

TORRINGTON AREA HEALTH DISTRICT
ANNUAL REPORT: JULY 1, 2024 – JUNE 30, 2025

The TAHD served over 133,000 people in twenty boroughs, cities, and towns covering 611 square miles.

The Torrington Area Health District (TAHD) **Community Health Program** partnered with DPH and FoodCORE to investigate: **9** giardiasis, **40** campylobacteriosis, and **13** salmonellosis cases. TAHD guided schools, daycares, and community members on a variety of health issues and administered **291** flu vaccines to residents. TAHD consulted with **14** residents regarding potential rabies exposures submitting **9** specimens to the DPH Laboratory for rabies testing. Ticks brought in by **117** residents were sent to the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station for Lyme disease testing.

The TAHD is an active member of **Fit Together**, a Northwest Connecticut Healthy Eating and Active Living Initiative. Fit Together's mission is to build healthier kids, families, and communities through sustainable strategies that promote healthy eating and active living, primarily through the 5210 program and related initiatives. This year, Fit Together focused on updating its action plan to include improved communication with the community via social media, policy advocacy, and environmental changes such as the Sue Grossman Greenway equipment upgrade and healthy eating mini-grant projects.

The Torrington Area Health District (TAHD) continued its active participation in the **Litchfield County Opiate Task Force (LCOTF)**, serving on its executive committee. TAHD staff also initiated a data committee focused on collecting and analyzing information to support substance misuse prevention efforts. Training sessions for local pharmacies and medical offices on opioid misuse prevention resumed under the Academic Detailing on Opioid Safety initiative. TAHD also participated in the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP), aimed at reducing morbidity and mortality associated with substance use disorder (SUD) and opioid use disorder (OUD) in high-risk rural communities. Through these programs, TAHD strengthened and expanded prevention, treatment, and recovery services to help rural residents access appropriate care and make progress toward recovery. Although some of these programs concluded in August, TAHD applied for new grant opportunities and remains committed to harm reduction as an active member of the LCOTF Harm Reduction Subcommittee.

TAHD continued its contract with the United Way of Connecticut (UWC) to enhance cross-sector efforts and implement a comprehensive public health approach to **suicide prevention**. Efforts focused on reducing suicide morbidity and mortality among three key vulnerable populations: middle-aged adults (particularly those in high-risk occupations or with serious mental illness or substance use disorder), young adults, and adolescents. This year, TAHD prioritized identifying and addressing suicide hotspots along railroad areas in Litchfield County. Suicide prevention signs were ordered for installation along two separate railway lines as part of a targeted intervention. TAHD also strengthened its involvement with the Western CT Coalition to support regional collaboration in suicide prevention. **QPR** (Question, Persuade, Refer) training continued to be offered to community members by certified Gatekeeper Trainers, providing a practical, evidence-based approach to reducing suicidal behaviors.

This year, TAHD was awarded the **Preventive Health Strategies at Work in CT Communities** grant through the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) to support the delivery of evidence-based prevention programs. The funding enabled TAHD to continue facilitating initiatives such as **Chronic Disease Self-Management**, **Diabetes Self-Management**, **Chronic Pain Self-Management**, and the CDC-recognized **Prevent T2** program for type 2 diabetes prevention.

With this support, TAHD partnered with the Agency on Aging to conduct two six-week workshops: Chronic Disease Self-Management at the Litchfield Community Center and Chronic Pain Self-Management at the Winsted Senior Center. These interactive sessions were designed for individuals with one or more chronic physical or mental health conditions, such as arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, or depression, and provided practical tools to improve daily life. Participants learned self-care strategies including exercise, healthy eating, symptom management, weight loss, and communication with healthcare providers. Those who completed the programs reported significant improvements in quality of life, demonstrating the effectiveness of these community-based prevention efforts.

The TAHD **Immunization Action Program (IAP)** collaborated with local healthcare providers and hospitals to ensure adherence to Connecticut's childhood immunization requirements. The program partnered with 12 medical organizations and 40

community-based organizations across the district, focusing on education, outreach, and promoting vaccine confidence. TAHD provided healthcare providers with educational materials for staff and patients and hosted training sessions and events. For community partners, TAHD set up informational displays in libraries, hospitals, museums, food banks, and KidsPlay Children's Museum, and participated in outreach at events such as back-to-school nights and health fairs. Public messaging was amplified through posters in high-visibility locations including post offices, coffee shops, libraries, and town halls. Social media was also used to extend the reach of vaccination campaigns. This year, TAHD received an award for achieving 100% outreach success across all program areas, recognizing the team's strong commitment to immunization education and community engagement.

The Torrington Area Health District (TAHD) **Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program** has been diligently working across multiple fronts to address lead poisoning in our community. Our program provided case management for over 60 children with blood lead levels ≥ 3.5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ and offered educational information to more than 100 families. TAHD continues its partnership with the Connecticut Children's Healthy Homes Program to ensure lead-safe housing throughout the district. Through these combined efforts, a total of **14** epidemiological investigations were completed and **14** abatement orders were issued.

TAHD **Environmental Health Program** resulted in the following inspections/licenses/permits: **1159** food inspections, **1016** temporary food permits, **129** new septic systems, **208** repaired septic systems, **140** private well permits, **79** private pool permits, **206** beauty salons & barber shops inspections, **632** house addition permits, **296** soil tests, **29** subdivision lots, **32** public pools were inspected, and **29** daycare centers inspected. Records show that approximately **407** samples were submitted to the state lab for testing drinking water, beach and pool water, lead in water, soil and dust, and stool samples for pathogens. Sanitarians investigated **350** complaints of various public health concerns; **35** legal orders/voluntary compliances were issued for enforcement purposes.

Emergency Preparedness Annual Summary

The TAHD Emergency Preparedness Program remained focused on training, education, and community engagement throughout the year. In April 2025, TAHD conducted a Point of Dispensing (POD) Drill at John Trumbull Primary School to test readiness for large-scale medical countermeasure distribution. We also met Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) deliverables by organizing a tabletop exercise focused on pandemic influenza response.

To further enhance public health and emergency preparedness capabilities, TAHD coordinated two in-person training courses through the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX). The first, Disaster Preparedness for Bombing Incidents (DPBI), equipped attendees with knowledge to effectively plan for and respond to explosive threats. The second course, Medical Countermeasures: Point of Dispensing (POD), Planning and Response, focuses on operational planning and execution of mass prophylaxis campaigns. These trainings are open to MRC volunteers, TAHD staff, public health partners, emergency personnel, and town officials.

The emergency preparedness team also participated in professional development opportunities, including the NACCHO Preparedness Summit and the Emergency Management Symposium. Additionally, TAHD attended an MRC Leadership training in Rhode Island with the Training, Innovation and Leadership Institute. TAHD also continues to be the lead fiduciary role for Connecticut Region 5 for the 2024–2029 project period, strengthening the district's position in regional preparedness coordination.

The TAHD **Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)** continued to grow and engage with the community through education and outreach. Trainings offered during the year included First Aid, Hands-Only CPR, Narcan administration, and Stop the Bleed. MRC volunteers participated in local fairs and events, distributing preparedness materials and promoting household readiness. The emergency preparedness team also attended the 2025 National MRC Summit, further supporting TAHD's capacity to enhance and sustain a responsive MRC program. Efforts to secure grant funding remain ongoing to support training, volunteer engagement, and community preparedness throughout the district.

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