

# Connecting Point *Newsletter*

Mid-Michigan District  
**HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
CLINTON • GRATIOT • MONTCALM

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Visit [www.mmdhd.org](http://www.mmdhd.org)  
for more information on  
agency programs,  
services and health  
issues.

## ***Public Health in Action—EEE***

The recent spread of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in Michigan not only put public health to the test, but also put on display the team approach needed to address a public health emergency. Michigan saw as many cases of EEE in 2019 as were diagnosed in the previous 10 years combined, presenting a need to take an aggressive approach to addressing the problem.



In 2019, 48 animal cases and 10 human cases of EEE were identified in Michigan. Unfortunately, six people passed away as a result. Those who survived are faced with potential long term disability and brain damage. Within the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) region, only one case of EEE was identified, that being a horse in Montcalm County. Despite this single occurrence, the risk to local residents was real, showing the need for a public health response.

Key MMDHD staff met to develop and implement a plan that would notify the public quickly about the threat and how it would be addressed. Letters were sent home with students to advise families about the importance of not spending time outside at dusk, using insect repellent, maintaining window and door screens, and emptying pools of standing water. Environmental health, emergency preparedness and administrative staff shared vital information with residents by visiting homes and businesses with information on aerial spraying of the insecticide Merus 3.0, which was scheduled to take place in several townships. Staff responded to phone calls from concerned residents. Public information was shared via the news media, the MMDHD website and social media. This coordinated effort helped to lessen the risk of EEE exposure by raising awareness for area residents.

The onset of cold weather has reduced the risk of EEE. For more information on this and other vector-borne diseases, visit [www.michigan.gov/eee](http://www.michigan.gov/eee) or [www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases](http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases).

## ***Flu Season Activity***

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services reports that influenza activity in Michigan is “sporadic” as of early November 2019. However, the flu season has just begun. Influenza activity is unpredictable and typically peaks between December and February. Getting the flu shot is important in protecting the health of patients, families and communities.

Health care providers can access important updates through *Michigan Flu Focus*, a weekly newsletter that offers information on influenza surveillance, reporting, testing, updates of interest and educational resources. The report can be found at: [www.michigan.gov/CDinfo](http://www.michigan.gov/CDinfo).

Getting the flu vaccine has never been more convenient. The vaccine is available at a variety of locations, including doctor’s offices, many pharmacies and MMDHD clinics. For additional information, visit: [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu) or contact Sarah Doak, RN, Division Director, at [sdoak@mmdhd.org](mailto:sdoak@mmdhd.org).





### United Way Supports Pathways to Better Health

In April of 2019, the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) was awarded a \$2,375 Community Impact Grant from the Montcalm-Ionia United Way. The goal of these grants is to improve health outcomes for Montcalm County residents. The funds awarded to MMDHD are being used to provide gas cards to clients who are being served by the Pathways to Better Health Program.

Pathways to Better Health is an evidence-based program in which a Community Health Worker assists at-risk clients in navigating medical and social service systems. These clients, faced with medical conditions and other obstacles, often lack the funds for long-distance trips to receive needed medical care or social service supports. While some lack gas money for their own vehicles, others depend on family and friends for transportation. Gas cards, now available through the United Way grant, will help lessen a transportation barrier that prevents many from seeking much needed care. They are much appreciated by clients.

For more information about the Pathways to Better Health Program, contact Stephanie Husted, Community Health Worker for Montcalm County, at (989) 831-3618. Applications for assistance can be found at [www.mmdhd.org](http://www.mmdhd.org).

### Water Testing Service



Dentists and other health care providers who encourage well water testing for their patients now have a resource. The Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) now offers a courier service for transporting water samples to the Kent County Regional Laboratory.

Residents can stop at one of MMDHD's branch offices to pick up sample bottles, take water samples from their homes, and return them to MMDHD with payment, for transport to the laboratory. The cost of water testing is:

Bacteria	\$16
Partial Chemistry (fluoride, hardness, sulfate, iron, nitrate, nitrite, and pH)	\$20
Transportation Fee	\$5

For more information on the water testing service, contact the Environmental Health Office at your local MMDHD branch office.

### Wear One Campaign



The *Wear One* campaign is a program that aims to increase free condom availability, create awareness and promote condom usage in individuals ages 18-24. The goal is to decrease sexually transmitted infections (STI's) and unplanned pregnancies by removing barriers, such as cost, embarrassment and lack of access. Launched by the Ottawa County Department of Public Health in 2014, *Wear One* is now running successfully in locations statewide.

The Mid-Michigan District Health Department has joined the *Wear One* campaign and is now seeking business and agency partners who are willing to make *Wear One* packets available in places where young people shop, eat and receive services. This is done by placing packets in easily-accessible locations within the business. Each packet contains 10 condoms, lubricant, and information on proper use, participating locations, and health department family planning services.



Reducing the stigma of condom use will contribute to reductions in STI's and unplanned pregnancies. For more information on the *Wear One* campaign, including participating sites, visit: [www.mmdhd.org/clinic/fam](http://www.mmdhd.org/clinic/fam) or [www.miOttawa.org/WearOne](http://www.miOttawa.org/WearOne). For information on becoming a business partner, contact Cheryl Thelen, Health Educator at (989) 831-3634 or [cthelen@mmdhd.org](mailto:cthelen@mmdhd.org).

### Smoking Cessation and Reduction in Pregnancy Treatment (SCRIPT)



*SCRIPT* is an evidence-based smoking cessation program for pregnant women, made available through the Society of Public Health Educators. It is now available in Gratiot County where 30% of pregnant women smoke, a rate far exceeding the state rate of 17%. Getting support is an important part in breaking an addiction that can impact infant health. For more information or referrals, contact Cheryl Thelen, Health Educator, at (989) 831-3634 or [cthelen@mmdhd.org](mailto:cthelen@mmdhd.org).

For more information about these and other Health Department programs, contact:

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