

2023 Annual Report





Table Of Contents

Letter from Medical Director and Health Officer- Page 3

Leadership- Page 4

Personal Health- Page 5

Environmental Health- Page 9

Emergency Preparedness- Page 11

Financial Statement- Page 12



Letter from our Health officer and Medical director

We hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. It is with great pleasure that we present the Annual Report for the year 2023 on behalf of the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department. This report serves as a testament to the dedication, hard work, and resilience of our team in the face of this year.

Throughout 2023, our department remained steadfast in its commitment to advancing public health in Benzie and Leelanau County. We directed our efforts towards a diverse range of initiatives, all aimed at fostering a healthier and more resilient community. From health education campaigns promoting wellness to initiatives addressing environmental health concerns, our team worked diligently to create positive, lasting impacts.

One of the standout achievements of the past year was the implementation of the new Benzie and Leelanau District Sanitary Code in early 2023, which featured the incorporation of the Time of Sale/Transfer evaluation program in Leelanau County. This groundbreaking initiative emphasizes the critical importance of conducting thorough evaluations of wells and septic systems during property transactions.

In addition to our department's accomplishments, we would be remiss not to acknowledge the successful implementation of school health programs aimed at promoting health in Benzie and Leelanau schools. Through targeted planning and strategic partnerships, we strived to ensure that every student, regardless of background, had access to the resources needed for a healthier life.

As we look ahead to the challenges and opportunities of the coming year, we do so with a deep sense of gratitude for the progress we've made and a steadfast commitment to the journey ahead. We are confident that together, we will continue to build a community that prioritizes health, wellness, and resilience.

Thank you for your continued support, and we eagerly anticipate the progress and accomplishments that lie ahead in the year to come.

Sincerely,

Daniel R. Thorell MS, RS
Health Officer

Joshua Meyerson MD, MPH
Medical Director

Leadership

Administration Team

Medical Director: Joshua Meyerson, MD, MPH
Health Officer: Daniel R. Thorell, MS, RS
Director of Administrative Services: Dodie Putney, BS
Director of Environmental Health: Eric Johnston, RS
Director of Personal Health: Michelle Klein, RN, MA, PH-C
Assistant Director of Personal Health: Debbie Aldridge, RN
Personal Health Supervisor: Autumn Jurek, RN, IBCLC
Personal Health Supervisor: Betsy Hardy, MSN, RN
Public Health Technician Supervisor: Kerry Turner, MBA

Board of Health

Chairperson: Dr. Barbara Conley- Leelanau County Member at large
Vice Chairperson: Gary Sauer- Benzie County Commissioner

Members:

Gwenne Allgaier- Leelanau County Commissioner
Dr. Mark Kuiper- Benzie County Member at large
Rhonda Nye - Benzie County Commissioner
Ty Wessell- Leelanau County Commissioner

Mission and Vision

The mission of the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department is to prevent disease, prolong life, and promote public health

Our vision is optimal community health and well-being supported by equitable services, outreach, and education, delivered by expert, caring, and compassionate public health professionals.

Personal Health Highlights

Employee Recognition

Our Community Health Worker (CHW), Carolina Tabora-Cortez was named the 2023 recipient of the Linda Hutchinson Advocate of the Year Award!

Carolina is a CHW in the health department's Community Connections program. She is a tireless advocate for her clients, mentoring and providing resource navigation with kindness, professionalism and persistence. She is active on the Migrant Resource Council, where she is the voice for this vulnerable population. Those who interact with Carolina can't help but respond to her infectious smile and passion for helping others.



Partnerships



Health Departments benefit immensely from partnerships as they enable a synergistic approach to tackling complex health challenges. This is true with large projects like community health needs assessments and small projects like advertisements. Over 2023, we were blessed to partner with many amazing community agencies and other businesses.



In 2023, BLDHD partnered with Grow Benzie and Benzie Human Services Collaborative for a grant funded bus wrap to promote the Women, Infants & Children program (WIC) program. BLDHD continued their partnership with Harm Reduction of Michigan to promote overdose prevention with billboards and community Narcan distribution boxes.

School-Based Health

School nurses and mental health therapists play a crucial role in supporting the overall well-being of students through a variety of activities and services.

- With parent consent, nurses and therapists provide individualized care and support in school, limiting time away during the school day.
- Nurses can conduct symptom assessment, triage, help coordinate sports physicals required for participation, teach on health topics such as handwashing, nutrition, water safety, and oral health to promote healthy behaviors.
- Nurses also engage in care coordination for kids with chronic diseases, in partnership with primary care providers and families. Nurses provide education to school staff on chronic care management for school success.
- In addition to one-on-one counseling, school therapists provide education to student groups on healthy coping, stress, anxiety, and depression awareness.

Through this strong collaboration between BLDHD and our area schools, nurses and mental health therapists contribute to creating a nurturing and supportive environment that fosters the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of students.

" We are extremely fortunate to have such amazing partners in public health (Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department) for our students, staff, and families. Briana and Natalie are huge assets to our school community!"

-Casey Petz, Superintendent of Suttons Bay Public Schools



Left to right: Gerardo Vasquez, Stephanie Burn, Tammy Sorensen, Briana Truckey, and Natalie Bowman.

— “

" Having a school nurse in the building has been amazing and she has been so helpful in supporting our students who aren't feeling well! It has taken so much of the guesswork out for us as teachers. We appreciate all she does for our students and supporting our families too."

-Libby Wadsworth, K/1 Teacher of Suttons Bay Public Schools

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School-Based Health

"My daughter's confidence and mental health has improved during the course of therapy. It's helping her become a happier kid!"

-Benzie Central Parent



Left to right: Crystal Thomas, Elizabeth Merrill-Tietz, Danielle Gray, Rudy Strickland, and Kathryn Flannery.

"Our Husky Health and Wellness Center has been a great success. Students have access to a nurse to care for illness, injuries, and referrals for additional support, and a therapist to meet their mental health needs while staying in school. We appreciate the partnership and connection that help ensure students have access to quality care".

-Aimee Erfourth , Superintendent of Benzie County Central Schools

"Having school team members from the medical and mental health community is reassuring during challenging times when our office staff works through injury, illness, and stress. Additionally, our nurse has been incredibly helpful to our entire staff as we partner with families to plan, create and maintain health plans for the medically-fragile students we serve."

-Steve Graetz, Homestead Hills Elementary School Principal

"I can definitely see a difference in helping my young children with managing their emotions and giving them tools to work out what's going on with them ever since they started with the school wellness program. Kate is also available when I have questions and concerns whenever they arise!"

-Benzie Central Parent

School-Based Health Program Numbers

(October 1st, 2022-September 30th, 2023)

- Six nurses and four therapists provide care and support to students throughout the school year.
- Approximately 600 nurse and mental health visits were conducted to assist students.
- Over 500 students received health and wellness education in areas of nutrition, disease prevention, and safety.

Breastfeeding Event

On August 12, 2023, BLDHD with Grand Traverse County Health Department, Munson Medical Center, La Leche League, and Northwest Michigan Breastfeeding Coalition hosted a (breast) Milk and Cookies event.

This free event celebrated National Breastfeeding Month with raffle prizes, family and breastfeeding photos, and the opportunity to meet other families in the area.



Top Row (Left to Right): Nikki Cleland, GTCHD staff, GTCHD staff, Mariah Kaufman, GTCHD staff, and Jennifer Flohe-Payne. Bottom Row: GTCHD staff, GTCHD staff, Autumn Jurek, GTCHD staff, Debbie Aldridge, and GTCHD staff.

Personal Health Program Numbers (October 1st, 2022-September 30, 2023)

- **Immunizations:** 3,520 immunizations were administered
- **Hearing Screening:** 1,231 screenings were completed for school aged children
- **Vision Screening:** 1,561 screenings were completed for school aged children
- **School Oral Health Screening:** 145 screenings were completed for school aged children
- **Infection Disease Control:** 1,215 cases investigations were conducted
- **Healthy Futures:** 240 contacts with 88 home visits to 122 families
- **Maternal Infant Health Program (MIHP):** 153 MIHP clients were served for a total of 697 visits.
- **Reproductive Health:** 111 clients were served for a total of 137 visits, and 2 Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program (BCCCCP) visits were completed
- **Women, Infant, and Children (WIC):** 690 clients enrolled in WIC, 129 fluoride varnish applied, and 91 lead tests were completed
- **Community Connections:** 1,043 referrals, 4,024 Medicaid managed health plan referrals, and 2,181 contacts
- **Children's Special Health Care Services:** 107 clients were served and 66 plans of care were completed

Environmental Health Highlights

Well and Septic Evaluation



Left photo: Clay McNitt. Right Photo: Brett Yonker and Clay McNitt

In 2023, the revised Benzie and Leelanau District Sanitary Code was implemented. The new sanitary code modernized septic and well regulations and incorporated the Time of Sale/Transfer evaluation program in Leelanau County which mirrors the long running, successful Benzie County program.

During these evaluations, qualified professionals assess the condition of both the well and septic system to ensure compliance with local and state health and safety regulations. By identifying any issues and providing necessary recommendations for repairs or maintenance, these evaluations contribute to the continued safe and efficient operation of essential systems for the property and the protection of groundwater and surface water resources.

Inspections

A food facility inspection is a comprehensive assessment conducted by designated inspectors to evaluate the overall cleanliness, sanitation, and food safety practices within a dining establishment. This crucial process aims to ensure that the restaurant adheres to strict hygiene standards set by local and state health authorities. Inspectors examine various aspects, including food handling, storage, preparation areas, employee hygiene, and general cleanliness.

They also check for compliance with regulations related to temperature control, pest management, and proper disposal of waste. Any violations or areas of concern are documented, and the restaurant is provided with recommendations for corrective actions to maintain a safe and healthy environment for patrons. These inspections play a vital role in safeguarding public health and upholding the integrity of the food service industry.



Photos: Nick Dow

Inspections



Photos: Nick Dow

A campground inspection involves a thorough evaluation of facilities and amenities to ensure they meet state regulations for health, safety, and construction standards. Inspectors assess factors such as water quality, waste disposal, fire safety, and the overall condition of campsites, restrooms, and common areas, providing feedback to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for campers.

Environmental Health Program Numbers (October 1st, 2022-September 30, 2023)

- **Well Permits Issued:** 368
- **Septic Permits Issued:** 486
- **Vacant Land Evaluations:** 118
- **Existing Well and Septic System Evaluations:** 596
- **Swimming Beaches Monitored:** 8
- **Partial Body Contact Advisory Issued:** 1
- **Septage Hauling Vehicle Inspections:** 29
- **Septage Receiving Facility Inspections:** 4
- **Tattoo Parlor Inspections:** 3
- **Routine Food Inspections:** 381
- **Follow up Food Inspections:** 86
- **Mobile/Special Transitory Food Unit (STFU) inspections :** 68
- **Food Complaints:** 15
- **Foodborne complaints:** 9
- **Plan reviews received:** 29
- **Temporary food inspections:** 76
- **Pool inspections:** 25
- **Campground inspections:** 29

Emergency Preparedness Highlights

In 2023, our organization remained committed to ensuring the safety and preparedness of our staff and community members in the face of potential emergencies. Here are some key initiatives undertaken last year:

Prioritized CPR Training for Staff: Recognizing the importance of immediate response during medical emergencies, we prioritized CPR training for our staff members. Through comprehensive training sessions, employees were equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide life-saving assistance when needed.

Active Shooter training in Benzie County: In collaboration with Michigan State Police and community partners, we conducted training at the Benzie Resource Center. This training aimed to enhance our readiness and response capabilities in the event of a critical incident. The education provided valuable insights and opportunities for improving our emergency protocols and coordination efforts.

Participation in Regional Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication Training: Communication and leadership staff members actively participated in a regional crisis and emergency risk communication training. This training equipped our team with essential strategies and tools for effective communication during emergencies, ensuring timely and accurate dissemination of information to the public and stakeholders.

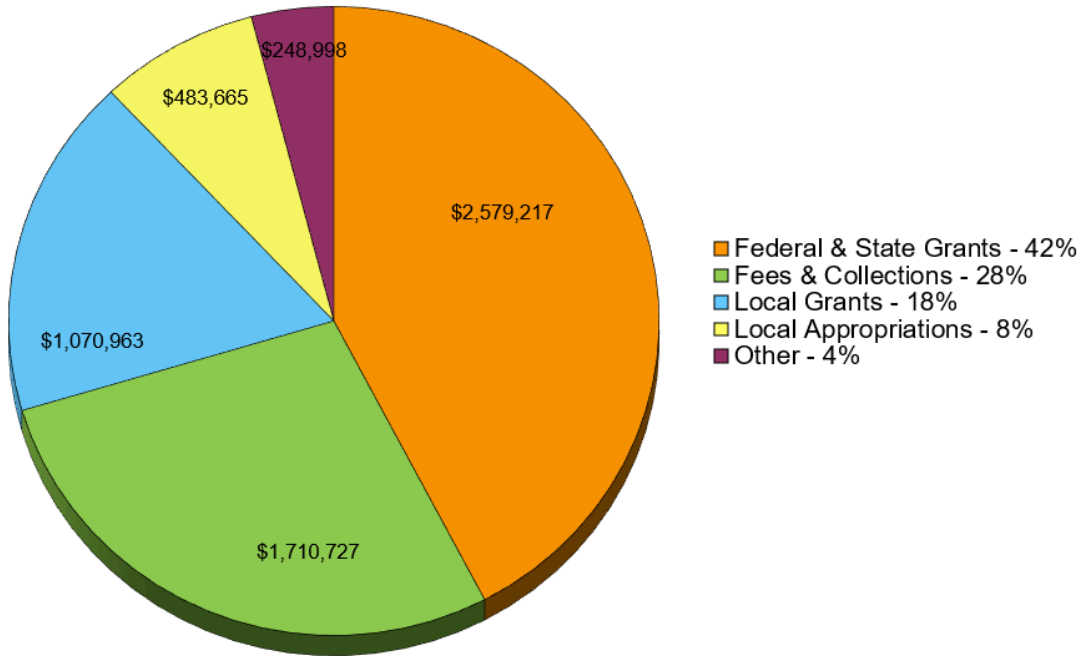
Through these initiatives and ongoing preparedness efforts, we reaffirm our commitment to safeguarding the well-being of our staff, clients, and the community, and to effectively responding to emergencies with professionalism and efficiency.



Top Photos: Nick Dow and Debbie Aldridge. Second photo: Tammy Sorenson and Nanci Drake. Bottom two photos: BLDHD staff and building partner staff attending active shooter training.

Financial Statement

FY 22/23 Revenues \$6,093,570



FY 22/23 Expenditures \$5,932,802

