



Tioga County Public Health

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Heather Vroman, MPH, MEd., Public Health Director



INTERNAL MEMO

TO: Tracy Monell; Chair, Tioga County Legislature
Jackson Bailey; County Administrator

FROM: Heather Vroman, MPH, MEd.; Public Health Director

DATE: February 3, 2026

RE: Public Health Report 2025

Attached is our agency's report for 2025 which includes an executive brief with bulleted highlights of accomplishments/successes, challenges, as well as on-going priorities and goals for 2026. A detailed narrative report is also included.

Part One-Executive Brief

Key accomplishments & Successes

- Staff retention, including three new hires and two advancements
- Achieved a strong and successful fiscal year
- Completed all goals and milestones in our agency Strategic Plan
- Participated in over 63 outreach activities this year
- Launched Municipay to process electronic payments
- Created electronic forms to make services more accessible to public
- Completed dental security system project
- Hosted a six-month employee wellness series
- Focused on workforce development and training
- Conducted stay interviews with staff
- Completed several state audits with little to no findings

Challenges

- Experienced several IT related challenges
- Legal review process often stagnant
- Training new staff requires a lot of time and preparation
- Identified the need for cloud-based software for the dental van
- Coalition work and engagement efforts is time consuming and challenging to balance
- Early Intervention continues to struggle with the provider shortage
- Collaborating with a neighboring county has occasionally been difficult

Ongoing priorities and goals for 2026

- Retain current workforce: focusing on employee satisfaction/engagement; while incorporating feedback from stay interviews, through incentives, wellness activities, and enhanced training.
- Develop a new three-year agency strategic plan that aligns with our mission, vision and values; adheres to county (strategic planning) theme and sets the stage for National Public Health Accreditation.
- Continue a focus on Quality Assurance/Improvement projects that incorporate best practices, improve efficiency, and have value for the Tioga County residents, i.e. complete overhaul of the Weights and Measures Program, implementation of the Metopio software application and a fully trained back-up Communicable Disease Investigator.
- Complete and begin implementation of the Community Health Improvement Plan in collaboration with community partners, and with public engagement.
- Continue with Project Public Health Ready (in Public Health Emergency Preparedness)

Narrative Department Report

Internally, the year brought notable staffing changes, including one retirement, two resignations, and two employees advancing into new titles. We welcomed four new team members this year, including the addition of an entirely new role—the Public Health Preparedness Coordinator. While welcoming new staff is both exciting and beneficial for the department, the time and effort required to train and onboard them can be challenging. Ensuring each person is fully prepared and supported is essential, but it also demands significant attention and resources from existing team members during an already busy workload.

We ended the fiscal year on solid financial footing, fully meeting operational needs and generating both savings and increased revenues. As a result, we were able to return funds to the county, reflecting careful stewardship and efficient use of resources. We are also pleased to note that our fiscal team dedicated significant time this year to strengthening financial literacy across the department. Program directors deepened their understanding of their operating budgets, and program staff gained greater familiarity with their grant budgets, enhancing accountability and informed decision making at every level.

We are very pleased to announce that our agency's strategic plan is complete. In summary, the department focused on strengthening communication, accessibility, and workforce development while expanding community partnerships. Key priorities included demonstrating taxpayer value through effective public health messaging, assessing community service needs and online accessibility, and leveraging technology to increase access to programs. Internally, efforts centered on developing an employee engagement survey and training needs assessment to support staff growth. Externally, the department aimed to identify and collaborate with public health partners to promote healthier living across the community.

The department achieved significant progress this year through community outreach, technology, workforce development, and operational improvements. Staff conducted more than 63 outreach activities at fairs, festivals, schools, and community events; distributed over 900 surveys and hosted three family movie nights. Online accessibility expanded through the launch of Muncipay for electronic payments and new public-facing forms, while the dental van's security system was fully upgraded. This essentially made the dental van safer for staff and clients by installing new electronic swipe access at entry, indoor and outdoor cameras, panic buttons, and sensors for equipment.

A six-month employee wellness series strengthened team engagement. Activities ranged from a tower walk and a Nerf gun challenge to pumpkin decorating and other fun, low stress opportunities for staff to participate and unwind together. Workforce development was another major success, with 17 staff attending the Public Health Partners Conference and others participating in specialized training opportunities in Washington, D.C., Baltimore and New Jersey. All staff completed deescalation and domestic terrorism awareness training, and several earned advanced certifications in their program areas. In November, we conducted stay interviews to gather meaningful employee feedback that will guide our retention efforts. Early themes show that staff view the work environment as positive, appreciate the transparency of leadership, and choose to stay because of the strong, supportive workplace culture.

The first major state audits since Covid occurred in several program areas, with very few findings; it was rewarding to see how well we did; and how far we have come, especially under new administration. Program areas include School Based Dental Health Clinic, Early intervention, Preschool Special Education document review, and Vaccine for Children site visit.

We have established new workflows and job procedures, which have greatly benefited the department by providing clear, consistent guidance for staff. These tools are used daily to support more efficient work, streamline service delivery, and ensure greater consistency across programs. Our QA/QI team remains highly active, conducting chart audits for each quarter across nearly every program. This meticulous work requires hundreds, if not thousands of staff hours, continually looking to improve the way we do business. When errors are identified, corrective action plans must be written, implemented, and reviewed. The QA committee then evaluates the findings and shares results with the Medical Consultant and the Board of Health, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

We did have some challenges during the year. IT issues were prominent early in the year due to leadership transitions in that department, and our department's needs were frequently not addressed in a timely manner. Our need for cloud-based software for the dental van proved difficult as the identification and implementation process hit many roadblocks. The legal review process created delays, with documents moving slowly or coming to a complete standstill despite being submitted in a timely manner. The lack of momentum created significant delays in our workflow at times. We are happy to report that we have seen improvements with both departments.

Two of our Health Educators serve as lead facilitators for prominent community coalitions. Efforts can be challenging to balance, especially when trying to lead a diverse group with varying levels of investment. Encouraging members to fully commit their time and energy while also navigating moments when leaders' perspective is overlooked can be particularly difficult. However, as we move into 2026, coalition strategic plans should help prioritize this work.

Early Intervention continues to face significant provider shortages, which have led to waitlists for services. Our Service Coordinators remain steadfast in advocating for families, seeking creative and individualized solutions to keep children engaged while they await evaluations or services. Collaboration with a neighboring county has also presented challenges at times, as differing work styles and expectations can make coordination less seamless than desired. These dynamics have occasionally limited the development of the smooth, fully integrated partnership we are striving to build.

Our department's goals and priorities for 2026 focus on strengthening organizational capacity, advancing strategic planning, and enhancing the quality and impact of public health services for Tioga County residents. They include:

Workforce Retention and Engagement: Retention of the current workforce remains a central priority. Efforts will emphasize employee satisfaction and engagement, incorporating feedback gathered through the November stay interviews. Several immediate improvements have already been implemented, and additional initiatives, including a renewed wellness series and targeted incentives, will continue throughout the year to support a positive and stable work environment.

Strategic Planning: The department will develop a new three-year strategic plan that aligns with the agency's mission, vision, and values while adhering to the county's strategic planning framework. This plan will guide departmental operations and priorities and will position the agency for National Public Health Accreditation, which may support future funding opportunities and strengthen organizational credibility.

Quality Assurance and Improvement: A continued emphasis on Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement will ensure that programs operate efficiently and reflect best practices. Early initiatives include a comprehensive overhaul of the Weights and Measures Program, implementation of the Metopio data analysis platform, and training a fully qualified backup Communicable Disease investigator. These projects will be completed in the first half of the year, with additional improvement efforts planned thereafter.

Community Health Improvement and Accreditation Efforts: As required, the department will finalize the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) in collaboration with community partners and with meaningful public engagement. Implementation of evidence-based interventions will begin following completion of the plan. Additionally, the department will continue progress on the Project Public Health Ready application for emergency preparedness accreditation, with the goal of achieving accreditation within the year.

This year was a testament to the strength, dedication, and resilience of our team. Despite challenges, we delivered an exceptionally productive year—advancing our mission, strengthening our programs, and achieving meaningful progress across every corner of the department. With this momentum and the incredible people behind it, we are well-positioned to meet our 2026 goals and continue serving Tioga County with excellence.