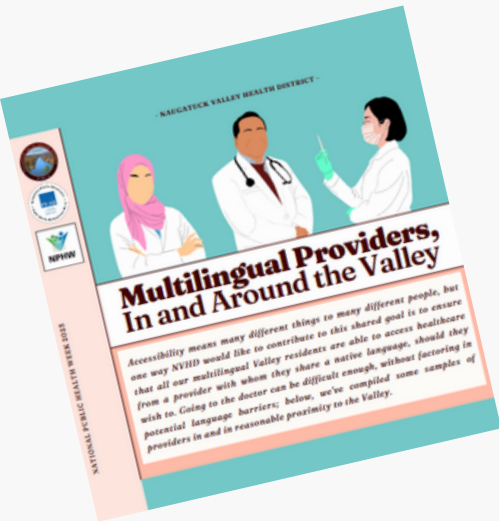
## Community Driven Solutions

**Vaccines clinics provided for parents at convenient locations**



**113 vaccines given to children!**

**Provider directory provided to Parents**



**Provided educational materials and resources for parents in other languages**



**Community Partners/Organizations who contributed to our RCA:**

- Naugatuck Board of Education
- Mercy Pediatrics
- YMCA Naugatuck
- Howard Whittemore Library - Children's Program
- Naugatuck Mobile Food Pantry
- Walmart
- Future Scholars Childcare Center
- Retail 101

**For the full Parent Survey Report, please visit the following link: NVHD Survey Analysis**

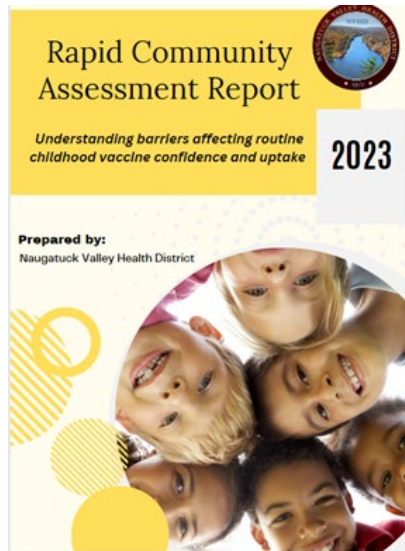




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Way to go!

The RCA project was featured in Provider Spotlight section of the CT DPH Immunization Program August 2023 Newsletter which is distributed statewide!



**Provider Spotlight**

**Naugatuck Valley Health District**

As the public health emergency of COVID-19 dwindled to an end, it was important to hear from the community and find the areas full of questions, confusion, misinformation, and strong opinions that still linger around immunizations. And what better way to find the perspectives of others than diving in and working hand-in-hand with the community. This is the approach the Naugatuck Valley Health District (NVHD) took when collaborating with the Connecticut Department of Public Health during the third pilot Rapid Community Assessment (RCA). This project was led by the NVHD's COVID-19 Immunization Action Plan (CAP) team, consisting of CAP Program Coordinator Nancy Serrano and Community Outreach Worker Vanessa Lopez. For their RCA, the team decided to focus on routine childhood immunizations, feeling that they would be able to capture community insights on all vaccines through these opinions. Recognizing Naugatuck's diversity, Nancy and team chose to explore key places in the community, such as the Naugatuck Public Library and the YMCA, that catered to populations with varying economic status, race, ethnicity, and backgrounds. For the data collection, Nancy and Vanessa chose to speak with people directly. "We learned the most from talking to people" Nancy said, "I try to keep it very easy like a conversation... we are trying to hear your voice and your opinions. Posing it like this is nicer and allows people to open up more and share". The goal was to use this feedback to inform strategies to communicate information to the public, increasing vaccine confidence, especially among those in underserved populations and before 'back to school' time. The team faced challenges during the RCA, including the heat, which made it difficult to take the time outside to talk with people, and the rapid nature of the RCA made it difficult to get stakeholders together in a short period of time. To overcome this challenge, the team strove to use their time efficiently and onboard people who were going to be participating. Despite these challenges, the team saw many successes from their project. The NVHD was able to develop a stronger relationship with the Naugatuck Board of Education during their in-person meeting and share findings, ideas, and immediate solutions. "At the end of the day, when we're talking about childhood vaccines, were talking about parents" Nancy stated, "because parents are the ones that decide if their child gets it or not and that's the best pool to work with through the Board of Education."

When asked if she had any advice for others who may be starting an RCA in the future, Nancy emphasized the importance of identifying communication methods that can connect the team the quickest. For her team, she found that texting was more efficient on days in the field versus an email. Furthermore, she suggested that team members should teach each other strategies of how to approach the public. Finally, Nancy shared that flexibility is key. "Don't be afraid to go to different communities and ask questions." For more information, please visit their website at [nvhd.org](http://nvhd.org)



Pictured From Left: Nancy Serrano, Vanessa Lopez, Beatriz Allen, Samantha Prince







## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES REPORT

Melanie Dokla, BS, RS

Assistant Director

SUMMER 2023

JUNE | JULY | AUGUST

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### **Food Service Establishments**

Sanitarians continue to conduct seasonal inspections for itinerant vendors (food truck/trailers), concession stands at sporting events and temporary events. We also continue to conduct routine inspections, plan views and inspections for food service establishments that are new or changing ownership.

### **Public Pool**

Outdoor/ seasonal public swimming pool inspections and follow-up inspections were completed. A total of 55 inspections were conducted.

### **Body Care**

Staff continue to conduct plan views and inspections for body care establishments that are new or changing ownership.

August

The renewals for all existing Body Care Establishment (232) were sent out in mid-August and the process will continue until the end of September when the current permits expire. A call down will be sent out to notify establishment owners that renewals were sent out via mail.

### **Subsurface Sewage Disposal Systems (SSDS)**

Nicolette O'Kelly, Head Sanitarian, continues to conduct SSDS inspections, B-100 visit, soil testing, B-100 plan reviews, new SSDS plans reviews, and has issued permits to discharge.

Nicolette also continues to train staff in the SSDS program.

Melanie, Nicolette, and Jess attended two Board of Condemnation Meetings and one public hearing with Town of Seymour officials related to one property in Seymour.

### **Housing Complaints**

Environmental staff continues to investigate housing code violations and complaints.

### **Lead**

Lead abatement plans submitted by lead abatement contractors are being reviewed and property owners are issued written orders from this office. Once the project has received approval and work is completed, a final inspection is conducted to ensure work was done as specified in the plan.

We had 1 lead poisoning that required a full comprehensive lead inspection.





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### Fresh Water Sampling

June/July/August

Water sample collections from the Derby Recreation Camp on the Housatonic River have been taken weekly since July. The swimming area had to be closed 1 time due to water quality issues. Collection ended the week of August 9<sup>th</sup>.

### Miscellaneous

Two sanitarian positions remain vacant; both positions are posted on our website, social media accounts (including LinkedIn), Indeed, and disseminated monthly to the CT Environmental Health Association membership and their website. Due to the lack of training at the Department of Public Health Food Protection Program and the competitive salaries at other departments/districts these positions will likely remain vacant for some time. All staff continue to do their best to keep up with the increased workload and we will continue to prioritize inspections based on needs (i.e., plan review, complaints and known “problem” establishments).

A per diem food inspector, Glenda, has continued to assist in conducting food service inspections after-hours and on the weekend up to 20 hours a week.

### Emergency Reponses After Hours

	Date/Time	Location	Description of Event
1.	Tuesday, July 11 <sup>th</sup> , 4-7:30pm	Argonne St., Seymour	Housing; septic failure
2.	Tuesday, August 8 <sup>th</sup> , 6:45-8:30pm	Wendys, Seymour	Smoke in building due to malfunctioning fan/vent
3.	Sunday, August 13 <sup>th</sup> , 10:00-11:30am	Starbucks, Shelton	Electrical fire

### Temporary Events

	Date	Event	Location
1.	6/2-3	Food Trucks on the River	Shelton
2.	6/3	Summer Festival	Ansonia
3.	6/10	St. Michael’s Artisan Fair	Naugatuck
4.	6/24	Mid-Summer Fantasy Renaissance Faire	Ansonia
5.	6/29	Beacon Falls Carnival	Beacon Falls
6.	6/30	Shelton Fire Works	Shelton
7.	7/3	Naugatuck Summer Fireworks	Naugatuck
8.	8/9	Holy Rosary	Ansonia
9.	8/26	Rock the Valley	Ansonia
10.	8/26	Taco Festival	Shelton
11.	8/26	Naugatuck Food Truck Festival on the Green	Naugatuck

