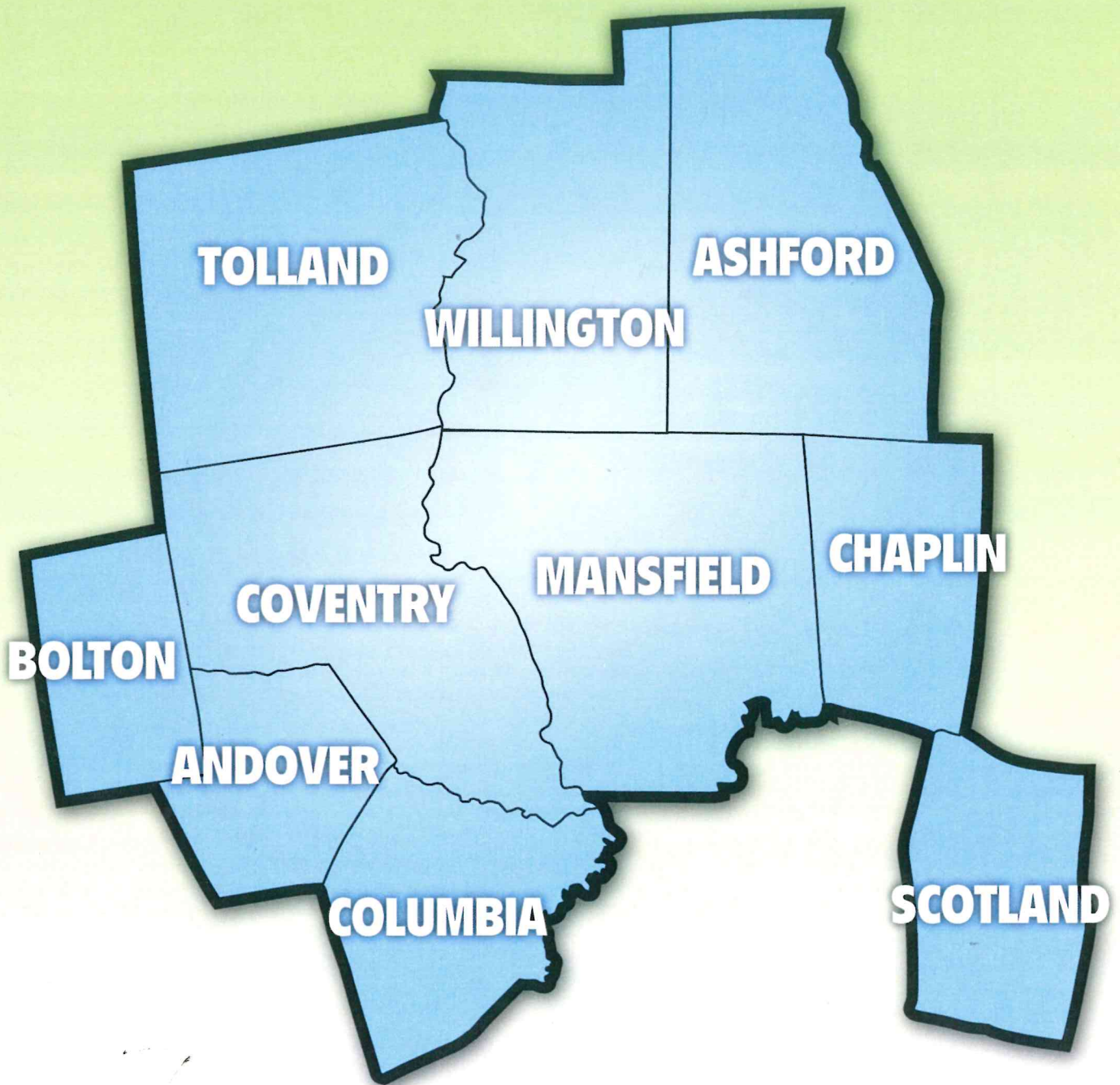




# 2021-2022

## ANNUAL REPORT



Serving the towns of:  
Andover, Ashford, Bolton, Chaplin, Columbia, Coventry,  
Mansfield, Scotland, Tolland and Willington

Population: 79,423    Service Area: Approximately 208 Square Miles



## Health District Staff

Robert L. Miller, MPH, RS ..... Director of Health  
 Kenneth Dardick, MD..... Medical Advisor  
 Glenn Bagdoian, RS..... Sanitarian II  
 Ande Bloom ..... Public Health Project Specialist  
 Millie Brosseau ..... Office Manager  
 Christine Grulke BSN, MSEd, RN..... Public Health Nurse  
 Holly Hood, MPH, RS ..... Sanitarian II  
 Thad King, MPH, REHS, RS ..... Sanitarian II  
 Courtney LeBlanc, BSN, RN..... Public Health Nurse  
 Mia Mitoma ..... Vaccine Program Administrative Assistant  
 David Oellerich, APRN..... Public Health Nurse  
 Lynette Swanson ..... Chief Sanitarian  
 Cecile Serazo, BSN, RN..... Community Health and  
 Wellness Coordinator  
 Nishel Thompson, MS ..... Public Health Emergency  
 Preparedness Coordinator



Back Row left to right:

Rob Miller, Nishel Thompson, Glenn Bagdoian, Thad King,  
 Cecile Serazo, Courtney LeBlanc, Lynette Swanson

Front Row left to right:

Millie Brosseau, Mia Mitoma, Ande Bloom, Christine Grulke

## EHHD Board of Directors

John Elsesser (Chair) ..... Town of Coventry  
 Mark Walter (Vice Chair) ..... Town of Columbia  
 Eric Anderson (Assistant Treasurer)..... Town of Andover  
 Cathryn Silver-Smith ..... Town of Ashford  
 Jim Rupert ..... Town of Bolton  
 Robert Morra (Alternate)..... Town of Bolton  
 Vacant..... Town of Chaplin  
 M. Deborah Walsh..... Town of Coventry  
 Ryan Aylesworth ..... Town of Mansfield  
 Heather Evans ..... Town of Mansfield  
 William Kaufold ..... Town of Mansfield  
 Susan Powers ..... Town of Scotland  
 Brian Foley ..... Town of Tolland  
 Tammy Nuccio ..... Town of Tolland  
 Erica Wicinski ..... Town of Willington

## Mission Statement -

Eastern Highlands Health District is committed to enhancing the quality of life in its communities through the prevention of illness, promotion of wellness, and protection of our human environment.

*Vision - Healthy people, healthy communities ... healthier future.*



### Message from the Director

#### A Period of Transition

The COVID-19 virus was not done with us in Fiscal Year 2021/2022. The end of December through the beginning of February saw the highest prevalence of cases since the pandemic first started in March 2020. Needless to say, our health district worked tirelessly during this period to support our schools, our towns, and mitigate transmission risk in the community. Despite this demand on our staff, and after two years of battling COVID-19, in February we began the process of transitioning away from some of the higher demand pandemic response tasks, and into more normalcy at the Health District. This included restarting a number of special projects and initiatives that were paused during the pandemic. Below is a rundown of some of those items and other highlighted activities for Fiscal Year 2021/2022.

**Environmental Health** – We engaged our business community and Board of Directors to develop and adopt new provisions in our Sanitary Code that establishes a permitting and inspection program for Barbers, Hair salons, and other cosmetology businesses. We leveraged technology by launching a new online license renewal program for all food service establishments. Finally, after environmental staff noted changes in observed water quality data the agency issued its first report on a multi-year survey of sodium chloride contamination in private wells within the Health District jurisdiction.

**Community Health** – The health district continued to expand its scope of clinical services during fiscal year 2021/2022. In addition to adult flu vaccinations this was the first year our agency offered seasonal flu shots to children. We hosted five flu clinics, with four targeting our first responder community and their families.

**Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response** – The EHHD administered over 2400 COVID-19 vaccinations during more than 130 clinics district-wide. We provided contact tracing or support for over 7000 cases of COVID-19. This includes over 1450 school-associated cases. The EHHD issued weekly surveillance reports to community partners and the general public providing local COVID-19 surveillance data and news. We partnered with UConn Storrs on a number of pandemic response infection control activities including testing, and messaging. We supported and partnered with 12 school districts to establish and implement risk mitigation measures. We supported local businesses and town governments with safe workplace guidance for essential workers and town recreation department support for youth sports programs and summer camps. We recruited and/or retained over 200 Medical Reserve Corps volunteers who supported contact tracing, and our mass vaccination campaign. In addition, we provided pandemic-related education and information to the general public on multiple informational platforms.

Finally, as an important reminder, the above highlighted activities and initiatives is a demonstration of our agency's ongoing, and deep commitment to enhancing the quality of life in our communities through the prevention of illness and promotion of wellness. This is our mission and the foundation of all that we do.

My door is always open.

Yours in Health,

Robert L. Miller, MPH, R.S.  
 Director of Health







# Public Health

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Local health departments work across the nation to prevent disease, promote health and protect communities. The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) developed this logo to promote universal recognition of this critical work and to provide a consistent image and message for local health departments. EHHD is proud to support this national effort.

## What is a Health District?

Health districts are much like full-time municipal health departments in the services they provide. They are governmental entities that carry out critical local public health functions that include: infectious disease control, code enforcement and health education. Through a binding relationship with member towns (provided for in state statutes), services are offered to a group of towns that may not otherwise have a full-time health department without district membership. Joining a health district is an attractive option for towns because they are provided access to full-time public health services at minimal cost. District membership increases the ability of a town to benefit from grant-funded public health programs. Towns that are members of health districts provide annual per capita contributions to support health district operations.

## Top 10 Benefits Your Community Receives as a Member of a Public Health District:

1. A professionally staffed department with fully trained and certified personnel.
2. Improved availability of services; seven days a week, 24 hours a day for emergencies.
3. Less fragmentation of services.
4. Uniform enforcement of state laws and regulations, codes and ordinances.
5. A regional approach to public health problems that cross town lines.
6. Pooling of manpower for backup services in times of need.
7. The capability to address a wider scope of public health problems and issues than your community could manage on its own.
8. Reduction of waste and maximized effectiveness through problem identification, priority setting, improved coordination and more efficient use of resources.
9. Eligibility for extensive state and federal funding, bringing services to the local level that might not otherwise be possible.
10. An opportunity for your town to network with other local health departments and state agencies.

## 10 Essential Services of Local Public Health:

1. **Monitor** health status to identify community health problems.
2. **Diagnose** and **investigate** health problems and health hazards in the community.
3. **Inform, educate** and **empower** people about health issues.
4. **Mobilize** community partnerships to identify and solve health problems.
5. **Develop** policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts.
6. **Enforce** laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety.
7. **Link** people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.
8. **Assure** a competent public and personal health care workforce.
9. **Evaluate** effectiveness, accessibility and quality of personal and population-based health services.
10. **Research** for new insights and innovative solutions to public health problems.



# EHHD'S PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

We provide the community with a range of programs and services to promote and protect environmental, personal, and community health.

## Emergency Preparedness

This year Eastern Highland Health District's Emergency Preparedness program continued its Emergency Response to address the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. EHHD worked alongside its partners and constituents by keeping them informed in the face of rapidly changing COVID-19 information, providing mass vaccinations and local testing sites. EHHD conducted COVID-19 vaccination clinics town buildings, farmers markets, libraries and supported regional vaccination exercises. The EHHD Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), a unit of medical and non-medical volunteers from the community, continued to dedicate their time and effort to support COVID-19 vaccinations including its booster shots.



With the success of the previous COVID-19 mass vaccinations, EHHD excelled in hosting smaller scaled pop-up clinics in efforts to capture more of their local population as well as introducing homebound

vaccinations per request. EHHD delivered more than 2400 vaccinations against COVID-19 through the end of June 2022.

As the pandemic began to slow down and state restrictions lifted, EHHD closely monitored positive cases in efforts to support and guide local schools or businesses with any concerns they may have. With the support of CTDPH, EHHD provided PPE, (pulse oximeters and thermometers), to health care providers. Public Health will continue to be flexible and adaptable and the EHHD will continue to be part of whole-community disaster planning and response. On May 19, 2022, EHHD attended a regional Anthrax training exercise in efforts to stay informed and equipped for a potential bioterrorism crisis.

EHHD offers its very heartfelt thanks to all of their community partners who have made the COVID-19 response possible. It would not have been successful without the EHHD MRC volunteers, CTDPH, local fire/police/emergency management, UCONN, local schools and town leadership, senior centers and many more. For continued information and announcements in regards to our effort to combat COVID-19 please visit our social media pages or website [www.ehhd.org](http://www.ehhd.org)

## Environmental Programs

**Water Quality** – EHHD reviews and approves private well sites and drinking water analysis reports to assure that the drinking water supplies are free of harmful bacteria, chemicals and pollutants. Our sanitarians provide guidance and information to residents with water quality issues and concerns. The health district also inspects and monitors the water quality at public bathing areas and public swimming pools to ensure compliance with water quality and health safety standards.



**Subsurface Sewage Disposal** – EHHD sanitarians conduct site evaluations and soil testing, review septic system design plans, issue permits to construct, and perform site inspections during construction to verify compliance with codes and technical standards. The health district is also required to evaluate the septic system impacts from proposed building additions, accessory structures and use changes on all properties served by on-site subsurface sewage disposal systems.



**Food Protection** – All food service establishments are inspected frequently and operating licenses are renewed annually. Temporary and special events, including farmers' markets, where food is served to the public, are also permitted and inspected for food safety compliance.

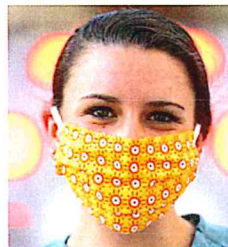
**Campground/Daycare/Youth Camp Inspections** – EHHD conducts annual family campground inspections, biennial daycare inspections, and assists the State of Connecticut with youth camp kitchen inspections.

**Complaint Investigation/Code Enforcement** – EHHD staff investigate all complaints received by the department, ranging from food protection and water quality concerns to housing, sewage, vermin problems, and COVID-19. Where conditions are found that violate the Public Health Code or Connecticut General Statutes, and such conditions are not corrected voluntarily, property owners or violators are then subject to enforcement procedures.

**Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention** – EHHD receives laboratory reports of blood lead tests for children under age 6 when blood lead levels are 5 µg/dL or above, and tracks these cases until the child's blood lead level is confirmed below this reference level. The health district provides re-test reminder letters and educational packets to these families to help them understand the health risks associated with lead exposure and assist them in identifying and reducing lead hazards in their child's environment. Elevated blood lead levels can require additional intervention by the health district, including property inspections and lead abatement enforcement.

## Communicable Disease Surveillance & Control

**Disease Surveillance** – EHHD conducts communicable disease surveillance to detect outbreaks. Examples of communicable diseases include but are not limited to: COVID-19, hepatitis, rabies, and foodborne illness. Statistics detailed at the end of this report represent the total number of reported disease cases that have public health significance in member towns (it is generally acknowledged that these diseases are underreported within the population).



**Disease Control** – Clinical laboratory and physician case reports are reviewed for possible follow-up and investigation. Outbreaks of disease are investigated, and measures to prevent and control further spread of disease are implemented when necessary. The second half of the fiscal year has been heavy on COVID-19 response efforts.

## Community Health

EHHD Health Promotion initiatives focus on developing sustainable interventions and nurturing partnerships to build a healthier community. While targeted programming is utilized when appropriate, our primary focus is on policy, systems, and environmental changes to promote and encourage healthy lifestyles for all member town residents, employees, and visitors. EHHD continued to provide information on the prevention of acquiring Lyme disease, and other tick-borne illness as the use of outdoor spaces increased. EHHD continued to promote the importance of keeping up-to-date on immunizations and provided Covid-19 vaccines to the community. During the winter, EHHD distributed radon test kits to residents. These kits allow residents to be aware of the current radon levels in their home, and to take action if necessary.

**Tobacco Free Living** – Focusing on policy, systems, and environmental changes, EHHD developed toolkits to encourage towns in Tolland County to adopt smoke free policies or ordinances to make their workplaces smoke free. The toolkits can be found on the EHHD website. EHHD continues to assist the Town of Mansfield with implementation of its smoke free workplaces policy. A toolkit was developed to assist other organizations/communities to implement similar policies. In addition, EHHD continues to update a summary of smoking cessation resources. The resources include web phone, text, and nicotine replacement therapy cessation methods.



**Be Well** – Developed by EHHD in 2006, this program provides comprehensive programming and promotion on a contractual basis to local employers. The goal of this employee wellness program is to improve the overall health and wellness of employees through initiatives that target risk factors for health. This program is provided as a fully contracted service to the Town of Tolland. Basic Be Well initiatives are also provided to member towns, school employees and private sector businesses through the State of Connecticut Preventive



Health Block Grant (to focus on policy and environmental changes to reduce the incidence of obesity in worksites). Each year Be Well contributes to strong

health outcomes and a significant return-on-investment for participating employers. Examples of programs and policies implemented include, but aren't limited to, quarterly wellness newsletters, online wellness resources, on-site biometric health screenings, and wellness seminars. You may learn more about the program at [www.ehhd.org/be\\_well](http://www.ehhd.org/be_well). Find more information about having Be Well as part of your business or organization by sending an email to [Be\\_well@ehhd.org](mailto:Be_well@ehhd.org).

**Health Education:** EHHD provides its member towns and residents with newsletters, social media sites and web pages for health information, and regular updates with health and wellness "hot topics". EHHD continually updates the social media pages (Facebook and Twitter). We focus "hot topic" updates on providing clear and concise information on health topics pertaining to a particular month or season. EHHD participated in several educational workshops and health fairs throughout the year focusing on topics such as hurricane/emergency preparedness, childhood vaccines, healthy snacks for kids, planning for care as you age, and flu prevention and treatment.



**Plan4Health Initiative:** Anchored by the American Planning Association (APA) and the American Public Health Association (APHA), the Plan4Health grant funded EHHD and the Community Health Action Response



Team (CHART) to implement strategies to increase physical activity and access to healthy food for our region. During the year EHHD continually marketed the Toolkit to the planning and zoning boards and commissions of small and rural towns in Connecticut. The Toolkit is continually maintained and updated to provide the most current and accurate information. A survey was introduced last year to gain feedback on the Toolkit and its ability to meet the needs of users. This survey will be reviewed and analyzed to make change for the future. The toolkit and survey is available online at [www.healthyeasternct.com](http://www.healthyeasternct.com)





## Selected Reportable Diseases by Town\*

	Andover	Ashford	Bolton	Chaplin	Columbia	Coventry	Mansfield	Scotland	Tolland	Willington	District Totals
Babesiosis	0	2	0	1	0	1	3	0	2	1	10
Campylobacter	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	5
COVID-19	138	192	180	116	226	506	587	41	546	219	2751
Cryptosporidium	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cyclospora	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
E. Coli 0157/STEC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Ehrlichiosis/Anaplasmosis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Giardia	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	3
Group A Streptococcus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Group B Streptococcus	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	5
Haemophilus Influenzae	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hepatitis A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hepatitis B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hepatitis C	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	1	6
Influenza	6	1	6	0	4	17	303	1	15	14	367
Lead-Elevated Blood Lead Levels in children up to age 6 (5-9.9 ug/dl)	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	1	5
Lead-Elevated Blood Lead Levels in children up to age 6 (10-19 ug/dl)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lead-Elevated Blood Lead Levels in children up to age 6 >20 ug/dl	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Listeria	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lyme Disease	0	0	0	1	3	4	11	1	0	0	20
Measles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus	2	0	1	2	1	5	2	0	10	0	23
Mumps	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neisseria Meningitis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pertussis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rubella	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Salmonella	0	1	0	0	0	5	0	0	2	2	10
Shigella	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Streptococcus Pneumoniae	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Varicella	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vibrio	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
West Nile Virus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yersinia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

\* The case numbers above are considered to be below actual figures due to under reporting.



4 South Eagleville Road  
Mansfield, CT 06268