



PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS & VIEWS

A Regional Health Professional Newsletter

FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR'S DESK

Karen Luparello, DO, MPH, Medical Director

Welcome to the Fall Edition of Public Health News & Views.

As students return to school, it's a great time to engage parents in conversation about **immunizations**. Our agency can offer educational materials designed to educate parents who may be hesitant about vaccines, and for providers on how to talk with parents.

Back-to-school and wellness physicals are an excellent opportunity to **conduct blood lead testing** for children, especially in **designated high-risk areas**. More information on the state's universal lead testing requirements is inside this issue.

Throughout the school year, our agency provides services such as **hearing and vision screenings and state-mandated kindergarten oral health assessments**. More information on these services, including area providers who participate in Health Kids Dental.

We will cover the rising incidence of **Hand, Foot, and Mouth disease** in the jurisdiction, and share helpful resources to reduce its transmission.

We also find it crucial to discuss Alpha-Gal Syndrome and Lyme Disease, both of which are associated with tick bites.

From October 1, 2024, to July 31, 2025, we have had 47 reported cases of Lyme Disease in the jurisdiction.

November is National Juvenile Diabetes Month, providing an opportunity for families to learn about juvenile diabetes symptoms, with resources available for cost management.

We have also included the **2025-2026 WIC income guidelines** and highlighted the benefits of the WIC program. Hillsdale County events are also featured, including our monthly WIC Mobile Clinics in Waldron and Litchfield. Additionally, an upcoming community event on substance use on **October 16, 2025, which offers 3.5 free CME credits**.

If you have any questions or suggestions for topics to include in future editions of News and Views, please feel free to reach out. Thank you for your dedication to patient care and the well-being of the tri-county area.

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Back to School

Our agency offers various programs to prepare children for the school year. These programs include immunizations, Kindergarten Oral Health Assessments (KOHA), and hearing and vision screenings.

Immunizations

Back-to-school time is already here. Childhood vaccine rates remain low in the tri-county area, and we are seeing an increase in waiver rates. Providers are the most trusted advisors to parents in overcoming vaccine hesitancy. This is a crucial time when healthcare providers can communicate with families about the benefits of routine childhood vaccination. Free vaccines through the Vaccine for Children Program (VFC) for children who do not have insurance or are under-insured are offered at our offices and through our partner providers.

Click below for additional information:

- [Percentage of Kindergartners with an Immunization Waiver by County, 2023](#)
- [Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule by Age \(Addendum updated August 7, 2025\) | Vaccines & Immunizations | CDC](#)

Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment (KOHA)

The Kindergarten Oral Health Assessment law [Public Health Code Act 368 Section 333.9316] was passed to ensure that children entering their first year of school are able to receive an oral health assessment (dental screening) before starting school. Good oral health is important to help children stay healthy and ready to learn.

Where can families get the Screening Done?

Our agency provides screenings at preschools for children entering Kindergarten, at Kindergarten Round-Up enrollment events, at our offices prior to the beginning of the school year, and at the schools during the school year. Families can contact their school or their local Health Department to check the schedule.

Families also have the option of having the screening completed at their provider's office. The provider must complete an MDHHS required form, and it must be provided to the school.

What is the cost?

There is no cost for a screening performed by our agency.

A dental screening is simple and fast.

Our Registered Dental Hygienist will look into the child's mouth and note what they see on the screening form. No treatment is done. It is simply a quick look in the mouth. They will let the parent/caregiver know if the child needs to see a dentist. This does not replace a routine dental cleaning.

Help is available.

Your Local Health Department can help families find a dentist if they don't have one. Children may be able to enroll in the Michigan Healthy Kids Dental Program, if they don't have dental insurance.

For questions or concerns, call Your Local Health Department office and dial extension 110.

Click below for a list of Healthy Kids Dental Providers by county:

- [Branch](#)
- [Hillsdale](#)
- [St. Joseph](#)

Hearing and Vision Programs

Our Hearing and Vision Screening program offers free screenings in schools as part of the Public Health Code. Conducted by trained technicians from the local health department, these screenings begin at age 3 and continue throughout the school years. Parents can check screening dates by contacting their child's school. Information is also sent home with students at the start of the school year. If there are concerns, screenings can be scheduled at other times. Early detection of hearing and vision issues can help prevent permanent damage and learning disabilities.

For more information, call 517-279-9561 ext. 110.

Back-to-school physicals are an excellent opportunity to

conduct blood lead testing.

Physicians are required by law to conduct or order lead testing for children as follows:

- All children must be tested at ages 1 and 2, or by age 6 if not previously tested.
- Children living in designated high-risk areas must be tested at age 4. The high-risk areas within the jurisdiction include:
 - The cities of Bronson, Coldwater, Hillsdale, Sturgis, and Three Rivers
 - Colon Township, Constantine Township, (St. Joseph County) Union Township, (Branch County), and Wright Township (Hillsdale County)

High-risk children in homes built before 1978 or where other children have lead poisoning —should be tested at least one additional time at age 4, or between their most recent test and age 6.

More information and resources can be found at:

<https://www.michigan.gov/mileadsafe/learn/blood-lead-testing>.

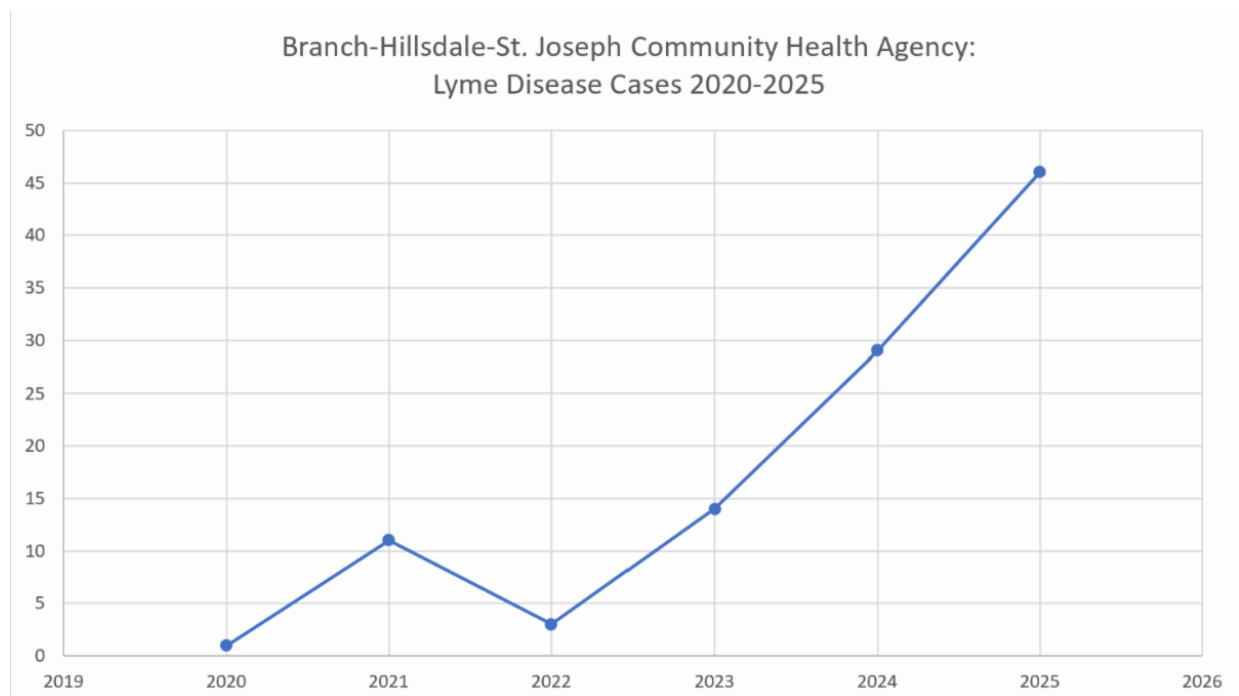
Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease

We are noticing an increase in cases of hand, foot, and mouth disease, which is common during the fall season. Prevention is key; it's important to remind patients to wash their hands frequently and clean potentially infected surfaces, such as restrooms, doorknobs, and toys. Additionally, to avoid close contact and sharing utensils with anyone who is infected.

[Click here](#) to view a helpful fact sheet for parents, caregivers, and schools.

Alpha-Gal Syndrome and Lyme Disease – Emerging Concerns in Tick-Borne Illnesses

Free CME/CEUs



Tick-borne illnesses are a growing public health concern, with Alpha-Gal Syndrome (AGS) and Lyme Disease drawing particular attention this season.

Alpha-Gal Syndrome is an allergic reaction to red meat and other mammalian products, triggered

by the bite of the Lone Star tick. Though under-reported, cases are increasing, especially in the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. In response, many providers have completed free continuing education on AGS, improving awareness, diagnosis, and patient care around this condition.

Lyme Disease, caused by *Borrelia burgdorferi* and spread by the black legged tick, continues to be the most common vector-borne illness in the U.S., and within the jurisdiction. The chart above shows the number of cases in the jurisdiction annually through July 31, 2025. Note the increase in cases since 2022. The agency's Vector Surveillance program annually monitors the tick and mosquito populations. Black legged ticks are the most commonly found species by our technicians.

As expected, cases have increased this summer, consistent with seasonal trends. Providers are key to controlling these diseases through education, early detection, and prevention strategies. Ongoing training and public awareness remain vital as tick habitats expand and new illnesses emerge.

[Click here](#) for free CME/CEUs

November is National Juvenile Diabetes Month

Type 1 diabetes is a common condition in the United States, currently affecting approximately 1.24 million individuals, with projections suggesting an increase to five million by 2050. It predominantly affects children, but adults can also be diagnosed.

Children's Special Health Care Services (CSHCS) covers over 2,700 different medical conditions, including Juvenile Diabetes- [click here for a list of conditions covered](#).

What does the program do?

CSHCS supports children and youth, ages newborn to 26, with special health care needs and their families. We help cover medical care costs related to the child's condition, including co-pays, deductibles, and sometimes insurance premiums for families with insurance. Additionally, we may assist with transportation to appointments and guide families through health care systems while connecting them with community services.

Who is helped by the program?

This program is not income-based. Eligibility is based on diagnosis. Here are examples of other conditions CSHCS may cover: Epilepsy, Asthma, Cerebral Palsy, Chronic Ear Infections, Heart Conditions, Sickle Cell, Cancer, and Lead Poisoning.

[Click here](#) for a Provider Referral Form

WIC Income Guidelines (2025-2026)

Referring families to the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program is highly beneficial because it provides access to free nutritious food, breastfeeding support, and connections to community resources. As of June 1, 2025, the program's income guidelines have increased, which allows WIC to assist even more families in need.

Program Eligibility:

- Pregnant, breastfeeding, or recently postpartum women (breastfeeding: 1 year; non-breastfeeding: 6 months).

- Infants from birth to 1 year.
- Children from 1 to 5 years.

Program eligibility is based on Michigan residency and income guidelines. Families receiving Medicaid, SNAP, or TANF may qualify. For example, a family of four may qualify if earning up to \$28.59/hour. Grandparents or guardians raising young children may also be eligible. Full eligibility details can be found at www.bhsj.org/wic.

[Click here](#) to access our flyer to share with patients.



Hillsdale County Updates

***NEW* WIC Mobile Clinics- Waldron and Litchfield**

Our agency is pleased to bring WIC services closer to families who may have difficulty travelling to our Hillsdale County office. We hope that by offering mobile services, the agency will improve the health of families. We are now offering Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) services in Waldron and Litchfield.

Mobile WIC clinics will be held:

- Waldron: First Thursday of each month at the Waldron District Library.
- Litchfield: On the third Thursday of each month at the City of Litchfield office.
- Clinic hours are from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Services will take place inside the Mobile Unit.

Click links below for flyers:

- [Waldron](#)
- [Litchfield](#)

Elephant in the Room: A Community Conversation on Substance Use

[Click here](#) to register for the event.

[Click here](#) for Calendar Reminder/Placeholder.

Hillsdale County residents, join us!



The Elephant in the Room: A Community Conversation on Substance Use



Thursday, October 16th
9 am-3 pm



Searle Center- Hillsdale College
315 N West St, Hillsdale, MI

**Attendance,
lunch, and
CE credits
are all FREE!**

Event Highlights:

- 9:15 a.m: Data Presentations from Hillsdale County Court and Overdose Fatality Review (OFR).
- 10:00 a.m: Personal story of addiction, stigma, and recovery.
- 11:15 a.m: Local Community Resources- Including services such as Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), peer support, and residential options.
- 1:00 p.m: Alternatives to Opioids- Exploring non-opioid pain management solutions.
- 1:45 p.m: Experience Wellness-Networking, resource sharing, and Narcan training.

Continuing Education Credits available for:

- Law Enforcement (MCOLES): 4 credits
- Addiction Professionals (MCBAP): 3.5 credits
- Providers and Nurses (CME): 3.5 credits
- Education Professionals (SCECH): 3.5 credits



**Registration is
required.
Scan the QR code
or call 517-933-
3019.**



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