



HEALTH
Department

Quarter 4 Board of Commissioners' Update

Allegan County Health Department (ACHD)

ACHD Activities during the most recently concluded quarter (2024 Q4)

Groundwater Education Agreement Reached with ODC Network: In December, Allegan County contracted with Outdoor Discovery Center Network (formerly known as the Outdoor Discovery Center) to create groundwater education and a training program specifically for Allegan County educators. These plans will be utilized in classrooms to educate students about groundwater in Allegan County. This work will take place in 2025.

Groundwater Workshop: On November 29th, the second Groundwater Workshop took place at Trestle Stop Restaurant. Local governing unit representatives and community members provided feedback on the future of groundwater oversight, and prioritized areas of concerns, namely groundwater protection and quality. Feedback was collected and Hydrosimulatics will report out the results of the workshop.

Training and Preparation for Palisades Restart – Efforts to recommission Palisades Nuclear Plant in Covert, MI are underway. In preparation for the plant's reopening and to meet federal guidelines, ACHD staff attended trainings with Allegan County Emergency Management and other local partners. Trainings included Federal Emergency Management Agency's Radiological Emergency Response Courses and county plans are currently being updated to align with FEMA guidelines.

Veterans Stand Down: ACHD participated in the Veteran's Stand Down event hosted by Seniors and Veterans Services. This event provided local resources and services to veterans in the community. ACHD provided immunizations and health education to veterans and their families.

ACHD Activities Forecast for Quarter Ahead (2025 Q1)

Community Health Needs Assessment: ACHD is working closely with Ascension Borgess Allegan Hospital to collect data for the Community Health Needs Assessment. This assessment provides valuable insight into the health and wellbeing of citizens in Allegan County and informs the priorities set in the Community Health Improvement Plan. Primary data will be collected in Q1 of 2025.

Emergency Planning & Preparedness: A Medical Response and Surge exercise will take place February 5th for Region 5 Healthcare Coalition. This is an exercise that will test regional response capabilities for mass emergency medical response that would occupy 10% or more of medical beds in the region. ACHD does plan on participating in this exercise.

Hearing and Vision Expansion: ACHD has trained additional staff for hearing and vision screening to address the need of these services in the County. ACHD screens all school-aged children for vision in pre-school, first, third, fifth, seventh, and ninth grade, and hearing in pre-school, kindergarten, second, and fourth grade. ACHD will also screen any community member for free at the health department by appointment.



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Anticipated Public Health Situations in Year Ahead

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI or H5N1): H5N1 has not disappeared, despite the cold weather, and has devastated some poultry flocks in neighboring counties. The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) has been educating the public and farmers about H5N1 regarding biosecurity and signs for watch for in poultry flocks and dairy herd. Farm workers are the ones primarily population at risk of infection, and H5N1 remains a low risk for the general population. Backyard poultry farmers are also encouraged to take protective actions to keep their flocks safe. ACHD is prepared to assist farmers with PPE and staff monitoring. More information can be found on MDARD's website at www.michigan.gov/mdard/animals/diseases/avain/avian-influenza

Pertussis Continues to Circulate – Cases of Pertussis, also known as Whooping Cough, continues to circulate in Allegan County, primarily in school-aged children. Pertussis is a bacterial infection that spreads through coughing and sneezing. It spreads easily, often without people realizing they are sick. Pertussis is most dangerous for babies younger than 1 year old, and individuals who are immunocompromised or have severe asthma. ACHD is working closely with school systems to identify close contacts with confirmed cases and provided education for schools to distribute to parents and guardians.